

Sport and Adventure in Central Africa.

BY MAJOR P. H. G. POWELL-COTTON.

This absorbing account of a memorable journey has been specially and exclusively written for "The Wide World Magazine." Major Powell-Cotton, who had already won fame as an explorer, left England in November, 1904, bound on an extended hunting trip in the little-known regions of the Congo Free State, and his tour lasted upwards of two and a half years. Married in East Africa in 1905, the Major's wife has since shared the hardships and dangers of the expedition—surely a unique honeymoon. Major Powell-Cotton has discovered six species of animals previously unknown to science, and has sent home the skin and complete skeleton of the mysterious okapi. His narrative will be found full of incident and interest.

I.



It was after my return to England from Northern Uganda in 1903 (see WIDE WORLD MAGAZINE, January, 1904) that my hopes of making an extended hunting trip in the little-known regions of the Congo Free State began to take a more practical form.

Thanks to the efforts of Sir Constantine Phipps, the British Minister at Brussels, I was able to set out in November, 1904, happy in the possession of exceptional facilities for travelling and hunting through the entire eastern portion of the Congo Free State.

Time was precious, and I discovered that, curiously enough, the quickest method of sending out the camp kit to Lado, my Congo destination on the White Nile, was by parcel post. There was no recognised postal route, but this difficulty was soon overcome by the goodwill of the officials in London, Egypt, and the Sudan, who safely delivered for me no fewer than three hundred and sixty-seven parcels. Guns, provisions, gramophones, cameras—in short, all my camp kit and trade goods for an expedition of two years, with the sole exception of tent and cartridges—were, with a little patience and ingenuity, packed into the prescribed eleven-pound parcels.

It was on a dull November morning that a little knot of friends collected on the platform at Charing Cross to wish me God-speed. The journey to Alexandria was an uneventful one. From there to my departure from Mongalla, the most southerly Sudan post, nothing could have exceeded the courtesy and kindness of the Customs and postal officials.

Khartoum and the White Nile I found humming with activity, for preparations were in progress on every hand for an expedition against the warlike Niam Niam.

At Gondokoro my Uganda safari (caravan)

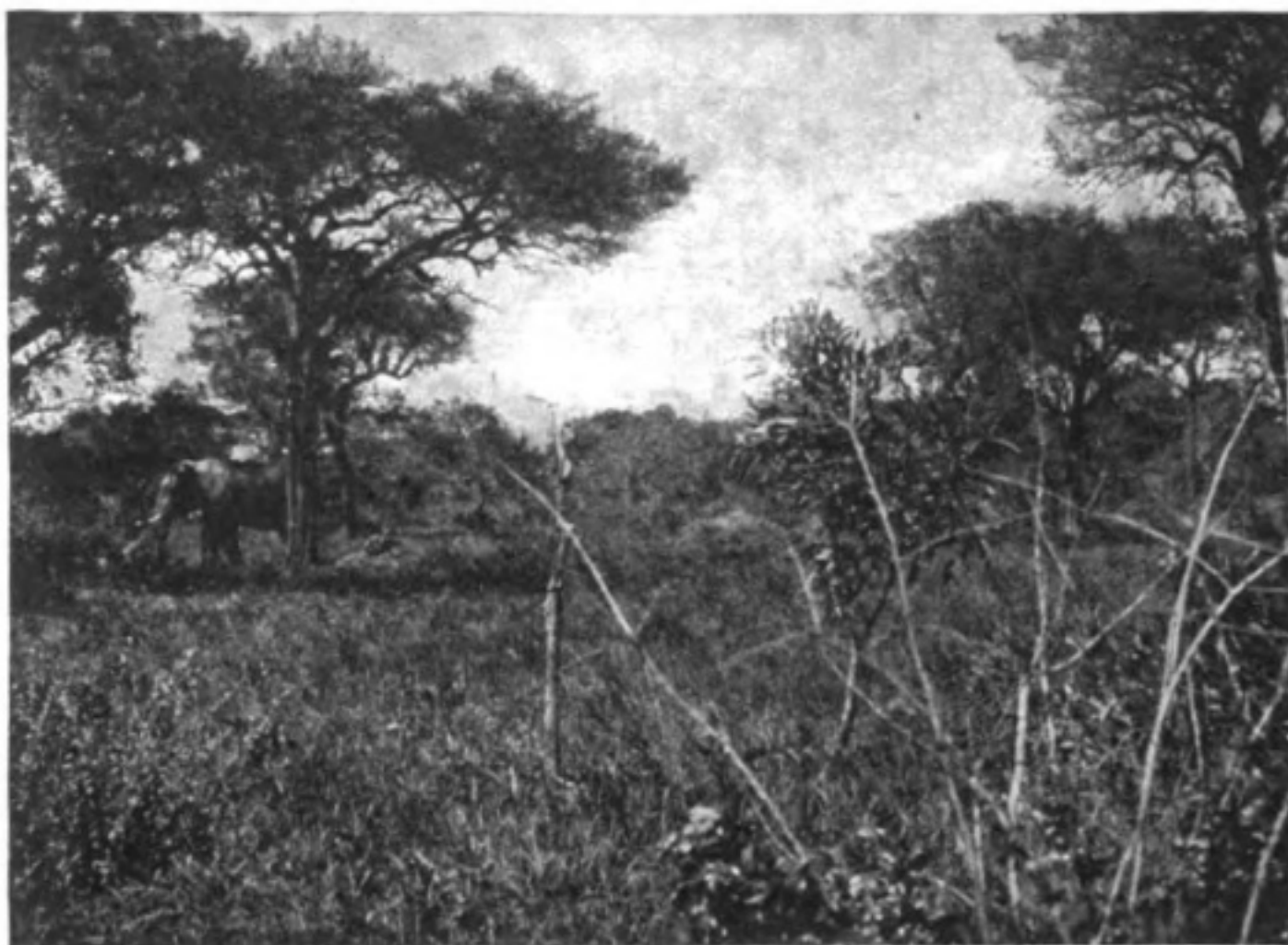
was to be ready awaiting me. What was, then, my disappointment to find that not a man had turned up, and I had to content myself meanwhile with a scratch crew drawn from the local loafers.

It was with a good many misgivings that I saw my new followers straggle off on their first march, and before long my doubts were justified, for never has it been my misfortune to work with so stupid a caravan.

My two great aims in this part of the journey were to secure and preserve the skin of an elephant over eleven feet high and to rediscover the northern white rhino—a very rare animal, known to science only by a single specimen possessed by America, and that shot over a decade ago.

Giraffe and buffalo abounded on my first hunting ground, but, search as I might, no rhino tracks were to be found. The next camp looked more hopeful, for I observed that the game path down to a little stagnant pool of water close by had been traversed by several of these animals.

Hardly had dusk fallen when a herd of elephants filed past our camp to drink, bathe, and repress in the darkness, rending limbs from the trees as they went. Very near they sounded in the stillness of the night air, and the frightened porters drew in close. The moon was three nights past the full. When, with steps as silent as possible, I crept down with my gun-bearers to the water, it was not yet high enough in the heavens for the misty beams to reach the pool. Crouching at the edge we listened with straining ears, yet nothing but the occasional splash of a frog or the rustle of a falling leaf broke the deep silence round us. The night air was beginning to chill us through, when suddenly one of the men touched me on the shoulder and pointed away to some big trees on our left. There, with



CHASING A WOUNDED ELEPHANT—"WE SOON CAME ON HIM, MOVING VERY SLOWLY AMONG SCRUB AND TREES."
From a *Photo.*

the aid of my glasses, I distinguished a great black form, which slowly detached itself from the surrounding shadows and moved towards us. As it gradually emerged into the light the moonbeams shone on its white, gleaming tusks. It was a solitary bull elephant. Signing to one man to follow, I crept nearer and fired two bullets in rapid succession just as the animal was turning to drink. It immediately plunged into the water and waded heavily across, receiving two more bullets before it again merged into the distant gloom.

Hardly had I reached my tent and turned in when a blood-curdling yell and the din of an alarmed camp made me start up, clutch my rifle, and rush outside. A confused group of porters were chattering and gesticulating wildly round the watch-fire before my tent; there was evidently some mischief afoot. Next moment, before I could reach the men, they had burst into peal after peal of hearty laughter, which quite reassured me. The merriment was so great that it was a few minutes before I could produce sufficient calm for an explanation. It seemed that one of my porters had had his dreams suddenly disturbed by a cold nose poked

into his face. Sure it was nothing short of an elephant, he rolled to one side, cleared himself with a bound from his blanket, and fled in the direction of my tent, yelling lustily. In a moment the camp was awake, each man eager to inquire where the danger lay, and it was not till the butt of the safari calmly strolled up, leading my donkey by a broken tether, that the mystery of the cold nose was explained.

Next morning as soon as it was light we took up the tracks of the wounded elephant and soon came on him, moving very slowly among scrub and trees, as shown in the accompanying

photograph. It was evident that he was hard hit, and a single shot brought him down. A busy time preserving the skin ensued. The next snapshot shows my men at work, and a second picture depicts a squad of them bringing in half the skin, which will give my readers some idea of the weight of an elephant's hide.

Still in quest of white rhino, we eventually reached the edge of a big, marsh-like stretch of country, well studded with bush and trees. Here, after an hour and a half's tramp, I discovered one morning a couple of fresh and interesting tracks, evidently made by full-grown



THE AUTHOR'S MEN AT WORK CUTTING UP THE DEAD ELEPHANT.
From a Photo.



AN ELEPHANT'S HIDE IS VERY HEAVY — HERE WE SEE THE PORTERS STAGGERING
From a ALONG CARRYING HALF OF IT. *[Photo.]*

rhinos. Following up the trail, we twice passed places where they had lain down to rest, but, as their pace had afterwards quickened, I feared we were too late.

Within a short time, however, we sighted them moving through scanty thorn bush—two fine white rhinos, their heads, as is characteristic of their species, carried low. This curious habit often results in the animal's horn being worn quite flat by constant friction along the ground; it also makes it more difficult for the hunter to judge the size of the horn while the rhino is walking. Gradually gaining upon the pair before us, I moved out a little to the right, to take a shoulder shot at the rear-most of the two.

Directly I fired the leader started and swung off to the left, only giving me time to send a snap-shot after it. But my first barrel at its comrade had gone home, and, leaving it in its death-struggle, I followed in hot pursuit of the fugitive. Soon I drew up short, a little disconcerted, for there in the plain before me I saw *two* rhinos, instead of the one I had expected! Beating as silent a retreat as possible, I endeavoured to discover which was the wounded one, but the nearer rhino seemed anxious to inspect me and not at all diffident, for with a crash it charged down on me.

When I fired it turned; then it dodged round a thick thorn bush, quick as a terrier after a rat, to dash this time at my guide. His huge spear poised

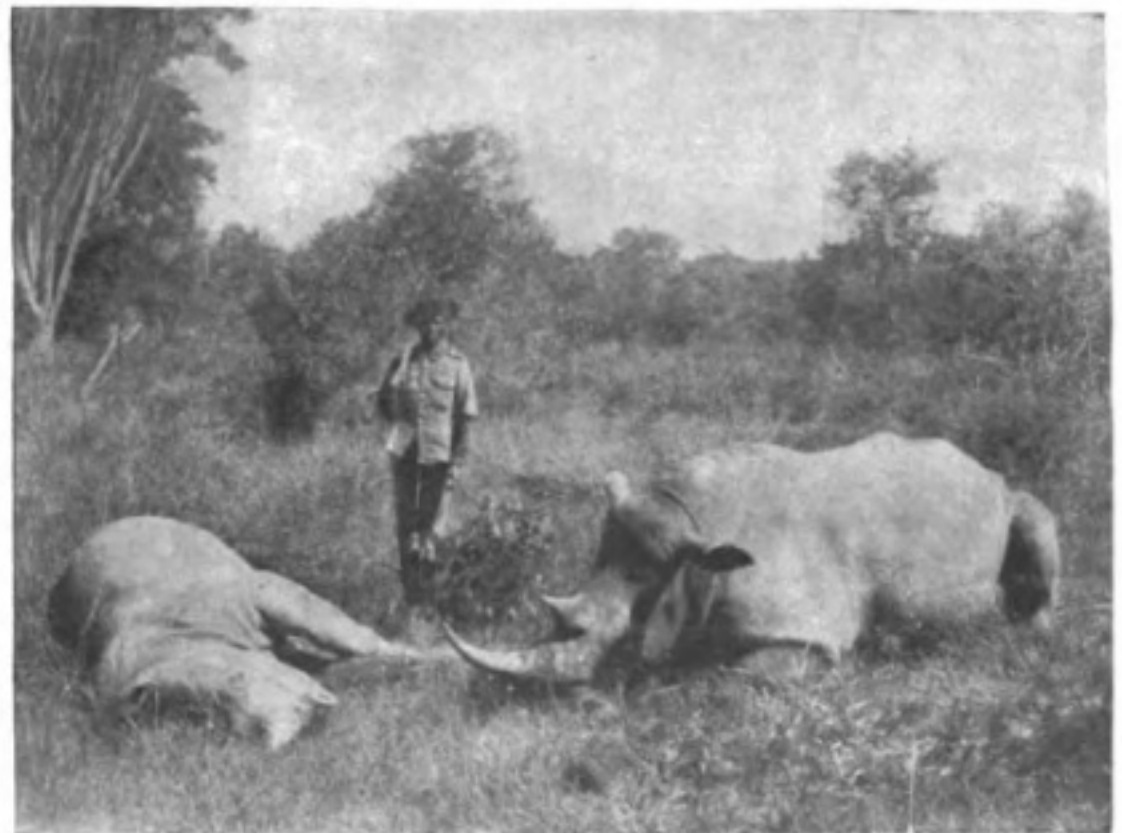
ready to strike, the native slipped behind the kindly shelter of another bush and the rhino plunged harmlessly past, while I emptied both barrels into it as fast as I could pull the triggers.

Cautiously following up the beast we soon found it standing disabled, close to a little bush-crowned hillock, from which vantage ground I thought some photographs might be secured. My approach, however, was greeted by such unmistakable signs of vitality that I promptly exchanged camera for rifle and gave the animal a finishing shot. The second beast meanwhile stood watching the scene intently, and so obstinately did it decline to quit that it had to share its companion's fate. It proved to be a two-year-old, and the other its

mother, an old beast with a slightly damaged horn.

These two rhinos are shown in the photograph reproduced below. The picture on the top of the next page gives a nearer view of a white rhino head. You will observe the curious square mouth, which distinguishes this species from all other rhinos.

Passing southwards along the Nile, I next struck up the little stream of Kaya. The valley, well wooded and gently undulating, was dotted here and there with settlements of Barri, who ply the double trade of fishermen and blacksmiths. One of these villages comes back clearly to my memory. It was picturesquely



TWO FINE WHITE RHINOS.
From a Photo.



A NEARER VIEW OF A WHITE RHINO HEAD — NOTICE THE CURIOUS SQUARE MOUTH WHICH DISTINGUISHES THE SPECIES.

From a Photo.

situated near the river bank, a dozen grass huts clustered together under the shade of masses of rock and some fine trees, in whose branches hung the circular, bag-like fishing-nets of the villagers and rows of sun-dried fish impaled on little sticks by gills and tail. Near by, in the open, lay the beds of the natives, composed of loose bamboo poles raised slightly from the ground. The Barri themselves presented an animated scene—a regular Central African Birmingham on a small scale. In little hollows on the flat surface of one of the rocks the women were pounding filbert-like nuts of iron ore to powder, while behind them rose the smelting pits—grass-roofed constructions, shaped like the letter V, and encircled by heaps of dross and charcoal. Here men, in couples, were busy forging hoes, one of them beating the mass of glowing metal into shape, with two well-worn stones to serve as hammer and anvil, while his companion plied the bellows. These consisted of two earthen bowls, each with a projecting pipe leading into the flames. To the centre of a piece of soft skin, loosely fastened over the mouth of each bowl, was

attached a long stick, the two of which the man worked alternately, thus sending the draught down the pipes into the fire. The hoes, when finished, are taken over to the great chief of the Barri tribe living on the Uganda side, who buys them in return for flour.

Close to the blacksmiths a curious method of basket-making attracted my attention. The native workman sat by a shallow hole scooped in the earth to the desired shape of the basket, and lined with withies. These he was weaving neatly together with the more pliant of his rushes.

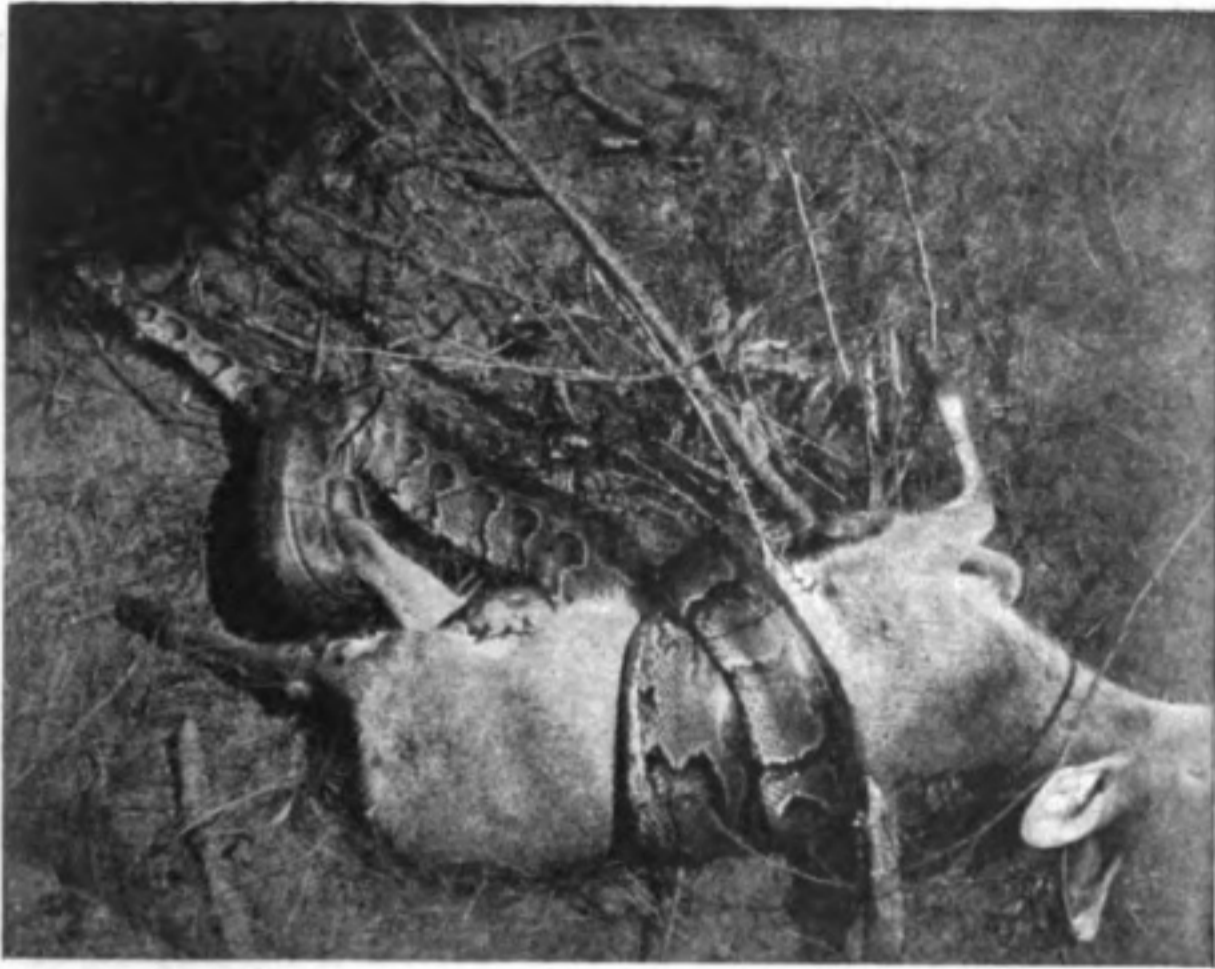
Striking up the side of the valley southwards, we came to the post of Kadji Kadji, lying on a highly-cultivated plateau—by far the most attractive station among those lying on either side of the Nile, British or Congo.

Here chattering groups of women were daily to be seen clustered in little groups in the shade of the huts, some behind baskets piled with produce for sale, others busily grinding sim-sim seeds to extract the oil. Their clothing was a simple matter, merely consisting of a diminutive apron of fibre and a long horse-like tail of the same material, which hung down behind, suspended from a belt of beads. These appendages gave them a most curious appearance, and may possibly have given rise to



A SCENE AT KADJI KADJI, WHERE WOMEN WEAR TAILS—AND VERY LITTLE ELSE.

From a Photo.



A REMARKABLE TRAGEDY OF ANIMAL LIFE — THIS UNIQUE SNAP-SHOT SHOWS A DUIKER KILLED BY A HUGE BOA-CONSTRICTOR—WHEN THE AUTHOR FIRST ARRIVED, THE VICTIM'S PARENTS WERE ENDEAVOURING TO RESCUE THEIR OFFSPRING.

From a Photo.

the legend that "tribes with tails" inhabit the fastnesses of Central Africa.

One day, close to this station, while I was out in quest of game, my attention was arrested by a couple of duiker, apparently butting at each other. My first shot brought one of them to the ground, but the other, to my surprise, instead of taking flight, continued the attack on its fallen comrade, as I at first fancied. What was my astonishment, on drawing a little nearer, to distinguish the outline of yet a third duiker in the grass, writhing in the coils of a huge snake, as seen in the unique snap-shot I was fortunate enough to secure. A shot in the neck instantly killed the latter, but not before it had crushed the life out of its hapless victim. This proved to be a yearling duiker. Its parents, instead of abandoning it to its fate, had been carrying on a plucky but hopeless conflict with the snake, by butting the deadly coils that were tightening round their offspring's body. Such a tragedy of animal life is without a parallel in my experience.

The northern end of Lake Albert, in the neighbourhood of Wadelai, literally swarms with hippos. One evening after dusk, as my headman was lazily paddling across the Nile to the Congo side, his little craft grazed the back of one of these beasts, who was making for the

shore in search of supper. With difficulty the man maintained his seat on the edge of the canoe and, scenting trouble, paddled for dear life. The astonished hippo sank, but rose again so swiftly that it caught the stern of the boat, tilted it up, and sent the headman splashing into the river. He immediately dived, but reappeared at the surface, only to find himself gazing into the face of another hippo! Sinking again, the unfortunate man managed at last to reach the rushes fringing the shore, and regained his canoe rather bruised and stiff, but otherwise none the worse for his alarming adventure.

While in the vicinity of Wadelai I was told of a curious method which the natives of this region have of disposing of their old folk when they become a burden. They have, apparently, never thought of

such things as old-age pensions, and as soon as the infirmities of age manifest themselves the unfortunate elders are given a sleeping-draught and wrapped in a fresh antelope skin. Thus attired, they are carried by members of their family to a spot some distance from their village, where they are deposited in the grass close to some track used by the inhabitants. The first native coming by sees, to his joy, what he imagines to be a sleeping antelope, and promptly spears it. Thereupon the victim's family, who have been watching the proceedings, emerge from their hiding-place and express their horror and surprise at the unfortunate event. Whether the



MEMBERS OF A TRIBE WHICH HAS A HIGHLY ORIGINAL METHOD OF DISPOSING OF ITS OLD FOLK. *From a Photo.*

arrival of the hunter is arranged for beforehand I am unable to say, but it is very evident that grey hairs are at a decided discount in this locality. Some members of the amiable tribe who practise this method of removing their old folk are seen in the snap-shot on the previous page.

After turning our backs on Mahagi station, with its picturesque native villages—one of which is shown above—we traversed fine, undulating, grassy plains that give promise of becoming, one day, a grand grazing country for the white settler.

One morning, just as I had rejoined the path to camp, after a long but successful hunt for bushbuck, I was met by two natives who were coming out to tell me that elephants were close by. Though the hills around us were absolutely bare of trees, there were no signs of the beasts from where we stood, but the men persisted with such conviction in their story that I was persuaded to go in search. Sure enough, as we skirted the hill, another valley opened out at our feet, and there, one on each of the slopes that hedged the vale, were two elephants feeding. Through my glasses I saw that the nearer of the pair had but a single tusk, so I advanced towards the other.

The wind was favourable, but the grass lent so little cover that our approach had to be most careful, though the beast was still quietly feeding. At a distance of about eighty yards I decided for the head shot and fired both barrels in quick succession. The elephant merely ceased his feeding. For all other visible effect I might have been using a simple



From a]

A PICTURESQUE VILLAGE NEAR MAHAGI.

[Photo.

catapult upon him. The next bullet at his ear, however, made him swing round defiantly, and with ears out and trunk in the air he moved hesitatingly towards us. He was searching for the enemy preparatory to a charge. Still another two shots, this time aimed for the forehead, arrested, but failed either to drop or turn him. A ponderous fellow he looked, towering above us on the slope, apparently invulnerable, with the most massive tusks I had ever seen. For an instant I wondered if I had met my fate, and if this seemingly bullet-proof monster was going to kill me. At my third frontal shot, however, the beast slowly turned, and we saw that the 400 bullets had at last done their work. To make doubly sure of so fine a trophy I ran up and put two more into him before he rolled heavily over, dead. I photographed him as he lay there. My bad shooting was rewarded by the largest tusk that I believe a white man has yet slain. The heavier tusk measured nine feet in length by twenty-five inches in circumference, and weighed one hundred and ninety-eight pounds, while the total of the pair was three hundred and seventy-two pounds. These magnificent trophies are

seen in the centre of the photograph on the next page.

A few days later, while hunting in a dense patch of jungle, an offshoot of the great Congo forest, I had a lucky escape. The natives had been extremely loath to produce a guide for this forest belt, though they were keen enough to assist me in shooting elephant and antelope on the grassy plains. Their reluctance naturally



THIS IS BELIEVED TO BE THE LARGEST TUSKER EVER SHOT BY A WHITE MAN.

From a]

MAN.

[Photo.

increased my curiosity to see what the depths of the wood concealed; so as soon as I discovered that my guide was deliberately skirting the edge, by the aid of my compass I took the lead. Before long the sight of fresh antelope tracks rewarded me, and I was pressing on with the greatest caution, eyes fixed on the path ahead, when suddenly the earth gave way under my feet and I felt myself sinking. I knew not where! Next moment I was wedged in a narrow cleft, with earth and sticks raining down on my head. I had fallen into a V-shaped

game pit, eight feet deep, but, happily for me, there were none of the customary sharpened stakes in the bottom to make doubly sure of a trapped beast, otherwise my plight would have been a sorry one. As it was, although my rifle had been jerked out of my hand as I fell and my field-glasses were torn off, neither they nor I were any the worse. But this method of travelling was somewhat too adventurous, so the native guide received orders to keep close behind and warn me when we drew near a trap.

A very necessary precaution it proved, for the place was simply riddled with carefully-concealed pits, great iron-pointed logs suspended over the path to fall on one at the least touch, and snares of all shapes and sizes, from a little switch bent down to trap a tiny dik-dik, to stout saplings fit to jerk a sturdy antelope off its legs.

We were now in the Lendu country. A

curious characteristic of the women of this tribe is their method of lip adornment. Some wear a quill, three or four inches long, projecting from the upper lip to stand well above the nose, while in place of it others affect a shorter crystal pencil, with another hanging from the lower lip.

The neighbouring tribe, the Babila, have another and different method of "adorning" their mouths. The upper lip is pierced and the hole gradually extended till a disc of wood over two inches across can be inserted. The

native explanation of this custom is that a great chief ordered it, to give his women such a hideous appearance that his enemies would have no inclination to carry them off. That the precaution is eminently calculated to serve its purpose will be observed from the annexed photograph of a Babila belle.

Both these peoples possess a bad reputation for cannibalism, more especially the Babila. Poisoning was formerly rife among the tribe, and it was a most ordinary occurrence to administer a deadly draught to an enemy, or to a member of the community who looked peculiarly toothsome. The women would then dig up the corpse at dead of night, wash it in the river, and a horrible feast ensued. Even recently

stragglers from caravans have been known to mysteriously disappear, and rumour has it that they have found their way into some Babila cooking-pot.



IN THE CENTRE ARE THE TUSKS OF THE ELEPHANT SHOWN ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE—THE LARGER ONE WAS NINE FEET LONG, AND THE PAIR WEIGHED TOGETHER THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-TWO POUNDS.

From a Photo.



A BABILA BELLE — THE EXTRAORDINARY LIP "ORNAMENT" IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN DEvised BY A CHIEF TO MAKE HIS WOMEN-FOLK SO HIDEOUS THAT NO ENEMY WOULD WANT TO CARRY THEM OFF! *From a* [Photo.]

(To be continued.)