

FROM AN AFRICAN GAME DIARY: V

President Theodore Roosevelt In Africa

"I've Had My Life and a Very Good One"—
The Big Bull Rhino—When I Thought Kermit
Roosevelt Was Lost—Running Down a Giraffe

By SIR ALFRED PEASE, Bart.

[In the last instalment of his East African memoirs Sir Alfred Pease described the visit of the late Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States, to his farm and the lion hunt which was arranged for the Roosevelts, father and son. The narrative continues.—Editor.]

ONCE or twice she went straight for the place where R. was standing. The scene was such that, though Chungo was telling me there was a lion going through the grass a few yards in front of my horse's nose, I could not take my eyes off it. Then I saw the big lioness go straight at R. and to my relief he killed her—a remarkably big and heavy one. He bagged two good ones.

The other lions escaped very curiously. Two broke back during the battle with the lioness, another came to me and I thought the other laid down, but either this one or another got out at the north end. Several of us galloped after him, faster than he was going, but the ground was up and down and he seemed to vanish while twenty pairs of eyes were watching him in the grass. We picked up three Cheetah cubs during the fray and reached Potha Camp long after dark. At 10 p.m. the porters brought in the lioness whole, by torch-light, with dance and song—a sight which delighted our guests.

We now arranged a hunting camp on our neighbour Captain Slatter's farm at Kilima Kiu where he had some Rhinos, good Eland and Giraffe bulls "handy" as well as Roan, Oryx and Bushbuck. On the way there we put up two lions, one I tried to round up but he had too much start and the other sulked in some reeds and we thought it safer to leave him there. R., however, added warthogs to his collection this day.

May 6.—I now handed R. over to Slatter. They had a successful day. R. got a good bull Rhino which did everything in the right style. After being hit at 40 yards by R. he at once charged straight, and was killed by R. at 14 yards, though Slatter told me he was so anxious that he too put in a bullet behind his skull as the Rhino charged with its head right down.

"Colonel Roosevelt said that Slatter was nervous at the position R. had been in, put his hand on his shoulder and said. 'My dear man, take care of yourself (Slatter had only a left arm) but don't you be nervous about me—I've had my life and a very good one, there is nothing to fear for me.'

"Kermit is suffering terribly from tick bites, as I do, but nothing stops him.

"May 8.—As Kermit has not yet got a lion Sandy and I took him out to get one. I had a large force of beaters and had them in line to drive out the long donga, where we know they are. All my plans went to blazes for on our way we came on a fine bull Oryx standing at 100 yards, and it seemed a simple thing to add this new specimen to the growing collection.

"Kermit might have shot him without sitting down as the Oryx had his head turned our way and the movement of sitting down was almost certain to put him off. However, he sat down. The Oryx stood but then K. began fiddling with his sights. You don't want to fiddle with sights at point-blank range for, with a sweep of your hand as you bring your rifle up, you can make sure all your back sights are down.

"By the time the sights were right the old bull had whisked his tail once or twice, put his head down, plunged a few times and 'off.' K. then ran to his horse and went off full gallop

after him through stony mountain bush. I yelled to him that it was no use and sent Sandy after him, ran back to stop the beaters and to find my horse.

"K. had such a start that Sandy lost him. Here was a pretty kettle of fish! I had promised his father that I would 'never leave Kermit alone.' I pictured what was quite likely—his getting a bad cropper and perhaps some fate like the Prince Imperial's. While mine would be the dishonoured Carey's.

"Hall, who lives here, knows the country and I sent him off on my horse towards the railway (six miles) to inform the staff up and down the line, and I dispersed my beaters over all the hills. As the afternoon wore on I built beacons on the hill-tops to fire at dark and sent for lanterns, and then just before sunset Kermit appeared on a weary horse.

"He said he had galloped a long way till he lost sight of the Oryx and had then galloped for some six miles after a Roan until he came in sight of 'Machakos Road' railway station, where he watered his horse and himself and was put on the track for 'home.'

"Meanwhile, his father on these days was busy with Giraffe, Waterbuck, Wild Dogs and other things.

"May 9.—After lunch, Sandy and I took Kermit to get a Giraffe. We found eleven in the bare open with a good bull among them. They made off in the direction of Wami and I knew that Kermit would get a good gallop, such as he loved, and he did! I felt confident I could ride the bull out of the bunch and then leave him to Kermit.

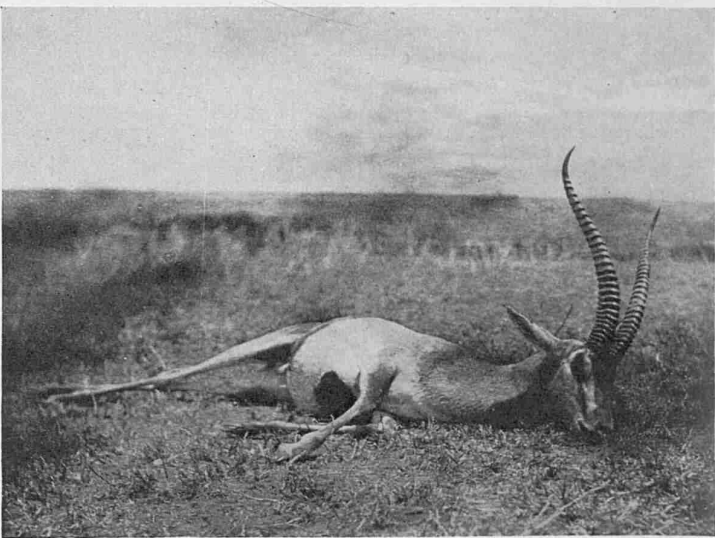
"My little Arab being very fast, I soon got a long lead of the others and got right under their great sprawling hind legs and turned them to the left so as to 'let in' Kermit. Nothing makes one realise the immensity of a Giraffe more than being under them on a 14.2 hh. pony, with their heads some 15 feet above you. It is a most curious sensation of littleness and whilst you are going top pace they are covering the ground with a slow lifting of their long forelegs and taking their straddling purchase off their hind legs, putting great stretches of ground behind them in this slow-bearing motion.

"This was to be my last ride on the handiest, bravest, and most intelligent African hunter I ever rode. He took me right in amongst the eleven and stayed there until I got the bull to the left outside and, by firing a shot, I got him slantways, more in the direction of my companions who were now coming on fast.

"Then we crossed a horrible bit of ground, full of holes and deep fissures which I had to



A GOOD WILDEBEEST: This good-looking bull wildebeest was killed by Gerard Gurney on Sir Alfred's place on the Kapiti Plains in 1908. The photograph is from Sir Alfred Pease's African Game books. Luckily, the head of game, under good wardenship, has not decreased a great deal since those days



A WELL-SHAPED "GRANTIE": This very symmetrical Grant's Gazelle is also taken from Sir Alfred Pease's African Game books. It was shot by Gerard Gurney on the ground covered by the Roosevelt Safari during the time that the late U.S. President was staying at the Pease farm

chance—and then down my horse came and I was shot far over his head. I rolled over into a sitting position and fired a final shot which turned the bull towards Kermit.

"The last I saw of the chase was Kermit close at the bull and he and Sandy disappearing down country towards the railway.

"What happened after was that Sandy rode his horse out in a few miles, but on went Kermit at the tail of the bull, getting a plug at him now and again. Finally, the Giraffe gave out and Kermit had secured a very fine bull, but only after a desperate seven-mile gallop. His father stalked and killed two bull Giraffes to-day.

"My horse had broken his shoulder and had to be shot and Sandy's nearly died of staggers! It was a sad day for me."

This entry in my diary always fills me with a certain melancholy when I read it.

In those days we regarded the pitting of the speed, sagacity and courage of an animal like the horse against the speed, courage and sure-footedness of creatures like the lion, the giraffe, the hyena—all of them at home in bad country—as a natural and more or less well-balanced form of fair combat. But to-day, I am told, they use motor cars. Surely gunpowder and the rifled barrel are sufficient of modernity in our pursuit of wild game. Sport, to my mind, is a contest of wits and courage—not a war of modern inventions against the natural intelligence of an animal. There is a point in these matters at which we must stop.

Petrol to me seems scarcely fair on the quarry. I think my little Arab died nobly in her way.