



THE SPORTSMAN TOURIST

Seeking African Gold and Game

Following a Gold Rumor to Lake Rudolph—Troublesome Rhinos and Why they are so—A Good Bull Elephant—Fever—Colors of Gold

By JOHN A. M. LETHBRIDGE

I HAD long wished to make a journey to Lake Rudolph, in part for the sport, but chiefly to search for gold—that elusive thing that we are all looking for and generally in vain. Reports had reached me of the marvelous alluvial fields there and how the natives carried about gold dust in quills. A few Arab traders had been there and with one of them, a certain Ali, my partner and I had talked, but in spite of bribery and every device we could use he proved obdurate and would not talk freely. At length my partner was called to England. From time to time Ali would come to my hut and talk to me and the hints he gave made the desire to get there more fierce. At length, in spite of the hardships of the trip, one of the chief of which was lack of water, I made up my mind to try it, even if I went alone.

Somewhere in that neighborhood there is any amount of gold I have no doubt, but whether it is brought from Abyssinia or where it comes from is still a matter of conjecture. I found gold, but in very small quantities, and the lack of water made prospecting hopeless for me, though I still believe that an expedition properly equipped and able to take its time to prospect that country thoroughly would meet with success. Such an undertaking would require engineering and arranging and would have to be carried out on a large scale and would require provisions sufficient to last a year if necessary.

As far as I could make out the journey would occupy at least eight months if I took things fairly easy, but as I was a free lance, it made little difference whether I took more or less. A few weeks were devoted to my outfit, which I made as light as possible. As medicines I took plenty of quinine, permanganate of potash, carbolic acid, some aperient medicines and a few bandages. When you have these you have practically all you can carry and all that are needed in most cases. I took also a few trade goods such as calico, wire and beads, but more for the purpose of making presents than for trading.

My battery consisted of a double .303 and a double .450-400 rifle, shooting sixty grains of cordite. This rifle is perfect for dangerous game, but in spite of a pneumatic pad, the recoil is very great. A heavy rifle is a necessity in some cases,

but for all ordinary shooting I used my .303, and a beautiful weapon it was, coming up just like a shotgun. It never got out of order, and in spite of several years' rough usage is still in first rate condition. The ammunition question was next to be solved and this was a rather hard proposition. The Government does not care to have any one individual carry too much of this. I got over the difficulty by buying from another sportsman his whole stock of .303, which was all properly packed in airtight boxes. This was a great piece of luck, and as he was returning to England, it was entirely useless to him, and he was only too glad to be able to get rid of it. I also took a twelve-bore shotgun, which is a very useful thing both for the pot and for collecting specimens. I had also a magazine pistol, a tried friend, which I had carried during and since the South African war. People say that the magazine pistol is not dangerous. I think in the hands of a person who does not exactly know its mechanism, it is. I remember a friend of mine presented me with this one. While in my rooms in London, showing me how it worked, he pointed the barrel straight at my stomach. I was dressing for dinner at the time and ventured to say, "Please point the barrel away from me." A moment afterward, bang it went, through the floor and the next man's ceiling and into his floor. Luckily he was not in at the time, but I received summary notice to quit and had to pay £2 for damage to the floors and ceilings. With this weapon I could do good execution on ordinary buck up to 200 yards, although I think you would more than you kill.

My tent was an ordinary canvas one with fly and ground sheet. This is an absolute necessity in these climates and on a long trip makes all the difference between comfort and discomfort. After all it is best to be as comfortable as possible.

I left the Uganda railway at Naivasha. I give one word of advice to anyone wishing to go into this country; when taking a trip of this kind it is best to keep your purpose to yourself. The paternal government is very curious and has a knack of trying to stop people; why I do not know. The officials seem to think that one is not capable of taking care of himself and they must have the onus of so doing. This is very

kind, but at times is apt to be rather troublesome.

My head boy was a Somali and a first-rate fellow he was in all respects, except that he was rather too fond of having his own way, but that is a very common thing with a Somali, and the more they have to do with white men, the more conceited they become, and with this class there is only one thing to do—kick them out. You cannot give them a beating as one can an ordinary negro. I relied upon a Swahili boy to show me the road, and all through the trip he proved himself the best of the whole crowd. Eli was his name and he was like Eli in many respects. The rest of the porters were a heterogeneous crowd, but they soon got into good working order, though at first we took very easy marches to get them accustomed to their work. At the same time their loads were very light. I had a camera with me and took many very fine pictures, but I lost the whole lot with a very few exceptions on my way home after having carried them hundreds of miles.

The first part of our journey was easy traveling over rolling hills fed over by great numbers of antelope. We came across several rhinoceros, two of which charged through the safari, but without doing any damage. The annoying part was getting the boys together again, for on the advent of the rhino, down went the loads in every direction and away went the boys. Rhinos are a great nuisance. They are so pugnacious that even if left quite alone they will not let you pass by in peace, but must start hostilities. Meat was easily obtained and there was plenty of water. A few days later the character of the country changed and we came to any amount of elephant sign. We passed through dense areas of timber and then came out into large grassy parks. In one of these I saw two cow elephants, and after a rather difficult stalk got a most perfect photograph. The grass was long and everything was favorable and I got up to within twenty-five feet of them and snapped them and was a good one hundred yards on my return journey, when in some way they scented danger and dashed away. Up went their trunks, trying to locate my whereabouts, and they were off. I had Hassan the Somali with me carrying my heavy rifle, so that had they charged I could probably have turned them.

After making camp the next day the boys called me out and said there was a large herd of elephants close by, but whether there were any good bulls among them they could not tell. I determined, instead of marching the next day, to stay where I was, and should there be a good bull among them, to try to bag him. The following day we found a good many cows and young bulls, but nothing big, but from the sign could see there were two large bulls somewhere. I devoted three more days to looking for them,

but could not run across them. We could not shoot other game on account of disturbing the elephants, and my porters were running short of meat, so I gave up the elephants and started out with the caravan the next morning. I had not gone far before I shot two hartebeeste which put the boys in a good humor again. We did not meet many natives and the villages were decidedly scarce, but the natives we saw were most friendly and seemed anxious to help, especially when promised a present.

One day I had the closest acquaintance with a rhino that I ever expect to have. The grass was fairly long and the boys called my attention to what I made out to be a lone rhino standing in the shade of some bushes about one-half a mile away. The front horn was a good one and I determined to get a little closer to see if it was worth while shooting as, unless a very good specimen, I did not want it, for it was an object to save every extra pound. The wind was absolutely in my favor. I had come up to within about forty yards and was just having a good look at him, when Hassan yelled, "Run!" and there, charging down on us was another rhino that had evidently been asleep or lying down and had not been noticed. I had no time to do anything but run, and when I turned I am sure that he was within five yards of me, but evidently catching sight of Hassan's white clothes he made after him. The rhino was only a small one, but very determined. I fired and hit him square in the shoulder, which brought him up sharp, enabling me to fire my second barrel, at which he dropped. I expected the other larger one to make mischief, but he went off as hard as he could. I was sorry to have to shoot this one, as he was practically useless, but then what could I do? It was really a case of self defense, and with rhino it is their own fault. They will not let you alone.

There did not seem to be many lions in this part. We had heard them at night on two occasions only, but so far had not seen one. We came across more elephant sign, but they were evidently traveling, and I did not bother to follow them up. On getting into camp I went out with my shotgun to try for some guinea fowl, and after shooting three, was on my way back to camp when we came across the spoor of a bull that must have been the father of all elephants. He had evidently been disturbed by my shots and was moving rapidly. I cursed my luck, but after all it was entirely my own foolishness. I made up my mind I would take his spoor and see in which direction he went.

In the early morning, as soon as it was light, with Hassan and two other boys I started out, but after going three miles or more we could make nothing of it. The ground was hard and covered with small rocks and there were a number of other tracks of a small herd and we got hopelessly at sea and mixed up. Hassan was for following up the small herd, but the tracks were not fresh and we had not brought food nor come prepared for a night out, still we made a big circle to try to strike the big bull's track, but it was no go; there were tracks in every direction, none of them very fresh and I had to make up my mind to one of two things, either to stay there for a few days and take my time or to move on, and as I had been out now more than a month I made up my mind that I had no time to waste, and that I had best move on.

Up to this time we had had no difficulty on account of water, and although Africa is always supposed to be a dry country—of course I am not alluding to the deserts—I have found water scarcer in other countries. We had gone only a short distance the following day, before we came on the spoor of two cows and one old bull. Giving directions to Eli to go on a certain distance and make camp, I took the trail with Hassan. Before going far the three had separated, one cow going on alone, so naturally we followed the others. The ground was very rough and rocky and although they were only a short distance ahead of us, I never could have kept the trail myself; but trust a Somali for a tracker. You cannot beat them, though I have found other natives just as good.

We had just come out of the timber into a clearing when Hassan showed me the two elephants slowly crossing a little ravine. They were about 200 yards from me, but I dared not chance a shot and as the wind was gusty and none too good, I made up my mind to try to cut them off. The bull was a large one and I could see that he carried good ivory. Hassan quickly agreed to my plan. He was very keen when there was something good in sight. We turned to the left, made a half circle and when we again crossed their tracks we knew they had gone on and that we were too late. They had only just passed and we again followed. On topping the next rise we almost ran on to them, as they were standing under a tree with trunks upraised, evidently suspicious and trying to get our wind. To get nearer was impossible and I tried a head shot with a solid .303 and fired my second barrel immediately after, but my aim was not true and away they crashed, the cow trumpeting loudly and turning round and round. I seized the big rifle and ran as fast as I could, taking care to keep out of sight and got another shot as they were crossing an opening and turning a bit to the left. This brought the bull to his knees, but he got up once more and started off very groggy and had not gone more than fifty yards before he rolled over. The old cow would not leave him, but she could not get our wind. She was vicious, full of mischief and in a most dangerous humor. As I did not wish to shoot her, I thought discretion the better part of valor and decided to get on to camp and send back boys with Hassan to carry in the ivory, when in all probability she would have gone.

We found our camp without difficulty and I sent back six boys to cut out the ivory. Toward dusk they returned and reported that the cow had gone off before their arrival, although the ground was trampled down all around the dead bull. The tusks were very good, weighing 83 and 78 pounds respectively, were very symmetrical and in excellent condition. The bull was not old, as I had at first thought, but absolutely in his prime.

That night I felt very seedy and knew I was in for an attack of my old friend, malaria. I dosed myself accordingly, but in the morning my head was splitting and I was quite unable to march. There I remained for three days, before I felt well enough to take the trail, but as we were again running short of meat, I was forced to make an effort, and on the afternoon ran across two oryx that I secured with a right and left. It is a great satisfaction to one to make a right and left at big game, just as it is with rocketing pheasants or even rabbits. One is inclined to pat his chest and feel that he has made a very fine shot. In the evening some natives turned out and we got some grain, and what to me was most acceptable, a large bowl of milk. They told me their village was not far off and I promised them I would visit them on the morrow, which I did. I left the matter of asking about gold dust to Eli, but in spite of presents they professed entire ignorance of its whereabouts, but said that they had seen small quantities of it carried by other natives, who did not belong to their tribe, but came from further north. I think they lied, but though I stayed there two days and shot them all the meat they wanted, we got no further. The chief was most keen to trade for my rifle and offered me every inducement he could, and as for wives, I could have become a Mormon there and then.

At this time I panned, most carefully, any gravel or sandbars found in the river beds, and though several times I got colors, there was not enough to warrant my laying off and working. All these streams or rather river beds carry a trace of gold, but where does it come from? The question has undoubtedly bothered a good many besides myself, but the riddle is still unsolved. The country we were now traveling through was purely a pastoral one and the natives had large flocks of goats and a good many cattle. Game was abundant.

Hewers of Wood

By S. D. BARNES

JOHAN AXMAN had his day in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, but that was years before my time, though the land still bore signs of his presence and activity. I first found him in the linn and hardwood groves of Central Iowa, and since then I have bunked and fed with him in a score of States and Territories between the Mississippi and the Rockies. He is good company wherever you find him, hospitable, cordial, frank, but never offensively curious

concerning the affairs of others. His world may be a small one, but he knows it well. Questions of worldwide or national importance rarely trouble him. He may know nothing of current happenings on the further side of the State or county, yet he will catch your attention at the first word, and you will have a few new ideas to digest when you leave him. Which is best—to know a little about many things, or all there is to know about a few?