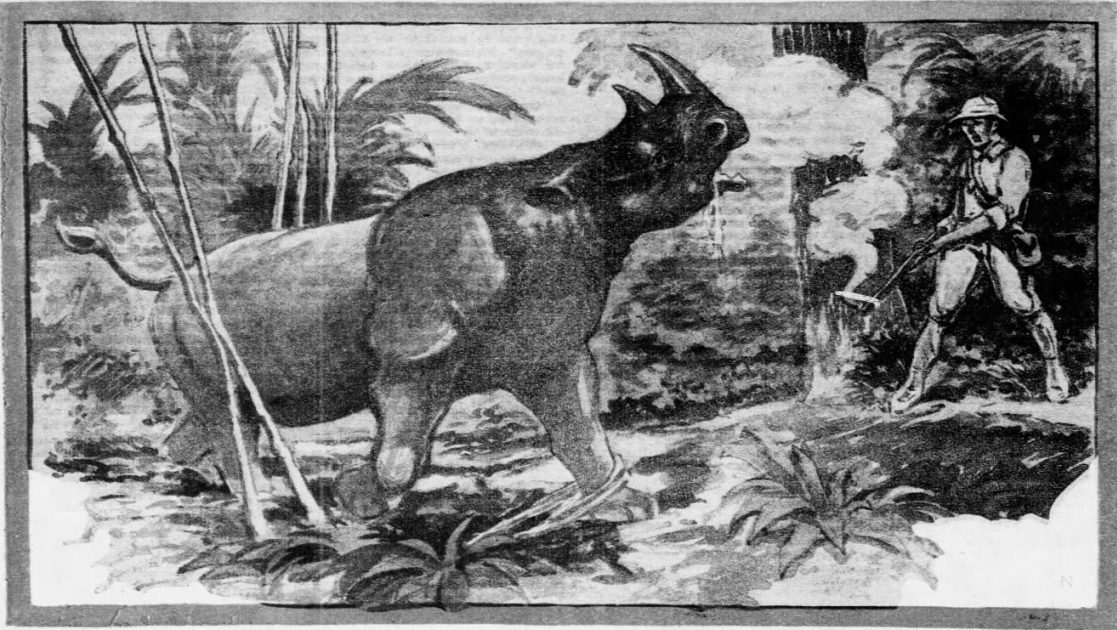


A Rhinoceros Hunt

By Charles Fredric Holder



For a moment he stood looking about, then seeing the smoke, lowered his head and dashed for me.



ONE of the most remarkable sights I ever witnessed," said an old hunter, "was in Africa some years ago. I was in the ivory trade—

that is, I was engaged in killing elephants for their tusks, a perilous but very profitable business.

"About fifty thousand of the huge beasts are killed every year for this purpose, and gradually they are becoming more and more difficult to find.

"It often happens that when this game is scarce, the rhinoceros is killed for its hide and for various purposes, and to my mind it is the most dangerous of all the large game.

"One day, when we were traveling slowly along under the hot sun, the men called my attention to a little bird that was flying about, and I soon saw that it was a honey-guide or indicator, one of the most intelligent of all African birds.

"It would fly up in front of the animals and men, steady itself in the air, and then dart off, fluttering its wings as if to call us away. In fact, it was trying to get us to follow it.

"For some time the men paid no attention to it, supposing that the honey-guide had merely, as usual, found a nest of honey, and wanted us to go and open it, and give it a share. But its actions became so violent that at last my head tracker said that perhaps the bird had found an elephant, and that we had better go.

"Finally I consented, and three of us started off on horseback, the little bird flying ahead, stopping every few moments to see if we were coming, and then flying on, taking us toward a dense wood.

"As soon as we reached it, the bird plunged in, but we were forced to remain outside. It soon returned, however, and flew to an open spot or lane, and into this we went.

"I think it was at least three-fourths

of a mile that we followed over a country so rough that we often thought of abandoning it, and I was about to suggest doing so, when one of the men, a faithful Kafir that I had had for several years, held up his hand, upon which we all stopped.

"For the last hundred yards we had been in the spoor or trail of some animal, or of many, and were evidently leading down to a pool.

"As we halted, we heard the chatter of the honey-bird just ahead, and we knew whatever it was had been found. "Cooking my gun and dismounting, I gave my horse to the third man and started forward, leaving them in a little glen or open place.

"As a matter of precaution, I left the spoor and took to the bush, and walking slowly on for a few moments, I came suddenly to a sight that brought me up with what the sailors call a round turn.

"I was fortunately behind a large tree, and as I looked around, there lay in the soft mud a gigantic black rhinoceros—the borele or ketloa of the natives—one of the most vicious of its kind.

"The big brute lay upon his side, partly submerged in the mud, and upon his back were several white cranes, busily engaged in picking off the various insects with which it was infested, and under which operation the rhinoceros seemed to be calmly sleeping.

"When I recovered from my surprise,

I saw that I had a fair shot at the shoulder, the most vulnerable spot.

"My first impression was to go back and get one of the men, but as I deliberated, the great animal moved. This determined me, and aiming over a rest formed by a branch, I fired.

"From perfect stillness there came a bedlam of sounds—the shrieking of birds and other small animals—and in the midst of all a snort as from a steam engine, as the enormous form of the rhinoceros rose from the black mud.

"For a moment he stood looking about, then seeing the smoke, lowered his head and dashed at me.

"I had just time to spring aside, when the vicious animal struck my protection, and it being old, went completely through it, falling on the other side. One of the limbs just escaped me, and to avoid trouble, I fell flat in the grass and kept still, knowing this to be my only chance.

"The rhinoceros recovered himself in a moment, and stood breathing hard, and I could perhaps have downed him there, but, unfortunately, my men, not knowing what was going on, hearing the shot, came riding up, and before they knew it were not thirty feet from the enraged brute.

"I screamed to attract his attention, and fired, but up went his tail, and like a shot he dashed at the horse.

"The poor native made a desperate effort to turn; but just as he got the

horse's head around, the horns of the rhinoceros entered its breast, and the next second I saw horse and rider in the air. The rhinoceros had tossed them as a bull would a dog.

"The man fell off upon its back, and rolling off upon the ground, succeeded in scrambling off in the grass, while the horse was instantly killed.

"For a few moments the rhinoceros could not withdraw its horns, and when it did, it repeatedly charged the prostrate animal.

"While doing this, I sent two bullets into its lungs, and it died while charging my smoke, falling not ten feet from me."

The black rhinoceros is one of four species known in Africa, two of which are white and two black. The one in question is easily distinguished, the first horn being the largest and bent backward, while the other is short and conical. The upper lip is long and capable of much extension.

The skin does not fall in heavy folds like that of the Asiatic species commonly seen in collections in this country, but is extremely tough, and a good armor against insects and small bullets.

It is usually found in the vicinity of swamps, feeding upon roots of various kinds, which it forces from the ground by its horns.

Probably no animal is so thoroughly dreaded as this, and old African hunters are unanimous in this opinion. One is reported to have said that he would rather face fifty lions than one wounded borele.

One of the most famous rhinoceros hunters was Mr. Oswell, who invariably shot them on foot.

Stiedman, the African hunter, witnessed an encounter similar to the one given above. A Hottentot came suddenly upon one of these animals, and before he could fire the borele had charged, and striking the horse in the breast, threw both over his head, dashing off as if satisfied with this exploit.

Mr. Oswell was himself tossed by one, and at another time was, with his horse, thrown into the air by a white rhinoceros, the horns of the animal not only penetrating the horse, but the saddle.

Fly Bites Speed Signing of Declaration

People sometimes remark during summer that it must be going to rain, for the flies bite so. Certain species of flies do bite, but not the common house-fly.

Before a rain, while the relative humidity is high, stable-flies try to get under shelter indoors.

The stable-fly or horse-fly bites and stings human beings as well as domestic animals, and torments people during hot, humid, sultry weather.

Strange as it sounds, certain his-

torians say that the United States owes its Declaration of Independence to the stable-fly.

When the colonial representatives were debating the issue in Philadelphia, it is said that the flies were so persistent that they bit through the silk stockings of the assembled patriots.

Finally they became so intolerable that one of the delegates suggested that they sign the document and get away from the abominable flies.

They all agreed, and the Declaration was signed at once.