



"POSED FOR ITS PHOTOGRAPH IN THE MOST DOCILE MANNER IMAGINABLE"

WITH THE WHITE RHINOCEROS IN UGANDA

The Story of Two Mornings' Photography

By SIR B. H. BOURDILLON, K.C.M.G., K.B.E.

TO-DAY the northern race of white rhinoceros is found in a comparatively small area within the West Nile District of Uganda and the Yei District of the Sudan. The total number in these two districts is probably in the neighbourhood of 250, but there is every reason to suppose that the strict measures now taken for their protection will result in an increase in that number. Their shooting has been entirely prohibited in Uganda since 1923, and very heavy penalties both of fine and imprisonment are laid down for the person who in any way molests or terrifies them.

It therefore behoves anyone who wishes to photograph them or study their habits, to proceed with considerable caution, since to shoot one in self-defence, actual or imagined, would, in view of their inoffensive nature, be to provide incontrovertible proof that they had been unduly molested. Whether they were ever as cantankerous as the black rhinoceros is open to doubt. In any case, the protection afforded them in the last few years has had the most satisfactory results, as the following account of two mornings spent in photographing them will show.

On a morning in February, I disembarked from the steamship Lugard at a point a few miles south of Rhino Camp, and proceeded, armed with a Cine Kodak and a Leica camera with a long focus lens and a stereoscopic attachment for the ordinary lens, to a camp some two-and-a-half hours inland in the close vicinity of which there were reported to be eleven white rhino. Half an hour before the camp we left the track, and within ten minutes came upon five or six rhino in typical scrub country. They took no notice of us until we were within 100yds. of them, when they moved off in two groups, and we followed two of them who appeared less perturbed than their comrades. Eventually they stood in full view of us at a distance of 25yds. by the range-finder on my Leica, and posed for their photographs in the most docile manner imaginable.

Having taken as many photographs as we wanted, we shouted at them in order to get some action for a cine picture, and they trotted amiably off, only to halt again within 100yds. Neither of them appeared quite full grown or had good horns; so we decided to follow the other lot in the hope of getting a photograph of a better head. We soon found them, but there were no big horns among them, so I contented myself with a few stereoscopic photographs and we left them and went on to the camp.

The next morning, as soon as the light was good enough for photography, we left the camp, and within half an hour came on a small group, who made off when we got within 100yds. I was going to follow them, when the District Commissioner, who was with me, pointed to a large bush about

10yds. away, through which a large grey mass was distinctly visible.

We waited a few moments, when out trotted a small calf, not much more than 3ft. high to the shoulder, followed by a large cow. The latter, unfortunately, went straight away from us, presenting to the camera only a large stern with a small tail curled like a pig's above it, but as she moved from side to side we could see that she had a very large horn, sloping downwards. The cow and calf

30yds., showing no signs of emotion other than curiosity.

Finally I stood out in the open and whistled, whereupon they proceeded to advance slowly. When they came to within fifteen yards I decided that they were quite close enough and "shoo'd" them off, when they turned and trotted slowly away, looking back occasionally as if regretting that their advances had been repulsed.

After waiting half an hour or so we decided to try to get a good picture of the big cow. She and her companions were only a short distance away, settling down under the shade of a big tree. A small bull was out in the open, giving a splendid target for the camera, the others behind the tree with the big cow's horn just protruding. The lower horn, curving downwards instead of upwards, was a good 40in. in length, the upper horn being very thick at the base, longer than usual and up-turned instead of straight.

I waited for a few minutes in full view of the bull, hoping that curiosity would induce the cow to show herself, but none of them moved, so I and my orderly carrying the Cine Kodak moved across a few yards of open space to our left. The bull promptly turned round and faced us, and the cow came out. I got one fair photograph and was waiting to get one in full profile when the bull put his head down and trotted towards me.

With more haste than dignity I stepped back to my old position while my companions shouted and waved their arms to turn the bull. The only result was to scare the other four who came out following the bull blindly and the whole five scampered past us within ten yards. My orderly had foolishly not followed me but stayed where he was, and they went past him on both sides, just avoiding the clump of bushes in which he was standing. A game guard who was with us was just about to fire, but I hastily shouted "Usipiga!" (Don't shoot!) and he let them go.

As the bull had not followed me when I stepped back it was quite clear that he was not really charging, and no one, not even the orderly, was in any danger. Nevertheless it was an exciting moment, and had any party in similar circumstances shot the bull they could have well have been excused for honestly thinking the shot necessary in self-defence. They would, none the less, have deserved a thoroughly severe penalty, as the "charge" was obviously the result of over-eagerness to secure a good photograph of an unusual head.

I felt somewhat conscience stricken, and we unanimously decided that we must make no more effort to get a picture of the old cow. The moral obviously is that photographers should be exceed-



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joined the others, making seven in all, and they made off at a fair pace.

As they were restless and had not settled down for their midday halt we decided to give them an hour in which to do so, and sat down to wait in the shade. Two of the herd, however, separated themselves, and as they were standing quite placidly a short distance away, I decided to try a few more stereoscopic pictures. They let us come to within

ingly careful when approaching a group containing a young calf, or a cow in calf; with a small party (two or three at most) and plenty of patience, good pictures should be obtainable, but the attempt must be abandoned at the first sign of restlessness.

It would be a tragedy if one of these rare beasts were killed, in real or imagined self-defence, just when the measures for their protection are proving so successful.