

INCIDENTS OF AFRICAN BIG-GAME HUNTING. — PART I.

BY SIR HENRY SETON-KARR, C.M.G. ILLUSTRATED BY R. CATON WOODVILLE, AND WITH PHOTOGRAPHS.



Yours truly
Henry Seton Karr

THE great variety of wild animal life in Africa makes that great dark continent almost the most attractive field in the world for the naturalist and the hunter. The African antelope tribe, for example, in its numbers and the beauty and variety of horned trophies that it yields, is equalled in no other continent under the

sun. But it is of the great pachyderms, the elephant, the rhinoceros, and the hippopotamus, and of the buffalo—perhaps the most dangerous, and, to the hunter, the most attractive animal of the lot—I would now recall some hunting reminiscences.

The main attraction of elephant hunting is ivory. Sooner or later, unless in very strictly preserved districts, this will cause extinction of the largest and most unique wild animal on earth. Alas, that it should be so. But ivory is increasing in value, and we live in a commercial age. Near settlements and cultivation the elephant is also a nuisance. No fence can stop him, any more than it can stop a locomotive or a traction engine, and whole fields of mealies can, and have been destroyed by elephant in a single night. It is extraordinary how an elephant can hide himself in his jungle home. A friend of mine once found a cow elephant's trunk waving over his head before he saw the animal itself in a thick cedar forest. Cow elephants are sternly protected by law in British East Africa, and so the hunter in this case crouched like a beetle under a bush until the elephant thought fit to retire. They do not usually attack unless wounded, but one can never be certain. Hence the thrilling excitement of the sport. I once spent a whole day in a cedar forest following fresh elephant tracks, and once even heard

their internal rumble without catching sight of a shootable bull. Another marvellous elephant attribute is his power of disappearing without sound and simply vanishing away, in a manner almost uncanny in a beast about 10 feet high and several tons in weight. Also he thinks nothing of travelling forty miles in a night to raid a mealie patch.

The rhino is a size smaller than the elephant, and carries no ivory. But he is another old-world, attractive beast to the hunter, yielding an interesting horned trophy and a valuable skin. My first wild rhino in British East Africa was feeding along a bush-surrounded ravine. We were after a water-buck at the time, that we had seen across the valley feeding under some trees on the far side. I was making my way through breast-high grass and jungle towards the buck, when Sam, my Somali gun-bearer, suddenly whispered "Rhino," at the same time pointing eagerly towards the bottom of the ravine below us. With some difficulty I made out the back and ears of a large rhino, as the beast moved slowly up the ravine, and presently fed out of sight. We gradually moved forward, expecting every moment to get a view and a shot. But the grass was thick and high, the ravine deep. I got within ten yards of the spot I had last seen the rhino, but could neither hear nor see a sign of life. This is one of the curious features of African jungle hunting. One may be close to some great wild, and possibly dangerous, beast, and yet know nothing of his presence until he is almost stepped on. There is a favourite yarn told of some well-known hunter, that he used to get close up to an elephant or rhino, and them slap them, as one might a horse, on the hind-quarters, with a "Come over there," so as to get a fair chance of a shot in the right spot. To return to our rhino, I gradually edged down through thick long grass, rifle in hand, almost to the edge of a deep cutting or ravine, hoping every moment to get a shot at our thick-skinned friend. I knew the rhino must either be within a few yards, or else have made up the bottom of the ravine and so out of ken. To meet this contingency I moved yard by yard to the right. Then came a snort like a steam-exhaust, and a distinctly angry squeal, almost at our feet, and out on the far side of the cutting or dip rushed an indignant rhino, evidently full of fight. He turned straight for us, not twenty yards away, having got our wind. The next moment he died, with a dramatic suddenness that was almost disappointing. I had the easiest possible chance at the point of his shoulder, and a single solid bullet from my double '465 Holland rifle killed with a rapidity and a cleanness that was an eloquent tribute to the death-dealing powers of

the modern cordite rifle. As the ground was too rough and the cover too quick for active movement on our part, there was nothing to be done but stand our ground and trust to the rifle. This is a golden rule for all tight corners with dangerous game, the corollary being that the hunter must be armed with a powerful rifle to which he is thoroughly accustomed. On examining the ground, I found that the rhino had, at one time, been within ten yards of us without our seeing him. A steep bank, under which he had been feeding, hid him completely from our sight. After admiring the weird ugliness of the great pig with horns—for such is a rough description of our African rhino—we left four natives to bring in his head, feet, and slabs of his skin, and returned to camp.

The next day, curiously enough, I ran upon another rhino in a neighbouring valley in somewhat similar manner, in this case getting a running broadside shot across the same kind of ravine. Again the rhino died in the quickest and easiest manner, with a solid cordite-rifle bullet through shoulder and lungs. I was distinctly disillusioned regarding rhino. These two specimens had put up no fight at all, and had died in rapid and orthodox style. But it is not wise to generalise from one or two examples. Other hunters have told me that rhino can be extremely awkward and dangerous at times, occasionally charging headlong and unprovoked caravan, wagon, tent, or anything else in their way. But once their charge is avoided, they will continue straight ahead, and not turn and hunt a man in the vindictive and persistent manner of a buffalo.

Now for a word on buffalo hunting. The African buffalo is an animal for whom I have the profoundest respect. The hunting of him is always a stimulating and exciting form of sport, almost thrilling at times, and he yields one of the finest and most massive horned trophies in the world. He is far more intelligent than the rhino, very nearly as large and heavy, much harder to kill, in my experience, and more difficult to find and to approach. When wounded or annoyed, and he is easily roused, he attacks savagely and persistently, and has even been known to circle his own trail and lie in wait for his pursuer. In fact, he plays the game to perfection, and is a quarry well worthy of one's "steel," or rather bullet. Several fatalities have recently happened to buffalo hunters. Two foreign sportsmen, I hear, in Northern Rhodesia, following three wounded buffalo not long since, were suddenly attacked; one hunter was killed, and the other seriously, if not mortally, injured. Another hunter in British East Africa got into difficulties with a wounded



R. Caton Woodville

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buffalo, and the enraged animal charged and instantaneously killed one of his native boys just as he was in the act of climbing a tree.

The buffalo of East Africa know well what the sound of a rifle means, and, like the lion, are seldom found out of jungle, swamp, or long grass, except late at night or at early dawn. They have, in fact, been hunted a good deal, and therefore are more secretive, as well as more aggressive and dangerous, than in the old pioneer days when hunters were few and far between. Unlike the lion, however, they must feed at frequent intervals, and can be found by the hunter who goes into ravine and long grass after them.

My first old bull buffalo I walked on to in long grass within five yards before I saw him. We were riding along the head of a valley one afternoon, hoping to find a herd coming out of cover for their evening graze, when suddenly we saw two buffalo in the trees half a mile away across the valley. Leaving our mules, we proceeded to stalk them through cover and long grass, in the course of which we presently came to a deep jungle-covered gully. The buffalo we had seen were about 200 yards away, on the far side and lower down the valley, but then out of sight. Rifle in hand, I scrambled down the gully, through grass and bush, and then climbed on all fours up the other side, my gun-bearer close at my shoulder. I remember well straightening up on the other side, on gaining comparatively level ground, thinking we had yet a 100-yards crawl or so for a shot. I took three cautious steps forward, and suddenly became aware of a huge old bull facing me, not five yards distant, as he lay apparently asleep in the long grass. His



The late Capt. Kinahan.

massive, curved, widely-sweeping horns were the first thing that caught my eye. I promptly fired a .465 bullet straight into his massive shoulder, aiming for the heart, my predominant feeling being one almost of pity for the grand old brute I thought to be so absolutely at my mercy. The next moment he had risen and vanished in the thick grass, thundering down the ravine with his companions with a rapidity marvellous in so large and bulky an animal.

Thinking it over afterwards, I was extremely thankful he had not charged us. Had he done so neither my gun-bearer nor myself could possibly have escaped, the quarters being so close and cramped. We followed a trail of blood for more than a mile—downhill—before we found him. My next sight of him was at 20 yards, as he charged savagely out of thick cover straight towards me. I remember a kind of creepy feeling up my scalp, as I put another bullet into his broad chest at 15 yards. It is a distinct and separate sensation of its own suddenly to find the great animal you have been so laboriously hunting and spending yourself to get near, in a new character as the aggressor, apparently only too anxious to get at grips with you. Fortunately a buffalo bull



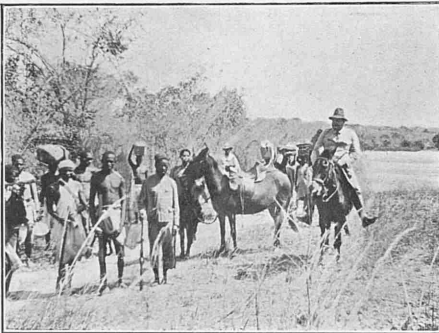
The Coal Strike.—Preparing the Stadium for the Queen's Park Rangers engagements of last week, owing to excursions for Park Royal being cancelled on account of coal strike.

charges with his head up, leaving his great breast a fair mark for the rifle bullet. Even his great vitality was unable to withstand a first shot in the chest, followed by a second barrel at 10 feet through the brain. As I admired his massive proportion, and deep sweeping horns, 45 inches in span and 15 inches in breadth of solid horn across the bosses as he lay dead at my feet, I thought, here is a splendid creature well worth the hunting and also the preserving. Long may his species survive to add interest and piquancy to the wild life and the hunting of Africa. But nothing of him was wasted. I took the head, horns, and skin, the boys ate the meat. We had the tongue and marrow-bones for dinner.

(To be continued.)

THE LATE CAPT. C. E. KINAHAN.

THIS officer was most unfortunately killed the other day in a bush fight in the Anauk country, near the Abyssinian border of the Soudan. Capt. Kinahan was a fine athlete, and won the Hurdles at the Army Championships in 1909, besides twice reaching the A.A.A. Championships finals. He fostered athletics among the men of his regiment, the 7th Royal Irish Fusiliers, with enthusiasm.



An East African hunting party.



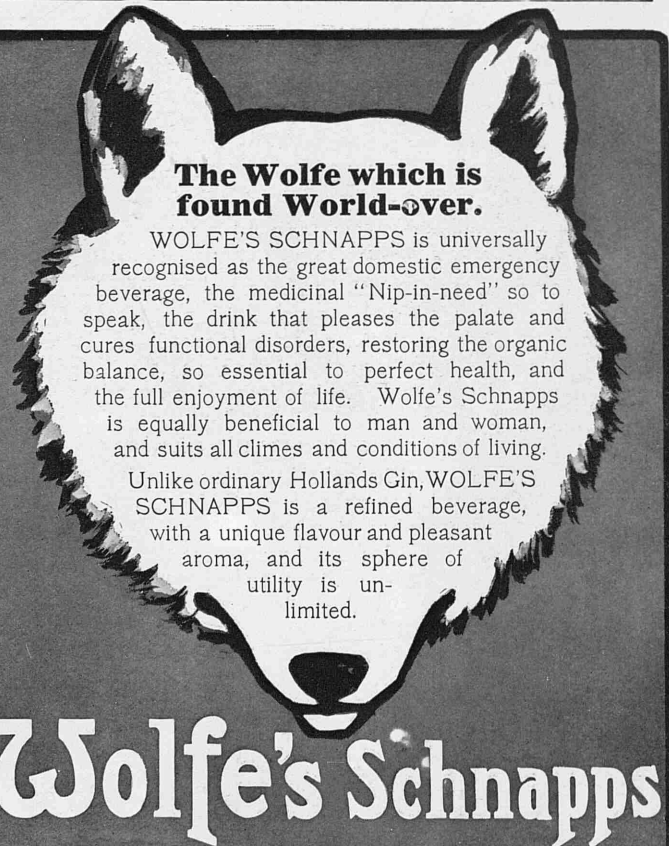
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