

SPORT AT LAKE BARINGO, BRITISH EAST AFRICA.—By C. V. A. PEEL, F.Z.S., F.R.G.S.

AFTER a hot, tedious march of five days over very rough, stony ground, we reached the shores of Lake Baringo, a beautiful sheet of water studded with islands and backed by a glorious panorama of high mountains.

Game was very plentiful by the shores of the lake, rhinoceros and impala, the latter carrying very fine heads, swarmed in the thick bush country, and in the more open places Peter's gazelle strolled about as if they had never beheld a white man.

From a native dug-out canoe I had the luck to shoot a fine hippopotamus in the lake. I saw a few tracks of buffalo in the dense reeds fringing the lake, but did not fall in with the animals themselves. Since the rinderpest destroyed these animals in hundreds, they have taken to the thickest bush, and now seldom show themselves in open country. But the heat and mosquitoes finally drove me from the shores of the lake, which lies very low. It was impossible to go out at midday, when my thermometer registered 95° in my tent and 125° in the sun. Night was also rendered hideous by mosquitoes, the grunts of the hippo in the lake, the croaking of frogs, the splashing of crocodiles, and the incessant singing of millions of crickets and other insects.

I was obliged to make a two days' march to a high plateau north-east of the lake. There I found game in great numbers. From a bit of rising ground close to my camp I saw a sight which would be difficult to credit in these days. Almost at my feet in thin bush country I could see, with my naked eye, several herds of Peter's gazelle and two herds of impala, including three fine bucks. Further on I could see innumerable herds of Peter's gazelle. Still further out on the open plain my glass showed a never-ending procession of zebra and oryx, and a single rhino with a calf. And last, but not least, there stood, motionless, with neck bent forward, the huge form of a giraffe, reminding me of the leaning tower of Pisa. This panorama, backed with giant mountains and a setting sun, was a sight worth a lifetime to behold. Next morning I went down to the thick bush fringing the open plain, where I had a somewhat exciting adventure. I had just shot an oryx antelope with a fine head, and was picking out the sharp points of grass from my knees after the usual painful crawl, when I saw a small troop of zebra walking slowly towards me, close to the edge of the thick bushes. Here was a magnificent opportunity to obtain a photograph, I thought, as I dropped my rifle, and, snatching up my camera and beckoning to my gun-bearers to lie low, I dived into the bushes unobserved by the zebra. I was walking along on tip-toe and was getting nicely opposite the zebra, when I all but stepped on to a huge rhinoceros, which lay in a trench scraped out by itself in some muddy sand. The rhino was up in a second, and, whisking round, stood snorting and sniffing at me, crouched behind a tiny bush but a few feet before him. I scarce dared to breathe, much less move



Head of impala.

legs swaying from side to side. I fired again, and the huge tower fell with a crash to the earth. Running up, I measured him accurately as he lay. His total height was 16ft. 2in. He stood 8ft. 4in. at the withers, and his girth was exactly 8ft. 4in.

So far I had been unable to find a shootable bull eland, although I had met with many large herds of these huge ox-like antelopes.

I left camp one morning before it was light in quest of them, and soon fell in with a herd of Peter's gazelle and zebra feeding in a gully below me. After carefully watching them through my field-glass, I at last made out what I took to be a small herd of eland resting behind some tall trees. I commenced the stalk about eight o'clock, and it proved one of the most arduous of any I had so far undertaken. I was again hampered by a rhinoceros, until I was forced to give him my wind, a large herd of gazelle, and the ever-watchful zebra. After crawling towards the trees for an hour, I became aware that I was stalking a very large herd of eland. A fine bull made as though to join the main herd, but, unluckily for me, he turned away and went and stood under some thick thorn trees out of my sight. Two hours passed, and still I had not wormed myself on my belly within rifle shot of the herd, owing to the suspicious zebra all round me and them. At length the zebra moved out of my way, and, using the glass, I discovered a very big bull amongst some trees within shot. I sat down and fired at him, and although he was badly hidden by trees and grass I heard the bullet tell.

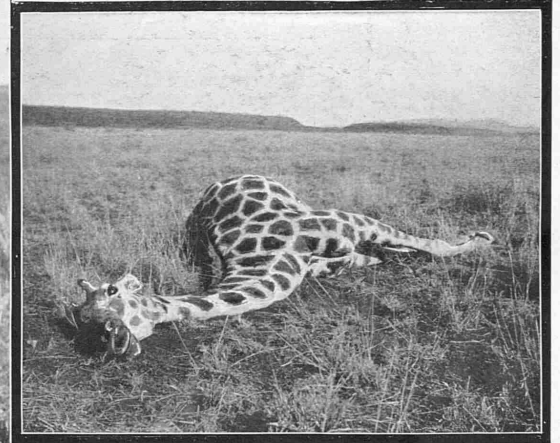
On hearing the shot the whole herd massed together and ran out on to the open plain. It turned out to be a very big herd of some fifty animals, and presented a very grand sight. There were four old bulls, and the rest were cows and young bulls. I had two or three shots at what I took to be my wounded bull, but the distance was too great, and I made a clean miss each time. I now ran up to where I had first shot at the bull, and found a lot of blood. We followed the spoor for about a quarter of a mile, when one of my gun-bearers pointed out what he said was the eland, standing broadside on, but half hidden by a bush, at about 100 yards distance. Personally I took it for an ant-hill, but my gun-bearer begged me to fire. I sat down and fired at what I could now swear was an ant-hill. To add to my conjecture, the thing I aimed at never moved, and I was quietly fumbling in my pocket for another cartridge when a huge bull eland ran past the bush and away. He stopped again after running 100 yards, and I fired at him again. I distinctly heard the bullet tell on him; however, he ran slowly out of sight. I raced after him till I could go no further, but sank, utterly exhausted, amongst the stones. Thrusting my rifle into my gun-bearer's hands, I bade him follow the spoor, but in an hour's time he came back, saying he had lost it on the stony ground. Slowly I wended my way back to camp,



Oryx antelope and gun-bearer.



Swahili porter with baby hartebeest.



A 16ft. high giraffe.

my camera to snapshot the animal, which I might easily have done. I was expecting every moment to be charged, but after what seemed to be an age, he turned round, and with hisses and snorts he went crashing through the thorn bushes like a runaway steam-roller! I lost no time in getting hold of my elephant gun, but after searching the bush for the rest of the morning without success, we returned to camp with skin, head, and meat of the oryx antelope.

Another day, whilst I was stalking a gazelle with a particularly fine head, I saw an enormous bull giraffe approaching me from the right. As I had taken out a special licence to shoot one of these gigantic animals, I determined to stalk him, and to that end I got the gun-bearers safely hidden from view. There were a great number of Peter's gazelle about, and some of these had seen us and were running or walking about suspiciously. They turned the giraffe, so that I judged he would walk past me at about 300 yards distance. This would never do, so I prepared to cut him off. I began to crawl on my hands and knees through patches of aloes. I soon found I had plenty to think about. In the first place I suddenly perceived a huge rhinoceros walking away from me about 100 yards in front; then I had the gazelle and a herd of oryx to keep out of the way on my left and right. Meanwhile the giraffe was coming on at a goodly stride, albeit his pace looked so slow. I reached some fairly high bushes and ventured to stand up and show myself to the gazelle, to get them quietly out of the way. It was a somewhat risky proceeding, but it had the desired effect. The gazelle slowly walked across me. I was now left with the oryx and the rhino, which latter insisted on stopping every moment to feed, and I greatly feared he would stampede the giraffe, in which case I should probably have to run for it! I tried to keep cool, but was getting so close to the rhino that I was beginning to wish I had a gun-bearer with me with a second rifle, as I held only a single-barrelled .450 cordite rifle. However, the rhino kept his head away, although barely thirty yards away; the oryx had vanished as the giraffe rapidly approached. I reached a small bush in safety. Here I sat down, cocked my rifle, and waited for the gigantic tower to appear. At length the living leaning tower of Pisa hove in sight, and I don't think I ever beheld such a wonderful picture as he strode out from behind some small thorn trees and stood broadside, watching. He was quite 200 yards away, but, realising I should not get a better chance, I pulled the trigger. I heard the ball strike him in the middle. He gave a lurch and then made off, his huge

and before daybreak next morning I set out once more to look for the eland. When the first faint signs of dawn appeared at five o'clock we were well on our way across the open plain, and by seven o'clock we had taken up the blood spoor, which at first was easily discernible, as it led along a sandy bottom, between two low, rocky hills. But at last the eland had made a sharp turn to the left up the rocky slope, and here it was with the utmost difficulty that we could find the tracks. Soon after we heard a great commotion on our left, and I expected to see the inevitable rhino charging down upon us, but it turned out to be six giraffe; the first herd of these animals I had as yet seen in the country. Their walk is majestic in the extreme, but when it comes to running these great camel-like mammals cut a ridiculous figure.

But to return to the eland. To cut a long story short, we followed the track all the morning with the greatest difficulty, when suddenly, far below me, I at length saw the bull running slowly downhill. At last he reached the bottom, and, walking out on to an open plain, stood under a solitary tree. Feeling the wind carefully by throwing grass into the air, I crawled and crawled towards him, until I was about 100 yards off. No further could I get, owing to want of covert. My stalking was generally good, I flattered myself, but my shooting—oh, I knew how bad it could be! I took plenty of time and careful aim, and fired, but the eland never moved! Yesterday's proceedings were about to be reproduced again, I feared. I crawled nearer (I was horribly excited, I own and fired again. The eland did not move. I got up and ran towards him. He stood still with his great head hidden in the shade of the solitary tree. All at once he seemed to realise that he must be off. He put up his head, saw me, and commenced to run. I fired two or three shots at him, which seemed to have no effect upon him whatever. I had now but very few cartridges left, so, jumping up, I ran as I think I never ran before over rough ground, and soon found I was gaining on him. The great game was done. I got up within 20 yards of his broadside and put a bullet through his heart, and he fell at last, in a kneeling position. After photographing him as quickly as I could, I tried to get at his throat with my knife, but the huge beast was game to the last, and with a great bellow he flourished his massive horns about in threatening fashion. I was obliged to end his troubles with a bullet through his neck. I found his body riddled with bullets, most of them too far back. He was a superb bull eland, measuring from tip of nose to end of tail 11ft. 1in.; his girth was exactly 7ft., and his height at the shoulder 5ft. 10in. His horns measured 24in., and he must have weighed about 2,000lbs.



My porters.