

AFRICAN ADVENTURE

Letters from Famous Big-Game Hunters

EDITED AND ANNOTATED

By

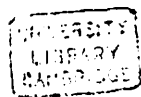
DENIS D. LYELL

Author of

"The Hunting and Spoor of Central African Game," etc.



F. C. SELOUS



LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1935

"One of my moose carried a truly magnificent head. [Selous afterwards sent me a photograph of this trophy.—D.D.L.] It will be the finest trophy in my collection. It has 41 points, and measures 5 feet 6 inches across the palms. A second head measures 4 feet 10½ inches.

"Besides the moose I only saw three Caribou, and got one good head, and a good many white sheep, but they were all ewes and lambs. The rams were by themselves and we could not find them.

"I am now using a .375 bore rifle by Holland, but I don't think it is any better for all ordinary game than my old .303 which got worn out.

"I don't think I shall ever visit the part of Africa where you have been shooting lately, as I have already got all the animals that can be got anywhere in Northern Rhodesia, except the Situtunga, which I have never yet shot. If I go to Africa again I shall go to some part of East or West Africa, where there are species of antelopes quite new to me. I have already made one trip to East Africa, and got several species there which are not to be found in South Africa.

"I am glad you have succeeded in shooting some good elephant bulls. The one shot by Mr. Melland, the Native Commissioner, with tusks weighing 119½ and 117 pounds is certainly one of the finest ever shot by a European. Oswell shot one whose tusks weighed 250 pounds the two, and Neumann has shot some with tusks nearly 120 pounds each.

Lately a Mr. Butter shot one on the borders of Abyssinia with tusks weighing 135 and 138 pounds. I saw these tusks at Ward's, and understood from him that Mr. Butter had shot the elephant they had originally belonged to himself. An elephant was shot three years ago by two Germans on Kilimanjaro, in East Africa, with tusks weighing a little over 120 pounds each. I saw these tusks myself at Voi, in East Africa. They were a beautiful, long, even pair.

"When you come to England you must be sure and come and see me, and then we can have a good talk about our travels and hunting adventures. I am getting old, and cannot get away for anything but short trips now. Wishing you good health and good luck.

(Signed) "F. C. SELOUS."

Then comes an interesting letter mentioning who shot the specimen of the White Rhinoceros now in the Cape Town Museum.

(Heatherside, Worplesdon, 19/1/06.)

"I have to thank you for your very interesting letter of Novr. 14th which I duly received some time ago, and would have answered before this, but I have been very busy lately going about England giving lectures. I put myself in the hands of a lecture agency, and they get engagements for me. It is rather a strain, but brings in a good bit of

money, and it is easier to make money by lecturing than by writing. As I lecture on my hunting experiences in Africa long ago I am still making money out of my hunting.

"I have been looking out for your article in the *Field*, but it has not yet appeared. I shall read it with great interest when it comes out.

"I am much interested to learn that you have killed all your elephants with a .303 rifle. [This was before I shot others with Mannlicher and Mauser rifles.—D.D.L.] Really these small bore rifles are wonderful. Did you shoot your elephants in the head, or kill them with body shots in the heart and lungs?

"I am quite sure that the White Rhinoceros in the Cape Town Museum was shot and preserved by Mr. Arthur Eyre, but he may have sold it to Mr. Harvey Brown, who sold it to Rhodes, who gave it to the Cape Town Museum. Eyre was with Coryndon in 1892 when he shot the first white rhino he preserved (the skin of which I think went bad). The next year, in 1893, Coryndon went by himself and shot and preserved two bulls, one of which is in the British Museum at South Kensington, and the other in Rothschild's Museum at Tring. The next year, 1894, Eyre went to the same district and shot the bull now in the Cape Museum.

"When I was in Salisbury, in July, 1895, I saw the skin and skull, with a very good horn, of this specimen, and heard all about it.

"Harvey Brown, to the best of my belief, never

saw a white rhino in the flesh, but he shot and preserved a black one. He may have bought the white one now in the Cape Museum and so got his name on it.

"I am afraid there is not much to be done in the way of getting orders for specimens of African animals for museums. I got the cream of this work and made over £2,000, minus expenses, by it, but now all the museums in England are full, and the Americans are sending out their own collectors.

"Wishing you good health and good luck, and hoping to see you here one of these days.

(Signed) "F. C. SELOUS."

Next comes a short letter about a piece of wood which came from the tree Dr. David Livingstone's heart was buried under at Chitambo's village, N.E. Rhodesia.

"(Heatherside, Worplesdon, 7/7/06.)

"Thanks very much for the piece of wood from the tree under which Dr. Livingstone's heart was buried.

"I am most fearfully busy getting all my things together for my trip to the Yukon.

"I enclose the only photo I have at the moment of my big moose head.

"I am glad the *Field* people are pleased with my little introduction to your book. I think I was quite right to put men like yourself and Capt.

been passed by the Treasury so I am going, and shall leave England on Jan. 20th. Of course I shall have letters from the Foreign Office to the Sudan Government, and I expect they will not require me to take out a game licence, and will give me a free passage on the Government steamer from Khartoum to Gondokoro.

"I expect to get all facilities granted me as I shall be engaged on work for the Museum, and if so my expenses will be very much less than they would be if I went out on my own.

"Walter Rothschild also wants me to bring him a complete specimen of a big bull of the Giant Eland, and a few other things, for which altogether he offers me —, so that altogether I hope to do the trip at only a small expense to myself. I am not sure, however, that I shall be able to get a permit to shoot an extra Eland for Rothschild. My worst enemy will be 'Anno Domini,' as on Decr. 31st I shall be 59 years old, and as I am going down to the Lado (of which Stigand is now in charge), where it is excessively hot I am told, and the climate rather bad, I may not be able to stand the work. If I can only keep fairly well I shall have a most interesting trip.

"The Museum want a specimen of a Northern White Rhinoceros, and if I can get the elands pretty quickly near Redjaf (where Mr. Roosevelt got his) I shall try for one a little further up the Nile. But the preservation of the skin will be the trouble, as the whole skin will, I believe, have to be pared

down, and I shall have no one to help me but a few raw savages.

"I hope you will get a good male Inyala to add to your collection. They are, I think, one of the handsomest of African antelopes.

"By the bye, a new antelope has lately been discovered by two young fellows on a shooting trip in the mountains on the borders of Abyssinia (9,000 feet above sea level). It is as big (the male) as a Koodoo cow, with horns which spread nearly as broad as a Koodoo's, but are only about half as long, no beard under the throat, but white chest and throat patches, as in the Lesser Koodoo, uniform dark brown in colour, with no stripes in one specimen, and two or three in another, and in both half a dozen white spots in a line along the side and on the haunch. It is quite a new and distinct species, in some ways like a Koodoo, in others more like a mountain Situtunga or an Inyala.

"The sleeping sickness seems to be spreading everywhere, and to be getting more and more dangerous for Europeans. I had a long and very interesting talk with Sir David Bruce the other day about the various species of tsetse flies, and he told me that 17 Germans are now on their way home from Lake Tanganyika, all of whom have got sleeping sickness germs in their blood. I suppose you have heard that several cases of sleeping sickness have lately occurred in the Valley of the Luangwa, 400 miles from the nearest point where *Glossina palpalis* is found. This seems to show that some

CHAPTER II

*Major C. H. Stigand, O.B.E., R. J. Cuninghame, M.C.,
T. A. Barns and Capt. Martin Ryan*

THE first time I met the late Major C. H. Stigand was in Zomba, Nyasaland, in 1903, when I got an appointment at "The Camp," the Boma of the King's African Rifles. Here I had as quarters a nice brick house with glass windows and a cool thatched roof, and this was the only "pukka" house I dwelt in during the years I lived in South Central Africa.

Besides Stigand other officers at "The Camp" I remember were Capt. J. P. Ll. Mostyn, Capt. Markham, Capt. McLeod and Capt. J. W. S. Wingfield-Digby.

Stigand, Mostyn and Digby often took week-end shooting trips some twenty to thirty miles into the surrounding country and at various times I accompanied one or the other, when we usually had some sport and a cheery time until we had to get back to work.

At that time there was still a good lot of game left within the radius mentioned, and on the occasions I went up Zomba Mountain, where fine views could be got, and also a shot at bushbuck sometimes, it was a fair shooting country. On several occasions I have seen the spoor of elephants on the plateau of

Zomba Mountain, and once the tracks of a rhinoceros. Now, I believe, there are trout in the streams flowing from the mountain.

In the country beyond Namitembo there were then eland, koodoo, sable, Lichtenstein's hartebeest, bushbuck, reedbuck, oribi, duiker, zebra, warthog, bushpig, etc., and there was always the possibility of getting a chance at lion and leopard.

Lions even visited "The Camp," and one night a hungry lion broke into a goat-house and killed several of these animals and a calf, but he did not live long after this escapade, as I now own his skull and skin.

Then I resigned my billet at "The Camp" and went off and hunted elephants round Fort Manning and at the same time collected drawings of spoor and made notes for a book which Stigand and I brought out in 1906. These meetings at the Fort with Stigand and Mostyn I look back on with great pleasure, as they were both the best of fellows.

Soon afterwards I went to North-Eastern Rhodesia, the adjacent territory to Nyasaland, and soon after getting there I went west to the Loangwa River to hunt, and lived in a wattle and daub hut at a place called Mzazas. When I was there Stigand wrote me that he had had a mix-up with a rhino, and besides other injuries it had gored him deeply in the chest, just over the heart. His battalion of the 1st King's African Rifles had been ordered for service in British East Africa, and before Stigand's wounds had properly healed he walked the whole distance to Zomba with the troops. Here he sent me an account of his scrap with the rhino :

" (Zomba, Nyasaland, 11/6/1905.)

" We are off in a few days. Sorry I haven't been able to write. I have been so beastly busy as I have had to push all the recruits through musketry. Hope you are fit and well again, so sorry to hear you had been seedy.

" Marabouts are white and black—bareheaded, yellow beaks, very long. [This was about an old discussion.—D.D.L.]

" I shall probably be going home on leave from Mombasa in about two months so try and buck-up with the other things. I will try and get gnu spoor there. [He sometimes sent me rough sketches to finish.—D.D.L.] Re rhino, they both went for me at once without any provocation. I put a bullet into one's head at point blank range. [Here follows a rough sketch of the spot where he was charged.—D.D.L.] You will notice by diagram that it wasn't a blind rush up-wind or a blind charge. I think they had heard me, and they galloped round a bit and then came diving through a clump of grass one yard from me when I thought they had galloped off, and finally, after one of them had rolled me along the ground, and then turned round and come back to toss me, he went off in the direction he originally came from. Needless to say I was delighted to see his old wrinkled bottom going off!

" When I found my rifle, etc., we heard him again either come back, or the one I hit perhaps had fallen down and was getting up again. I was, of course, too bad to go and see as my chest was laid open, and

I wasn't quite sure whether it had got the lungs or not, and waited rather anxiously to see if I spat blood. It also missed the heart by about an $\frac{1}{8}$ th of an inch, and the wonderful part was it did not break a rib.

" Let us try and get this book off soon or it will hang on forever.

(Signed) " C. H. STIGAND."

Stigand had a marvellous shave from death with the rhino and he was soon to have an almost narrower one with a lion. When he got to Simba (Swahili word for lion.—D.D.L.), on the Uganda Railway, he heard that lions were coming to drink the water which formed a small pool under a tank near the station, so he got leave to stop and sit up for them. He killed three, but one was only wounded, which he followed at night into thick grass. It knocked him down so that he could not use his Mannlicher, so he punched it with his right fist and it left him. It seems he was hitting it where his first bullet had smashed its lower jaw, a fact which saved his life.

He was taken to Nairobi, where good treatment saved his life, as he nearly died of blood-poisoning. For years afterwards he had a stiff arm, as the ligaments and nerves had been badly damaged. I saw the three skins and skulls afterwards in London, and he was there getting treatment and told me the whole story of one of the most thrilling experiences a man ever had at night with lions.

On his way home he wrote me the following letter :

down so as not to impede the shot. Should an animal get to close quarters a native will seldom be caught, for they can run and jink like wild pigs, and climb like monkeys!

I have seen Brander-Dunbar, round Duffus Castle, pulling down geese from the sky with a Magnum 12-bore pump-gun in a most satisfactory manner, and on his Loch Spynie—a wonderful haunt of ducks and wildfowl—the trout fishing used to be most excellent. He had an old curly retriever dog which used to retrieve fish from the water when hooked without damaging them in the slightest degree.

When staying in Elginshire I was keen to see the trophies in his kinsman's house, Altyre, particularly the wonderful white rhino horns, so he obtained permission from Sir A. P. Gordon Cumming, Bt., for me to do so, and we motored there one day. The larger horn, measuring $62\frac{1}{4}$ ins. on front curve, is a most remarkable trophy, and Roualeyn Gordon Cumming, who brought it home, so far as I can discover in his book *A Hunter's Life in Africa*, does not say whether he shot the animal or traded the horn. He may have killed it, but if so it is strange he does not mention the fact in his well-known work.

The entrance-hall in Altyre is the finest of the kind I have seen, and it is crammed with trophies of the chase, curios, and weapons, including old guns, rifles, swords and daggers, with some family portraits. The surroundings of wild country are in keeping with the beauty of the house, and it is a home to be appreciated, but the ruinous taxation of the present age must "take the gilt off the gingerbread," to use a slang term.

Roualeyn Gordon Cumming has been accused

of slaughtering game, but it must be remembered that when he shot in Southern Africa no one ever thought that all the killing that took place could make much difference. The chief exterminators were certainly the Boers, who hunted for meat and skins, for men like Gordon Cumming were only in the country for a limited period. Moreover, they were accompanied by such a horde of natives that I doubt if much of the meat was wasted.

These old nimrods must have been extremely tough and vigorous men, for carrying their heavy and unwieldy weapons, and loading them on horseback, must indeed have been strenuous work. They must often have returned to camp exhausted by their great exertions in the hunting field and it was only the strongest who could stand the life for long.