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SOMALILAND

BEING

An Account of Two Expeditions into the Far Interior

TOGETHER WITH

*A COMPLETE LIST OF EVERY ANIMAL AND BIRD KNOWN
TO INHABIT THAT COUNTRY, AND A LIST OF THE
REPTILES COLLECTED BY THE AUTHOR*

BY

C. V. A. PEEL

FELLOW OF THE ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY, MEMBER OF THE OXFORDSHIRE
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY AND FIELD CLUB, ETC.



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CHAPTER VII.

Tracks of elephants—Charged by a rhinoceros—Shikari wounded—
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I STARTED from Bun Feroli at 4 a.m., and pitched for the mid-day rest near some bitter-water wells, at which herds of camels were getting their monthly drink. Here my headman, of course, wanted to stay for the day; but I was determined to get away to fresh air, and marched on. In the evening I killed a sheep for the men, to show them how to do it in a humane way, as I was perfectly disgusted with the manner in which they butchered the poor brutes. After I had killed the sheep, the men utterly refused to eat it because they had not killed it themselves!

From cleanliness in sheep-killing, I pass to cleanliness in teeth-cleaning, where the Somalis, in their turn, beat us hollow. They are for ever rubbing at their teeth with a green stick, which they cut from a thorn-tree. This renders their teeth magnificently white. The stick, although green to the core, is perfectly tasteless and harmless. I noticed that my men, fearing Gallas, carried their rifles more than usual about this time, instead of allowing the camels to carry them. They had carelessly burst four of their rifles, and knocked off the sights of some half-dozen. They had broken nearly all my tent-pegs, and an extra strong mallet bound with iron had been reduced by them into matchwood. They got at my tool-roll one day, but I rescued it before they had got further than breaking a pair of pincers and two large gouges.

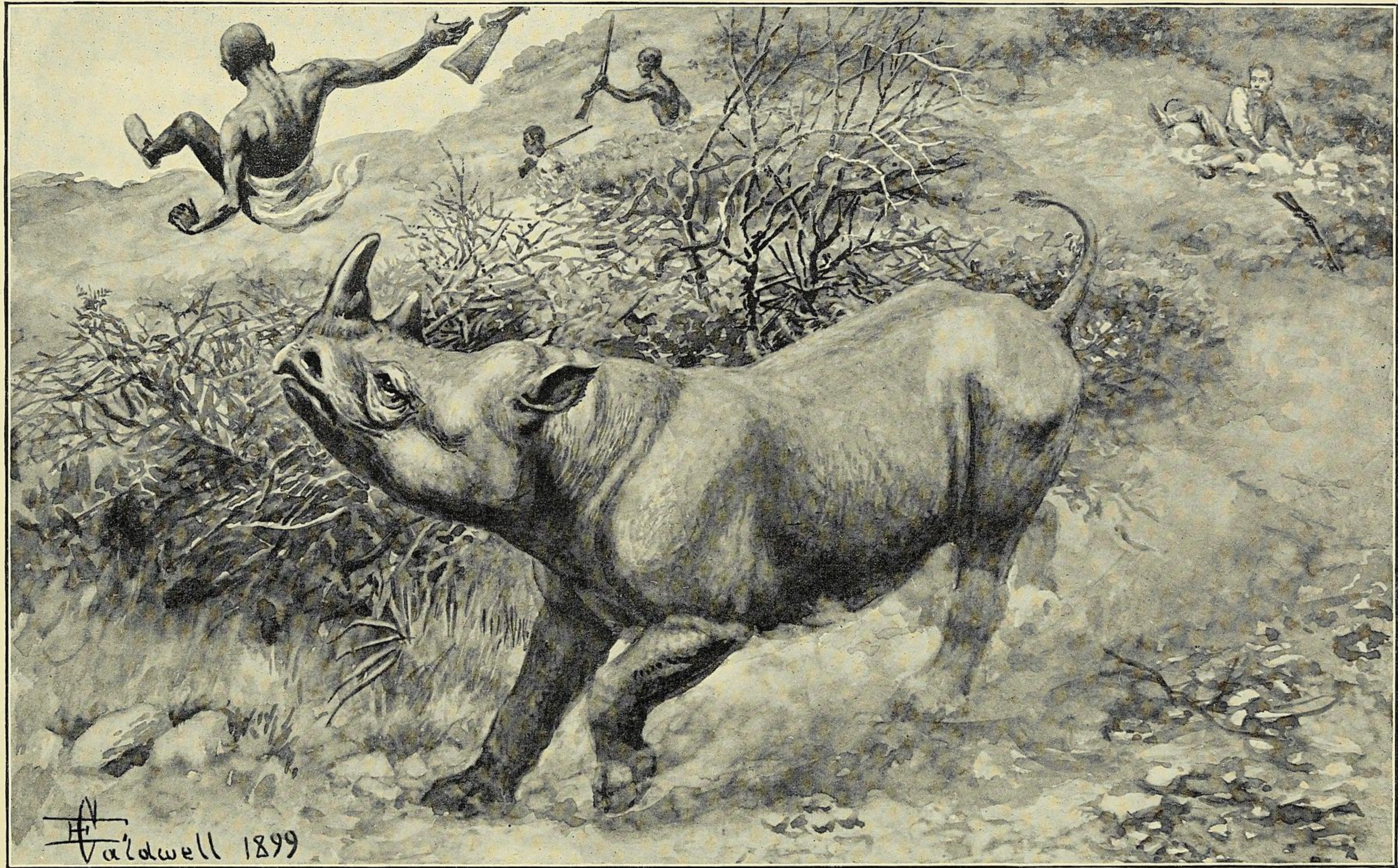
We encamped at 3.45 p.m. on stony ground, at a place

called Gonsali. I hoped that we had at length got rid of the villages for some time to come. I must not forget to mention a very dangerous practical joke played on villagers by my men. When approaching a 'woolidge,' and seeing some Somalis quietly watching their flocks and herds, they would rush at them, shouting at the top of their voices; they would then kneel down and point their rifles at them, when the villagers would all run away as hard as they could go, leaving all their sheep, cattle, and camels to our tender mercies, believing us to be a raiding-party of the dreaded Abyssinians. As I feared the villagers might make it very warm for us by mistake some day, I soon put a stop to this nonsense.

That evening we saw the first spoor of an elephant, but several days old. Here we decided to remain before proceeding to Biermuddo (the Black Water Hole). A man brought us in some honey of most excellent flavour, which I bought for some tobacco. Next morning, piloted by our guide, we went out early to look for elephant spoor, near some wells of which he knew. We soon found the very old spoor of a large bull elephant, and plenty of fresh rhinoceros spoor. We went on, however, to visit a second well, before following any track. We walked up a dried-up river-bed for about a mile, until we came to a pool of water, round which were the tracks of some half-dozen 'rhinos' and a few old elephant tracks. We singled out what appeared to be a really fresh track, and followed it. The spoor soon left the river-bed, and we quickly lost it in the rocky ground bordering the channel. I was pottering about, trying to find the tracks again, when I caught sight of a rhinoceros, slowly walking through the thin bushes, about 300 yards from me, up a bank. I had with me half a dozen men and my two ponies, as I expected every day to fall in with elephants. Leaving three men and the ponies behind, I followed the rhinoceros, and presently saw the beast again fairly close. I began to stalk him, making, however, a great noise in some thick bushes and on the stony ground.

The animal seemed to be walking very quickly, and I found it almost impossible to get along on the uneven ground, over little dried-up watercourses, interlaced with thorn branches. Suddenly coming over a small rise, I beheld, barely 20 yards away, with their backs towards me, not one, but two rhinoceros, one a large animal, the other a little smaller. I cocked the elephant rifle, and crouched along through the thorn-bushes until the big one, hearing us, suddenly turned sideways, held his head high in the air, cocked his ears, and snorted and sniffed loudly. Kneeling upon one knee, I aimed for the heart. Bang! The bullet struck him in the shoulder. There was a great snorting and rumbling of stones as I fired my second barrel at his retreating form, when, through the smoke, I became aware that the smaller animal of the two was charging down upon us. However, by some miracle we all dodged behind bushes, and he thundered off to follow his friend, my men letting off their Sniders, presumably at him, although in reality most of the muzzles were pointed up into the air! I loaded, and ran on the big one's blood-spoor, which was only too evident on the rocky ground. We soon found him, standing behind a bush, breathing heavily, when I took a steady aim and fired. It then became evident that the wounded beast meant to charge us. He tossed his head, and looked defiantly at us. He was standing on very rocky and uneven ground, thinly scattered here and there with 'wait-a-bit' thorn-bushes, on a steep slope 25 yards above us. Suddenly, with a shake of his ugly head, he made a most determined charge straight for the middle of the four of us.

Seeing him coming at a terrific pace, and so close upon us, I yelled, 'Fire!' and at the same instant fired the left-hand barrel of the big rifle I held in my hand. The next thing I remember was a huge dark head coming through the smoke. Whether I fell, jumped, or was thrown out of the way, I don't know, but I saw the huge beast dash past me, and felt the wind from his nostrils in my face. My



THE RHINOCEROS TOSSED HIM AT LEAST FIVE FEET UP INTO THE AIR.

[To face p. 99.]

second shikari and another man had thrown themselves behind a bush to the left. For a second after I was conscious of nothing but a huge cloud of dust and smoke, and a loud rumbling of stones. The next second I saw two men crouching behind bushes, but I was horrified to behold my head-shikari racing downhill, closely followed by the infuriated rhinoceros. I yelled out to the man to dodge. But straight on down the hill he kept, until he reached a bush, round which he appeared to stumble to the right, the rhinoceros gaining upon him at every stride. As the man stumbled, the rhinoceros, which, marvellous to relate, had turned the sharp corner with as much dexterity as the man, caught the poor fellow with his horn, behind, and tossed him at least 5 feet up into the air, my Express, which the man was carrying in his hand, going up perhaps double that height. My shikari, being a very heavy man, was turned literally head over heels in the air, and landed on the side of his head and shoulder, through a very thick thorn-bush, on the rough, stony ground, before the very nose of the rhinoceros, which had stood calmly waiting for him to fall. When the man fell he lay perfectly still on his side, and I quite gave him up for dead. The rhinoceros now commenced to give the man's head and side a series of terrific rams with his horn.

Although all this has taken a long time to tell, the events related all happened in a few seconds. Meanwhile all the men remained crouched behind trees, calling upon Allah to save the wretched shikari. Picking up my rifle as soon as I could, I rushed towards the huge brute as he was still butting at the man, yelling with all my might. I dared not fire at the animal, as his head touched the man, and as he stood below me I could see nothing else to fire at when he faced me, so, picking up some large stones, I threw them high, so as to land, if possible, on the animal's back, and not touch the man. At this he stopped mauling the man, and, raising his huge ugly head, stared at me, as though in doubt whether to charge me or not. I loaded quickly

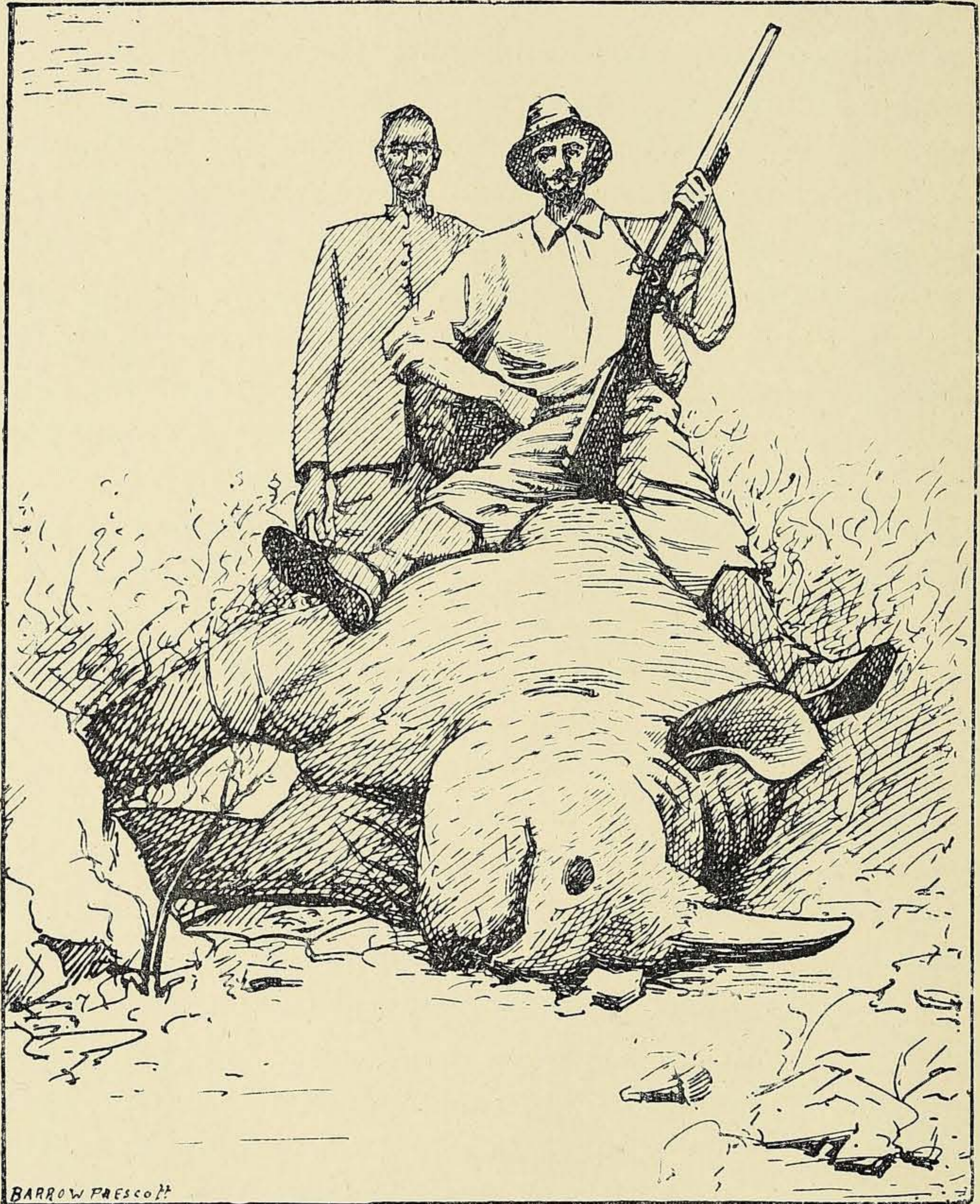
for him, and at length he made up his mind to bolt, and galloped away to the left. I fired both barrels at close quarters into his ribs, before he vanished in the thick bushes. I now rushed down to my shikari, when I was surprised to see him sit up, and I saw that blood was flowing from a large cut on the side of his head. He was utterly unconscious, and after stopping the flow of blood I left him with my water-bottle and two men, and rushed to avenge myself on the infuriated 'rhino.' About 100 yards off we found him behind a bush, standing above us, with his head towards us. This would never do; so retracing my steps, and making a short *détour*, I got behind a thick bush, with him broadside on. Fearing further disaster, I ordered a volley to be fired at him. All taking aim through the bushes, I said 'Fire!' at the same moment firing both barrels of my eight-bore simultaneously, and then picked up the Express. This moved him 50 yards further up the hill; stalking again, I got closer, and taking careful aim, we fired a second volley, which made the beast plunge about, but he did not shift his position. After this I waited a few seconds; then, seeing the game was nearly over, I advanced out into the open, within a few feet of him, and planted a ball in his neck. He still stood. I was aiming again, when, with two or three shakes of his ugly head, he fell heavily over on his side stone-dead. Thus died one of the most aggressive animals I have ever had to deal with, its great tenacity of life being simply marvellous. I counted eleven bullet-holes in his skin when dead, my first ball having gone right through his heart: how he survived this so long I cannot imagine.

I did not stop more than a minute looking at the great brute, but rushed back to find my shikari still unconscious, in the arms of the two men I had left with him. I examined his head, and found he had a frightful-looking cut, about 7 inches long, round the right side of his shaven head, the gaping wound displaying the bone of

the skull. On his temple, which was much swollen, he had a small indentation. He jabbered away, half in Somali, half in English, but what he was talking about it was difficult to know. We waited by him for a bit, as the blood had stopped flowing, when suddenly he regained consciousness, and I asked him where he felt it most. He replied, 'On my behind.' I turned him over, and found a small bruise only, where the horns of the 'rhino' had lifted him. He had a large bruise on his shoulder, which, however, was not broken. I had him carried home on a pony. When we got him home, the Somalis made a terrible din, jabbering nineteen to the dozen. The man's skull was not fractured, for I could get my finger right through the gaping cut and feel all along the bone of the skull. I pulled the sides of the cut together, sewed them up, and put strips of plaster across to keep them well together, the Somalis trying to spoil all my work by pushing a great piece of dirty wood into the wound, and then tying it round the patient's neck with a piece of string, offering up all the while a kind of prayer for his safe recovery. After breakfast I ordered a camel to be got ready, and started away to cut off some mementoes of my first rhinoceros. Thinking that the other rhinoceros might still be lurking about looking for its companion, I took the rifles with me. On reaching the dead animal, we found the inevitable vultures in hundreds round the corpse. I took some photographs of the animal, and with great difficulty the Somalis cut off his head, his four feet, his tail, and a large piece of his hide, and loaded the camel with the spoils. The length of the rhinoceros was 10 feet 2 inches and the girth 7 feet. The horns were short, $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches and $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches long respectively, and were very rounded at the tips, otherwise I think my shikari must have been killed.

Coming home, we found the track of a lion of the night before going to the water. I had a bathe in one of the 'wells,' and then went and dressed my shikari's wounds again before dark. The severance of the horns from the

head of the 'rhino' caused my men endless trouble, several of my tools being broken during the operation. At length I made them cease hacking at it with knives, etc., and sawed it off with a big saw in a minute. Of course they



AUTHOR ON DEAD 'RHINO.'

wanted two sheep killed in honour of the occasion. I had a row with my headman about the number of *tobes* he had got rid of in exchange for sheep, *harns*, etc. A *tobe* of *merikani*, or Massachusetts sheeting, is measured by a man's hand and arm to the elbow. Seven of these lengths

go to a *tobe*, or 'clothes.' Next morning I went down to the river-bed, Gonsali, to look for spoor. I walked along the river-bed for several miles, seeing old elephant spoor, some fresh 'rhino' spoor, and that of one or two lions. We next climbed a high hill, overlooking the river, from which we got a good view of the country, but saw no game.

I came home by a very rough route, through nullahs covered with rock and stones. In the river-bed I found some beautiful clear water in the hollows of the rock, at one of which I knelt down determined to have a good drink, when, ugh! I found it fearfully salt. The water in a 'well' near camp becomes perfectly black when agitated, and smells very strongly of soot. It was most disagreeable to wash in, and to drink it would have been certain death. Marvellous to relate! my rifle which my shikari threw up in the air when tossed by the rhinoceros escaped comparatively uninjured, with the exception of a few scratches and a large indentation of the file-like ridge running between the barrels.

In the afternoon I went out and had another long walk, but saw nothing. The day after we pottered about in the river-bed among a perfect maze of 'rhino' tracks, and after following one, which left the river, for upwards of four hours, we ultimately lost it in thick grass. Coming home, we saw a splendid cock ostrich, in beautiful plumage, and two hens, on a small piece of open ground, but, as usual, they made off before I could get within range of them. I found elephant spoor two days old all over the country, and sent my guide and pony after it, to see if he could make out where they had all cleared off to. Next morning we struck camp and marched to a place called Biermuddo (the Black Water Hole), over rough stony ground covered with the everlasting 'wait-a-bit' thorn-bushes and very little grass.

About 9 a.m., as we walked along, I saw some old wart hogs, with some squeakers; but just as I was in the act of taking my Express, I saw a larger pig-like animal, in the

shape of a huge rhinoceros. Exchanging my Express for the eight-bore, and getting behind some bushes, we crouched down to witness an extraordinary performance. The big beast had evidently got a whiff of our wind, for he careered about in a most alarming fashion, rushing up in this direction, and then turning and galloping off in that. At length he rushed straight for the very bush behind which I was concealed. I half turned round, and beheld my brave followers doing a 'guy' as hard as they could go. When the 'rhino' got almost up to the bush, I could wait no longer, but stood up and flourished my rifle in its face, when it turned sharp to the right and bolted. Taking aim off the shoulder, I fired the heavy gun as he galloped away, which caused him to spin round and round as hard as he could move five or six times, like a huge top, and kicking up clouds of dust. He then bolted off quietly into some thick bushes. Now came the most unpleasant part of dangerous game-shooting, *i.e.*, following wounded game in thick bush. However, after peering about in the bushes for a minute or two, we found the animal on the other side in the open, standing under a small thorn-tree. As I looked, he lay down and expired. The wart hog then reappeared close to the 'rhino's' body, and, taking a shot at a large boar, I was unlucky enough to hit a smaller one, which walked past its companion as I was in the act of pressing the trigger. It fell dead almost at the hind-feet of the 'rhino.' It possessed poor tusks. Running up to them, I found the 'rhino' a much larger beast than the first, and very much older. He measured 11 feet 6 inches from tip of nose to tip of tail, and his girth was 9 feet 6 inches. He had larger and more pointed horns than my first, the front horn, which was cracked, measuring $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches round the curve. I found I had made a very good shot behind the shoulder, the bullet probably penetrating the animal's heart. In the afternoon I photographed him, and on skinning him I found a large flattened spherical eight-bore bullet implanted between the skin and the flesh of his neck. How long it had been there

it was, of course, impossible to say, for the wound had healed up entirely. We took off his head, feet, tail, and part of his hide as trophies of the great beast, and left his huge carcase for the vultures.

The whole of the next day we found ourselves among a labyrinth of 'rhino' tracks, and followed two, both of which, however, got our wind, and went crashing through the bushes before us. The heat was very great, my thermometer registering 122° in the sun. Early on the following morning I found a rhinoceros lying down under a thorn-bush in very open ground. I had had enough of 'rhinos' at close quarters, so tried a long shot and missed, when he jumped up, and stood broadside and stared at us. I could not load quick enough, however, owing to the stiff action of my gun, and he thundered off. We followed the track for upwards of twenty minutes, when we suddenly came upon him standing broadside in thick bushes. I caught him a good smack in the side, but he wheeled round, and went off very fast, nodding his head up and down as he went. There was not much blood to follow, except under some trees, where he had evidently stood to listen. On reaching the top of a stony hill, we spied him walking quickly along at the bottom. We ran down the hill as fast as we could after him, and soon saw him again, running and dodging round the bushes. After this we lost him and his track altogether. I then walked up to the top of a small rise, to have a look round. Below me stretched a circular valley, or huge pit, four or five miles in diameter, like a huge extinct volcano crater, covered with very thick thorn-bushes, and surrounded by short but steep and rocky hills. The rocks were piled one upon another in huge fantastic shapes. There was not a breath of wind, and not a sound to be heard. The place looked weird and uncanny in the extreme. Presently I perceived below me two oryx glide softly from behind some bushes, and vanish again in the thick bush, like two gray spectres.

Leaving the pony behind, and telling my shikari to carry

my Express, I descended the hill into the crater covered with thick bush. When at the bottom, we could not see more than 10 yards ahead of us in the most open places. However, by tracking we soon found the oryx quite close to us, and I began to walk over the stony ground in tennis shoes and on tiptoe towards them. Not a sound could be heard. I was getting very near them, and was in the act of stretching out my hand for my rifle, when, on crouching cat-like round a bush, I suddenly became aware of an enormous head and horns about 3 feet from my face, and realized that I had literally walked into the face of a huge rhinoceros, which was standing under a bush within an arm's length of me, perfectly rigid. My shikari, who was carrying my rifle behind and a little to the left of me, stood with open mouth, as if petrified. I gave one glance at his horror-stricken face, and another at the ugly 'mug' of the 'rhino,' and then backed slowly away from the huge beast round a bush. When I turned round to grasp my rifle, I caught a glimpse of my shikari running hard away on tiptoe through the bushes with my rifle, gesticulating and pointing back towards the rhinoceros. This made me turn round again, when I beheld the rhinoceros slowly advancing upon me without a sound, having evidently got my wind when I was almost touching him. It was now my turn to run, and my name was 'Walker' until I had reached my men and snatched up my big rifle, when I again went to the attack; but look as I did all over, I failed to see him or his tracks anywhere, and at length stood and rubbed my eyes, to see if I was dreaming or had seen a phantom. On opening my eyes again, I sighted the same two oryx close to me, and had again begun to stalk them, when my shikari suddenly stopped, and, looking as if he had seen a ghost, whispered, 'The rhino!' There, sure enough, about 20 yards off, stood the rhinoceros, which seemed to haunt us like a huge demon. Before I could attempt to raise my rifle, I felt myself violently clutched by the arm, and dragged off at a great pace by my now utterly terrified shikari, in spite of

my struggles and curses in an undertone upon his head. Nothing would now induce him to return, as he kept saying: 'Leave lone, sahib—leave lone. It am de debil—you no kill him!' I turned round, and, reluctantly followed by my other men (my shikari remaining behind with the pony), I again sought the phantom 'rhino.' I soon discovered him musing under a thorn-bush some few yards below me. Taking careful aim for his shoulder, I was in the act of pressing the trigger, when he whisked round, and without a sound vanished into the bushes in an instant. This was more than my men could stand. On looking round, I perceived that the superstitious devils were all taking to their heels as if for life. I never saw the phantom 'rhino' again, and didn't want to, for, although I am by no means superstitious as a rule, it was a curious fact that this animal, which I saw three times, never made the slightest sound, and we could find no spoor of him, perhaps owing to the rocky nature of the ground. We left the wild and uncanny spot, and reached camp as the sun was setting.