

THE  
KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS  
CHRONICLE.

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1911.

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## ON SAFARI IN BRITISH EAST AFRICA.

BY SIR CLAUDE CHAMPION DE CRESPIGNY.

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ON August 17th, 1905, the Commissioner's party of five left for a "Safari," which had been anticipated for some little time with no little pleasure, though for Sir Donald himself a considerable amount of duty was blended with it—inspecting stations, their accounts, police, etc., settling boundaries, receiving chiefs with their followers, and numerous and various presents, the latter of which included enough live stock to set up a menagerie.

The principal chiefs were Karuni, Murad, and Kabala Bala, the latter being as fine a specimen of fighting Masai as I have ever clapped eyes upon, a leader who would instil the most implicit confidence in his followers had he the chance of leading a forlorn hope or a second Balaclava charge. To this day they talk of his indomitable courage when, after being left for dead with his skull smashed in, eye kicked out, lower part of ear cut off, he crawled—travelling by night, for many nights subsisting on sugar-cane—back to his native kraal.

A party of friends awaited us at the drive leading up to the "Homestead," and waved us *bon voyage*. Our next check was at the admirably arranged farm of Messieurs Felix and Faure, which showed every indication of a most prosperous future, on to our first camp at Kiambu. In the evening we tried for duck, but only got a ducking, as rain came down in torrents.



CAMP IN THE TANA FOREST.

Our "Safari" lasted five weeks, and took us over a great variety of ground. It would be useless to go through it in detail, as much of the country has not been mapped, and the camping grounds, which were logged, were mainly local names.

The *crème de la crème* of the shooting was expected on the trans-Tana plains, and such proved to be the case; but you must not judge of what we did kill by what we might have killed. Our grandchildren have to be thought of, so our licences limit us, among other things, to two rhinos, one bull buffalo, and one bull eland. There are heavy penalties for making mistakes, some of which are extremely difficult to avoid, with forfeiture of trophies. In long grass, etc., it is at times almost impossible to distinguish the sexes, especially in the case of single beasts. Should you come across a herd of elands, there is not much difficulty in picking out the bulls, as they are so much bluer in colour.

The best of Italian sportsmen, the Marquis of Pizzardi, who joined us for a day or two, had recently made a mistake in killing a barren cow buffalo, which he at once reported in the most honourable, sportsmanlike manner. He had, of course, to pay his fine, and there was a good deal of friendly badinage over it, but he was greatly pleased when the Commissioner said he might keep the head. If an old Shikari, like him, makes a genuine mistake, how much more liable would a man of lesser experience! I have rarely come across a better sportsman. He left the Italian Cavalry to kill the man who had killed his brother, and I shall hope to see him in London, as he has accepted an invitation for a night at the National Sporting Club. This, apparently, he thinks may prove somewhat insipid, as he is particularly anxious to witness an old-fashioned knuckle-fight.

Our Askaris have wonderful sight, and love their

masters to fire at something, and as they do not have to pay the fines, are not very particular at what, especially as they invariably get as much as they want of the flesh, of which they can consume huge quantities. In fact there is a tradition that one described a kongoni, which weighs at least 150lbs., as an unsatisfactory sort of a beast, being "rather too much for one man to eat, but not enough for two."

On one occasion we saw a head poking out of some long grass, which my gun-bearer solemnly affirmed was a bull buffalo, so I took up a position on a slight incline, sending three or four men—we generally had some porters handy to carry in the game—to beat up to me. Soon I could see the high grass waving as some big beast advanced towards me, and then out came, within easy shot, a cow-rhino and calf. Of course, as she did not charge me, I did not fire.

Close to this spot I shot a bush buck. It lay on the ground apparently dying. When my Askaris went up to cut its throat it sprang up, and with difficulty staggered into some high grass close by, the three of us plunging in after it, when out rushed three rhinos, one of my Askaris throwing himself into a hollow in the ground to avoid having daylight drilled through him.

My son and I were each charged twice, and I think that two of the rhinos were as close as they well could be without serious, if not fatal, damage.

On the first occasion the A.D.C. was riding across an almost dry water bed to join Mr. Slaney and myself, as a lion had just been viewed ahead, when a savage grunt in the long grass just enabled his horse to swerve in time to avoid the charge, the horn missing the rider's leg by two or three feet.

The rhino having ascended a hill towards some plains, I galloped after it on the hurdle-racer, Mary, hoping





SHOT NEAR THE MELANA RIVER, B.E.A.

to make rings round it till the others came up with their rifles, but, unfortunately, he turned sharp round to the left into some impenetrable jungle, and was lost to us.

That afternoon we had some remarkably good guinea-fowl shooting at Elder's Camp, where we met Mr. Swift, a settler, looking none the worse for a really nasty fall, which he got in the Nairobi Steeplechase. As I passed him at the fourth fence from home he was lying flat on his face knocked out, and one foot hung up in the stirrup.

The next time we were charged we were close together, on the line of a wounded buffalo, when a cow and calf, which we had previously passed, moved from the scent of some porters, and came top speed bang into our party of ten. Of course we only had soft-nosed bullets in our rifles, which have, as a rule, about as much effect on a rhino as a peashooter. To within three paces she was coming straight at me, and I was just about to drop my rifle and play the amateur matador, when she swerved slightly to her left, which gave me the chance of a neck shot, of which, naturally, I was prompt to avail myself, and at two paces from the muzzle of my .303 she fell stone dead with her neck broken, the A.D.C. being about the same distance on the other side. Of course her poor little calf blindly charged in her wake, and a fool of an Askari shot it, though Col. Harrison shouted to him not to fire. This was a thousand pities, as it would have been worth many hundreds of pounds if it could have been reared by hand, which could have probably been done, as Chief Murad had a large herd of cows a few miles off.

The next occasion was not such a close affair, a rhino having spoilt my shoulder-shot by swinging its head towards me as I pressed the trigger, so my bullet only caused annoyance, and it charged. However,

another shot at thirty yards, followed by a solid **from** my jungle gun at fifteen, and the gallant beast bit **the** dust.

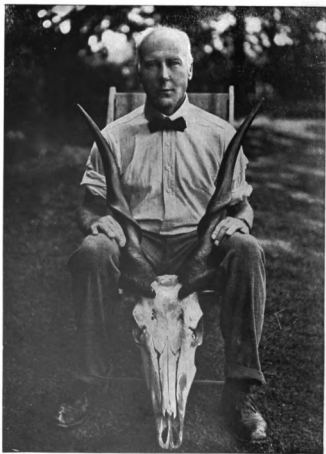
If you are wrong for the wind, a rhino's sense of smell is marvellous. On one occasion the A.D.C. and I, when riding alone after eland, saw a rhino lying in the grass on the farther side of a valley. When we were fully a quarter of a mile off it suddenly got our wind, sprang up, and made off. They are almost blind, their eyes being of hardly any service to them beyond a very few yards' range.

The last rhino which I shot must have winded our mixed bag of porters at least half a mile off, which, if you only knew them, would not surprise you; they are highly pungent.

Then, again, if you are down wind it is surprising how close you can get to them. On one occasion we suddenly came on a cow and a calf, when the A.D.C. crept close up to them with his camera, I standing over him with a rifle in case they charged, and he got quite a good snapshot before they winded us and bolted in the opposite direction.

Some time back I mentioned the vitality of a bush buck. All the gazelles possess it to an extraordinary extent. As an example, one day the A.D.C. knocked over a fine impalla, with, so far as one can judge, a beautifully placed bullet just over the shoulder-blade, but it was hardly on the ground before it was up and off. In answer to his shout, "Try and cut it off," I, being the better mounted, did my best for fully four miles over rough ground, the blood pouring down both its shoulder-blades. As the impalla in no way slackened its pace, and I had lost my party, and was riding directly from our camp, I reluctantly reined up. No doubt when the wounded beast once laid down it would get stiff and become food for hyenas, etc. Riding my





SHOT BETWEEN KANAN AND MERANGA, TANA FOREST.

own heelway, and using a powerful whistle, I eventually met my party. It is no joke getting lost in the jungle without food or water; but it is worse still if you take a toss and lose your horse, which is just as likely to join the first herd of zebra it comes across—and there are plenty of them—for it is improbable that a search party would be sent out till the following morning. A horse did this at Naivasha, about five weeks before Nairobi races, and it was a month before he was caught, and uncommonly lean he was, too, about the ribs. Nevertheless, much to our astonishment, judiciously ridden by his owner, Mr. Seymour, late 3rd Hussars, he won his race.

Naturally there is very little twilight under the equator, so if you mistake your distance from camp it is easy to find yourself let in for a long, rough ride over ground, nearly, though not quite, so bad as where we were pig-sticking last year in Morocco. The acumen of the horses in picking their way, hardly ever putting a foot wrong, proves them to be a long way in front, in intelligence, of many so-called Christians.

Of one rough ride I have a vivid recollection, though it was a daylight one, but the A.D.C. had to do it some hours afterwards in the dark. After a long stalk he had got a magnificent buffalo with a clean shot through the throat.

He remained with it while I rode off to the camp, many miles off, for porters, piloted by a Kikuyu guide. After going for about a mile I came across a herd of eland, headed by a real "monarch of the glen," which I fortunately got in one shot. Our lucky star must have been in the ascendant that day, as we got a rhino, a buffalo, and an eland, all with single shots, and all with soft-nosed .303's. I think that eland will prove to be a Tana record, though Mr. Jackson killed one of better measurement near Mount Kilimanjaro, which is

to German East Africa what Kenya is to British. We had some splendid views of the latter when in the Nyeri district.

Kenya was climbed a few years ago, with the greatest difficulty, by some members of the Alpine Club.

Continuing my ride, I eventually reached camp, having left an Askari with the dead eland; but as it was then long past lunch-time, I knew that those who were left out with the game, and those who were despatched to bring it in, could not possibly be back till long after sundown; so as soon as it was dark I kept a big fire going, and at intervals coloured rockets were sent up. We could just hear the A.D.C. answer them with shots from his revolver. However, all duly arrived after a hard day's work.

A wart-hog is another gallant beast, which will, at times, carry away an enormous amount of lead, and go for you if wounded. As an example, one afternoon we were on our way to try for hippopotami. Three jumped up in long grass and started to race past us. I, being at the time eighty yards behind the A.D.C., cut the throat of one, who rolled over without a motion—a fluky shot. The A.D.C. wounded a sow, who at once charged the gun-bearer standing to his right; a second shot made an awful mess of her shoulder, but did not stop her; but a third through her head killed her stone dead at the gun-bearer's feet.

We had two charming dogs out with us, known as "Jack" and "Toto," belonging to Mr. Hyde Baker, a nephew of Sir Samuel of that ilk, the great traveller and game shot. Mr. Baker being on leave in England, they were left in charge of the A.D.C. "Jack" has been a great fighter in his day, and has many honourable scars. He has been mauled both by lion and leopard, and a tope once drove its horn in by the back ribs, travelling along the body, and coming out behind the



THE HALL AT CHAMPION LODGE.



shoulders. Notwithstanding these vicissitudes, such is his strength, that if once he can pin a wart-hog in an earth, and a man can grip his hind legs, out come both dog and pig.

His various encounters have made him a little less reckless than in his salad days, for I noticed on one occasion, when I had rolled over rather a fine Neumann hartebeeste, two hundred yards from the column, out dashed the dogs, for the word "discipline" was not in their vocabulary. The old campaigner allowed his younger and less experienced companion to seize, with the courage of ignorance, the wounded antelope by the throat, while he worried at the other end.

The amount of game of various species which we could kill was practically unlimited, the waterbuck being distinctly the grandest; but, unless we wanted a particular trophy, we waited till we got fairly close to our new camping ground, as the porters had first to carry their 60lb. load from camp to camp, and then go back to carry in the venison, of which they invariably received a liberal portion.

We had no luck with the lions; in fact, not a shot was fired at one. In addition to the one seen by Mr. Slaney, we saw a lioness and cub at the end of our march half a mile from mile-post 400 on the Uganda Railway, but before the mounted men could get up to her she had disappeared in the bush.

Our big-game bag consisted of eight rhino, one hippo., three buffalo, and four eland. I was allowed a third rhino, as the one which gratuitously charged us had poor horns, and was only shot in self-defence, and I was lucky to get the hippo., my first bullet catching it above the nostrils, and the second under the eye, which turned its feet upwards at once. If you only mortally wound them, and they sink, they take, sometimes, many hours to rise, and you lose them if on the

march. This happened at Meranga, where Sir Donald got his only rhino. My son and I pumped no end of lead into the head of an obviously dying hippo. The next morning the natives reported that there was not one dead; but as we had marched they had probably eaten it, as they fight like wolves over the flesh, or, maybe, they were afraid to cross to a shallow hidden in an island, for on my return a week later the number of vultures perched on adjoining trees indicated that a carcase was close by.

Some of our dishes might astonish whomsoever may be the successor of the great Soyer, of Crimean fame—such as rhino and hippo-tail soup, ostrich-egg omelette, eland, and kongoni marrowbone, etc.

There can be no mistake about British East Africa being a grand country with a great future, and, if the present game regulations are strictly enforced, for many years to come a sportsman's happy hunting ground.

Personally, I may consider myself extremely fortunate, for, as a Government officer remarked to me, "During your five months' stay you have done far more in the way of sport than I have in five years."

The pleasure I had derived from the excellent sport obtained during my trip in East Africa was sadly marred by the news of Sir Donald Stewart's death, which we received by cable on the voyage home.

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