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UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

THE

# WIDE WORLD

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# MAGAZINE

AN ILLUSTRATED  
MONTHLY  
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TRUE NARRATIVE

ADVENTURE  
TRAVEL  
CUSTOMS  
AND  
SPORT

“TRUTH IS  
STRANGER  
THAN  
FICTION”

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# A Lonely Trans-African Tramp.

BY MAJOR P. H. POWELL-COTTON (LATE 5TH NORTHUMBERLAND FUSILIERS).

"The Wide World" is the first English magazine to publish an account—written by the explorer himself—of Major Powell-Cotton's great twenty-one months' journey across Central Africa from Mombasa to Khartoum. The expedition may be described as one of the most noteworthy of recent times, among its results being the mapping of a great extent of hitherto unknown country and the discovery of six new tribes. For over sixteen months the intrepid explorer was absolutely alone amid the savage tribes of Equatorial Africa.

## I.—FROM THE EAST COAST TO LAKE BARINGO.

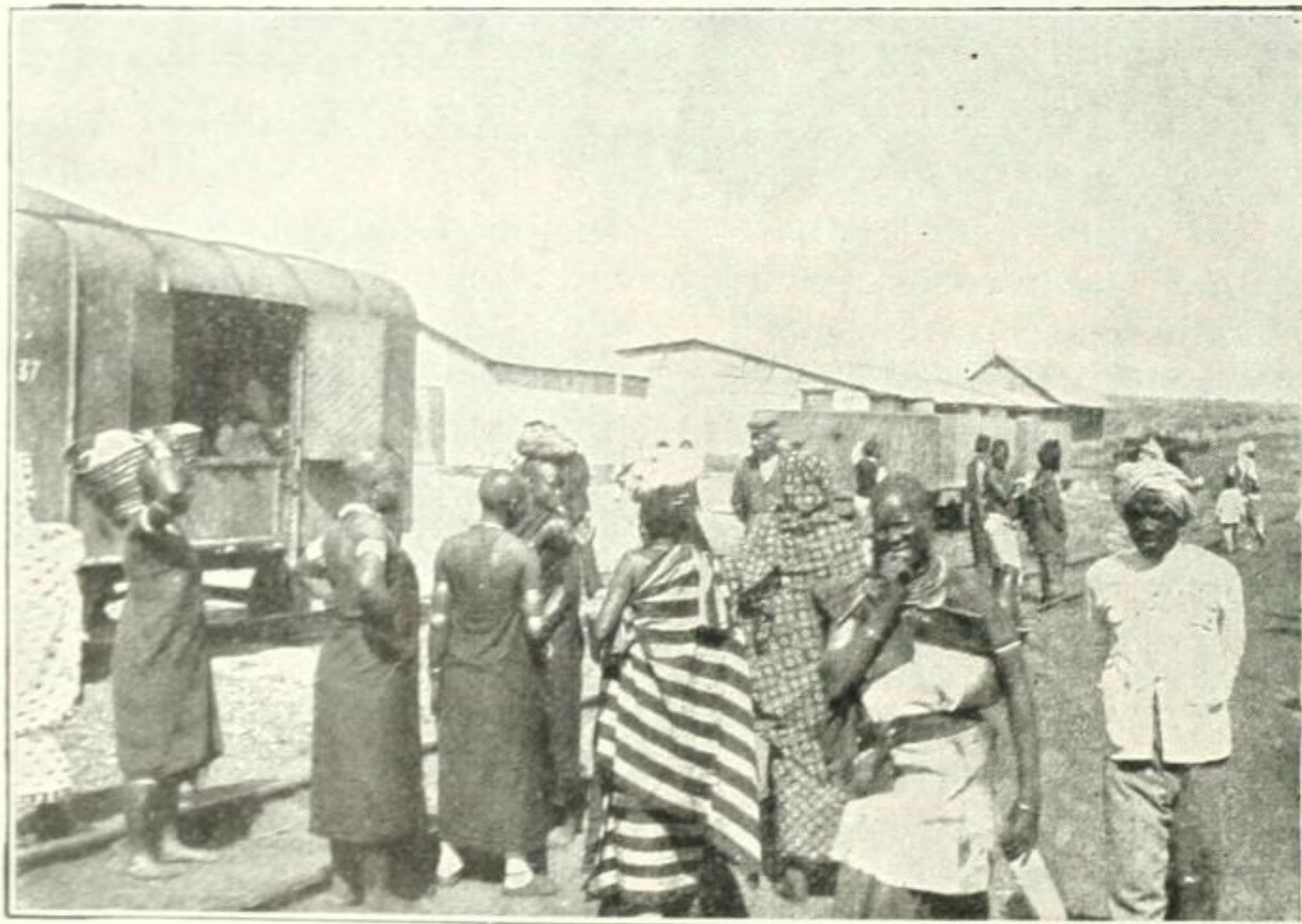


ON my return from garrison duty at Malta, to which place I was ordered directly I got back from my trip through Abyssinia, it was nearly eight months before the old craving for wandering in remote lands again became irresistible. This time I decided to explore some of the unknown parts of British East Africa and Uganda, and to return either by the Congo or down the Nile. Some two months were taken up in making my preparations, for when one has to depend on men only as transport every pound weight must be carefully considered, and, while nothing necessary is omitted, no useless things can be carried. At last all was shipped: rifles and ammunition, tents and camp-kit, cameras and plates, drugs and provisions, waterproof sacks for carrying skins, maps and field-glasses, and the endless small things that experience has taught me not to go without, and on which success or failure often depends.

On January 23rd, 1902, Mr. F. C. Cobb and myself left Dover and, after an uneventful journey *via* Marseilles, arrived at Aden on February 2nd, where the courtesy of the officials enabled me to draw from the arsenal the arms and ammunition for my escort, before the British India steamer

*Patiala* left for Mombasa. A nasty run down the East Coast of Africa landed us at that port a week later. Here I found so many difficulties put in my way that before I could begin to collect my caravan I had to make a twenty-eight hours' journey by the Uganda Railway to Nairobi, in order to see the Commissioner. There, worse luck, an attack of malarial fever made my visit anything but a pleasant one, in spite of the hospitality of the officers of the King's African Rifles. On my return to the coast with the necessary permits we lost no time in enlisting seventy-seven Swahilis as gun-bearers, personal servants, escort, and porters, and in buying clothing, tents, and food for them; rolls of cotton cloth, bundles of beads, and coils of brass wire as trade goods for the natives, besides all such tools as we had left to get locally.

On the 22nd of February we left Mombasa, the bulk of the men going to Stony Athi Station, three hundred miles in the interior, while we, with only a few followers, spent four or five days shooting on the way and then rejoined them. My first photo. is a snapshot of the gaudy crowd which is to be seen on the up-country platforms, and in which the Masai milk-seller is a prominent feature.



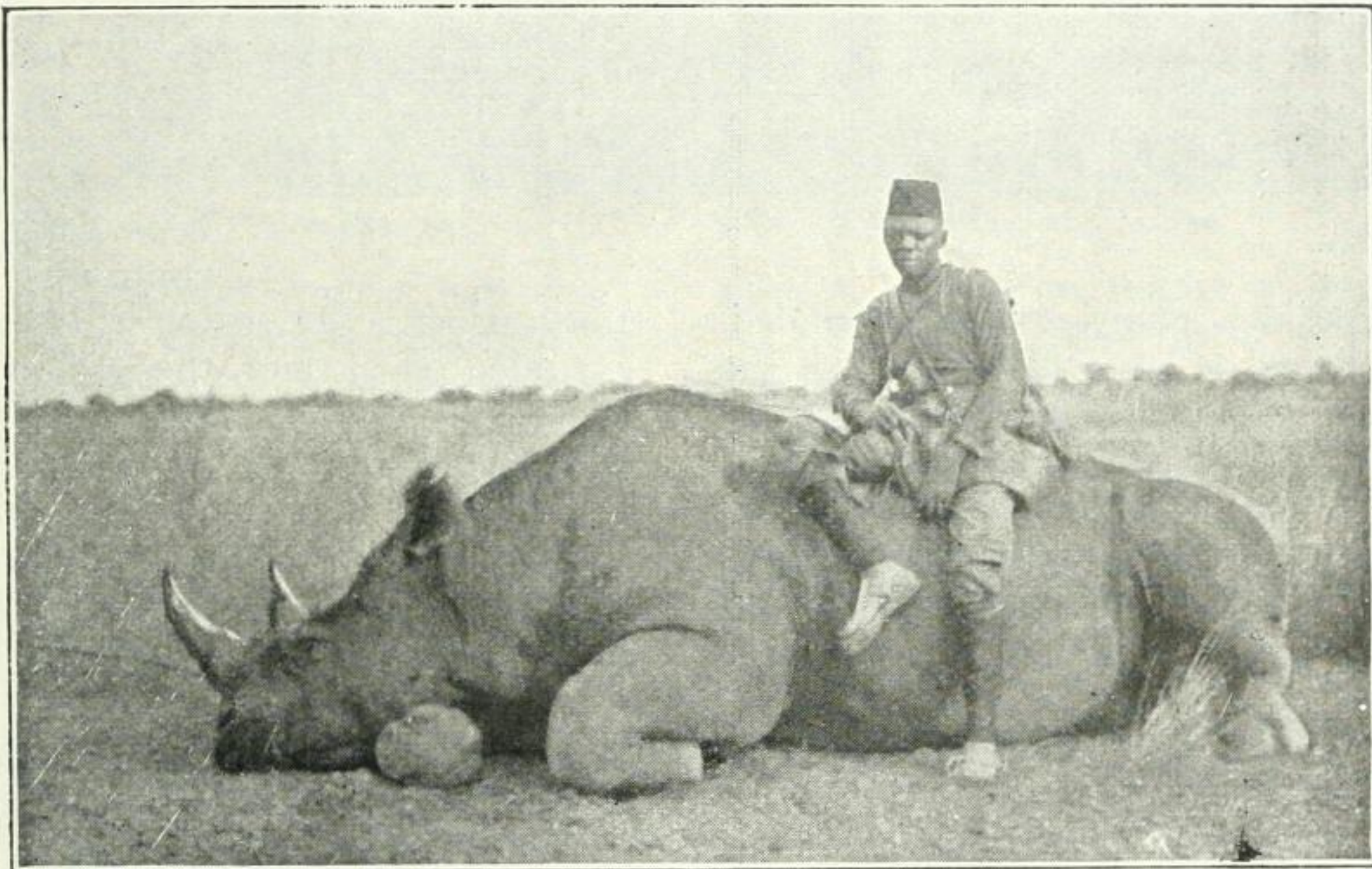
From a] A GAILY-ATTIRED CROWD AT AN UP-COUNTRY STATION.

[Photo.



Strengthened by twenty more porters from Nairobi and two riding mules, we left the railway and made a start in a northerly direction across the Athi Plains, but did not see very much game till we approached Mount Dony Sabuk, about forty miles distant. Here we found the first rhinos of the trip, and Mr. Cobb had an exciting experience with one before he killed it. My narrowest escape from a charge by one of these huge animals occurred at Baringo (where they seem to be particularly pugnacious, as another sportsman was badly mauled by one some months after my visit).\* One afternoon we were returning from an unsuccessful search for five-horn giraffe when, in passing some thin scrub, we came upon two rhinos, who, on catching sight of us, began shifting about uneasily.

three yards distance. This made it swerve, and as the infuriated animal dashed past me it caught sight of my gun-bearer (who had not fled so far as the others) and deliberately chased him, as he dodged among some thorn trees. I ran after the beast, but could not fire for fear of hitting the man, whom I saw suddenly fall down, while the rhino continued its course over his prostrate body. We ran forward and picked up the gun-bearer, who proved unhurt, except that his right wrist was badly bruised by the beast stepping on it. When we had recovered ourselves a little we found the rhino lying close by quite dead, and I took a photo. of the injured man sitting on its back, while my other followers collected the things they had thrown away in their headlong flight. The only



From a]

THE RHINO WHICH NEARLY CAUGHT THE GUN-BEARER.

[Photo.

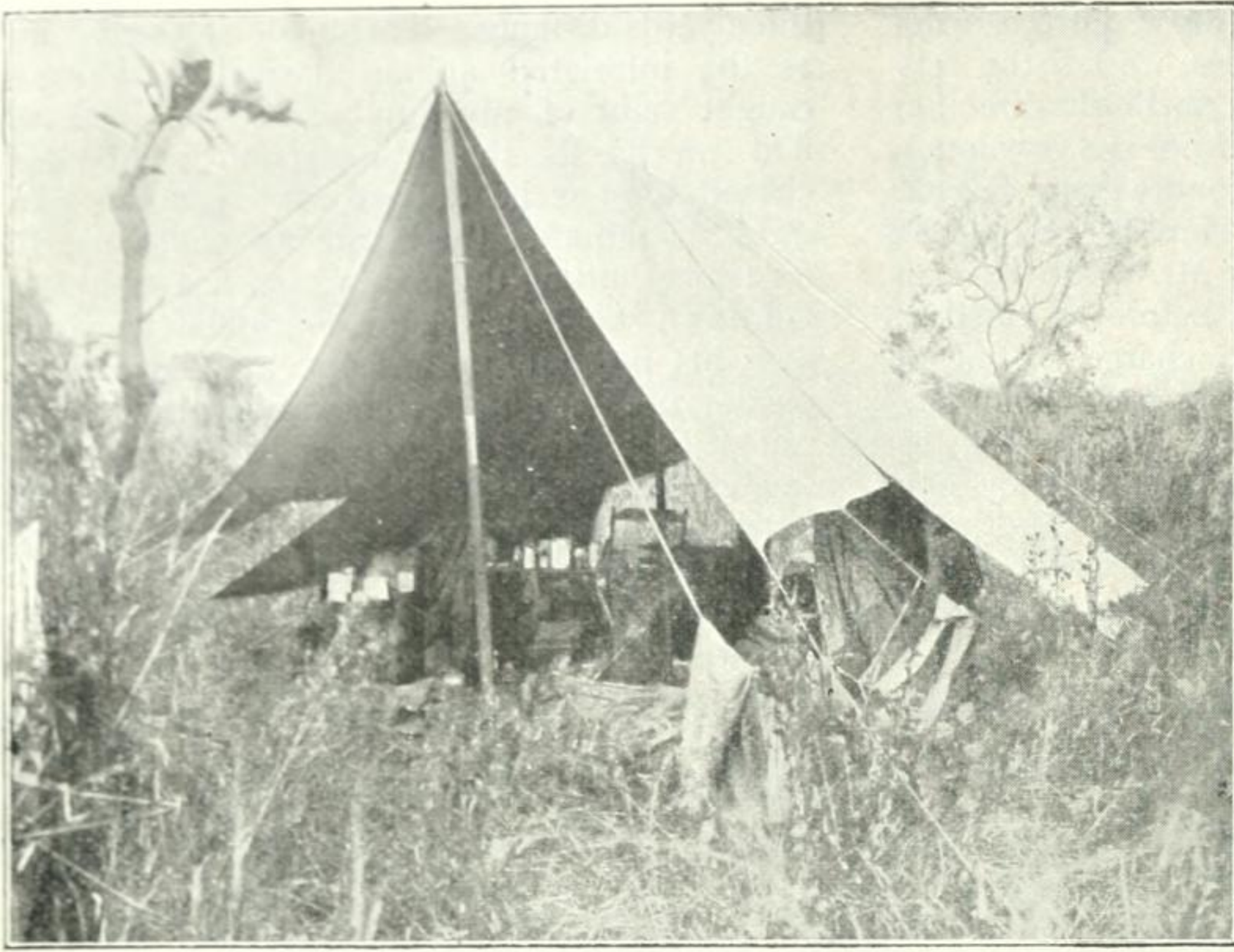
Accordingly, I had to take rather an awkward shot at the larger beast's shoulder. A moment later both animals were charging down on us, while my men were flying in all directions. The brute I had fired at was evidently hit in the lungs, for blood and foam were dripping from its mouth and being blown into the air from its widely-distended nostrils. It evidently recognised me as its enemy, and galloped at me in a bee-line. I hit it hard again with the left barrel, but, as I failed to stop it, I turned to run like the rest, reloading as I went. Hardly had I done so when I felt the ground shaking and could hear the angry snort of the brute almost on me. Jumping to one side and swinging round as I did so, I fired both barrels at its shoulder at some

member of the party that seemed quite undisturbed was my shooting mule, which had stood stolidly gazing at the proceedings as if wondering what all the commotion was about.

After leaving Dony Sabuk we crossed the Athi River and got into a fine lion country, the first we shot being an old lioness, who, after a fruitless night's hunting, was still on the prowl at midday—a most unusual time. I had just shot an antelope and was packing it off to camp when our paths met. With an angry growl she quickened her pace, while I jumped off my mule, seized my .400 cordite rifle, and fired a hurried shot which broke her hind leg. Instead of coming for us as I expected she broke into a lumbering gallop, but my remaining barrel was better aimed, and, catching her behind the shoulder, knocked her over dead. The country through which we were now passing was well watered and herds of different kinds

\* The author evidently refers to Mr. B. Eastwood, whose account of his unique experience appeared in THE WIDE WORLD MAGAZINE for August, 1903, under the title "A Battle With a Rhino."—ED.





*From a]*

THE AUTHOR'S HOME ON THE MARCH.

*[Photo.*

of antelopes, besides many zebras, abounded. One morning I had a good experience of the vagueness of the native idea of distance. The caravan was to do what they called quite a short march, while we were to make a wide circuit on either side in the hope of running across some lions which had roared in the night, but we had no such luck. On regaining the path I expected

thirty paces. On seeing us the one to our right bounded off at once, the one to the left turned slowly with an ugly snarl, while the centre one, which had the best mane of the three, after standing for a second with his body partly turned away from us looking back over his shoulder, was on the point of moving just as my bullet struck him, and piercing his heart

Hastily getting into my boots again we started at a jog-trot under a grilling sun—for the early afternoon is always the hottest part of the day—through long grass for the place indicated. On arrival my men said that the lions had moved off, and we had to slacken our pace as we took up the trail. One of the Swahilis climbed a tree, and pointing in front of us I understood him to say that our prey had gone in that direction. Naturally expecting them to be some distance ahead, I was not a little surprised when a few paces farther on three lions suddenly jumped from the bush where they had been lying concealed, and confronted me at less than



*From a]*

ONE OF MAJOR POWELL-COTTON'S FINEST LIONS.

*[Photo.*

to reach the camp almost at once, but it was only after a long and weary march that we reached it in the afternoon. I had just sat down to some food when news came in that our wood-cutters had seen a troop of lions.

dropped him dead in his tracks. As I fired I saw the one on the left spin round as though to charge us, but the fall of his companion seemed to upset his nerve and he turned to bolt, but I was too quick for him, and a solid ball from the



left barrel of my Jeffery .400 cordite raked him through. He, however, disappeared from sight in the long grass, and we spent some time in a careful approach, only to find that our caution was unnecessary, as he was lying stone dead.

A few days after we reached Fort Hall, the farthest Government station in that direction. Here we weeded out the sick men and sent them back with the Nairobi porters, replacing them with a band of Waki-kuyu, wild-looking fellows, with bits of stick fastened through their ears and wearing numerous necklets of fine iron chain, and coils of brass and iron wire on their arms. Their country is one of the richest in East Africa, and we were able to barter large quantities of flour and beans for beads and cotton cloth. At one of our camps we had a series of dances, each

to their right legs, and a wild-cat skin hung on their backs, they were a curious sight as they jumped about with the aid of their long staffs covered with monkey hair. At the conclusion of each dance the performers separately hopped

up to us like a frog and then retired in the same fashion. While this was going on a neighbouring chief paid us a visit, with a crowd of his followers, bringing presents of sugarcane, flour, and honey. They made such a picturesque group as they sat at my tent door that I photographed them.

Having traded enough food for our men we now set out for snow-clad Mount Kenia, said to be the third highest peak in Africa. During this part of the journey we had to be careful that none of our men straggled or moved far from camp without being armed, for the



From a]

BARTERING WITH THE NATIVES.

[Photo.



From a]

A KIKUYU DANCE—THE PERFORMERS ARE SMEARED OVER WITH CLAY IN DIFFERENT PATTERNS.

[Photo.

performed by bands of from three to six natives—men daubed over with white clay smeared into different patterns. Their heads decorated with feathers, a curious little shield fastened to their left arms, iron rattles strapped

natives are a treacherous lot and had lately been giving trouble.

It was in a dense bamboo brake on the slopes of Mount Kenia that I had one of my most exciting experiences with elephants during the





From a] A CHIEF AND HIS FOLLOWERS OUTSIDE THE EXPLORER'S TENT. [Photo.

trip. One day, after a fruitless search on the higher slopes of the mountain, I was hurrying down towards camp, for it was getting late, when we heard elephants feeding close to us. The first group I approached proved to be cows, but I succeeded in drawing back without attracting their attention. I then made my way, by an old track, towards where another was feeding, in the hope that it might be a bull, the path being so interlaced with fallen bamboos and strewn with leaves that it was not easy to pick one's way along without making a noise.

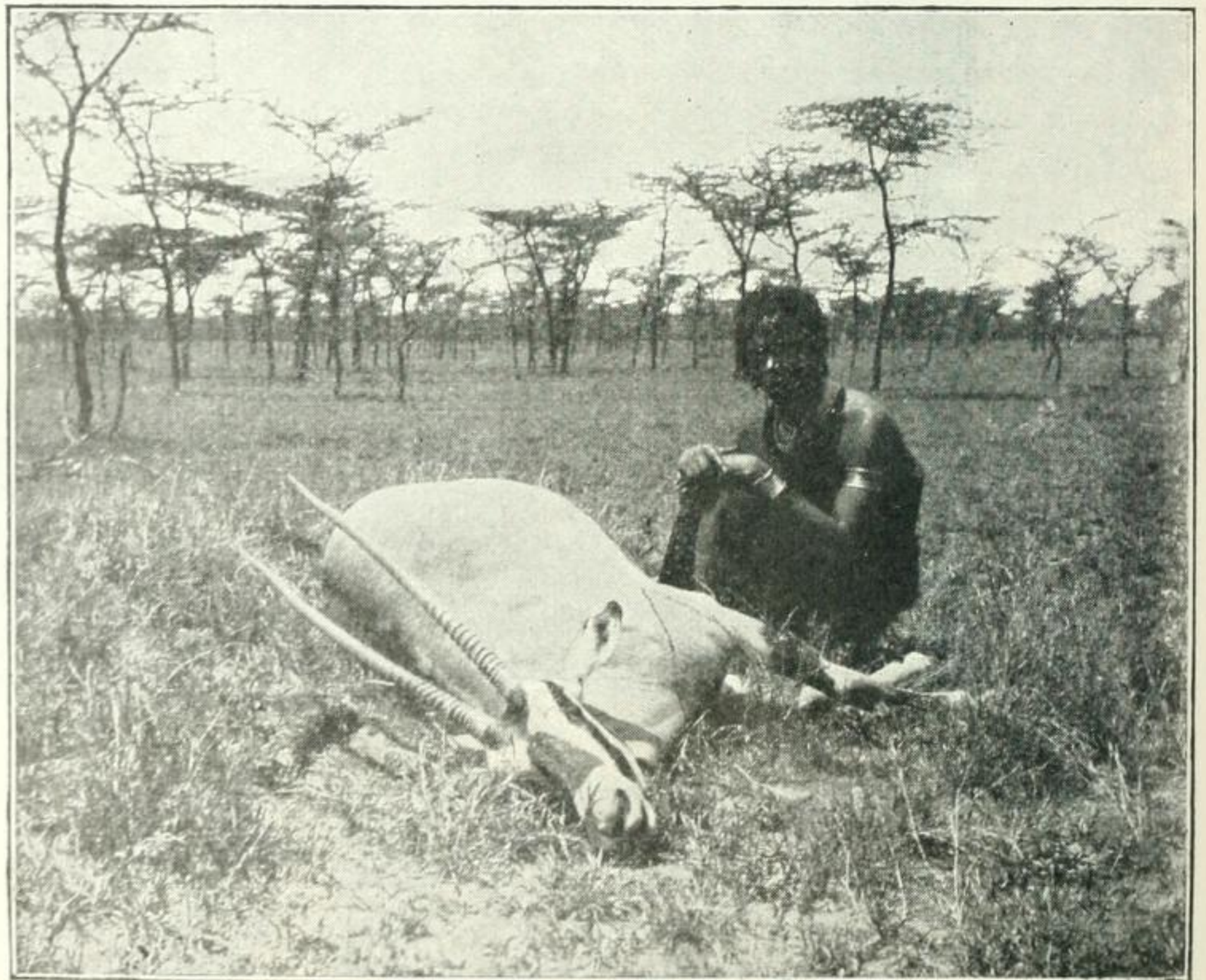
Suddenly the beast stopped feeding, and after a moment's pause we heard it coming screaming towards us. The path was far too obstructed to run along, even if we had known at what point the animal was going to break into sight, so there was no other course but to stand where I was with my '600 cordite rifle at the shoulder. The beast did not keep me waiting long, for suddenly the bamboos parted and, with trunk raised and ears sticking straight out, it burst into sight. Aiming as well as I could for the spot midway between the eyes, I

pressed both triggers almost simultaneously and turned to fly. As I did so my feet caught a fallen bamboo and I pitched forward on the ground, and a mighty crash told me that the elephant was down. My second gun-bearer—he was the only man I had with me—pulled me to my feet, telling me the beast was dead. I found its forehead was only seven paces from where I had stood, and that it was barely three paces farther to where it first came in sight—a quick shot and a lucky one.

The sun was now rapidly sinking, so after taking a few measurements of the animal I hurried off to camp. Although we tried hard we found no other

elephants on Mount Kenia, so started on our journey across the uninhabited plains of Likipia, where we had some fine sport with the different kinds of antelope, among them bagging a fine oryx.

Night marching was getting just a little too lively, so we returned to the forest, lit a fire, and, making a bed of leaves, alternately kept watch till dawn.



From a] A FINE ORYX SHOT ON THE PLAINS OF LIKIPIA. [Photo.

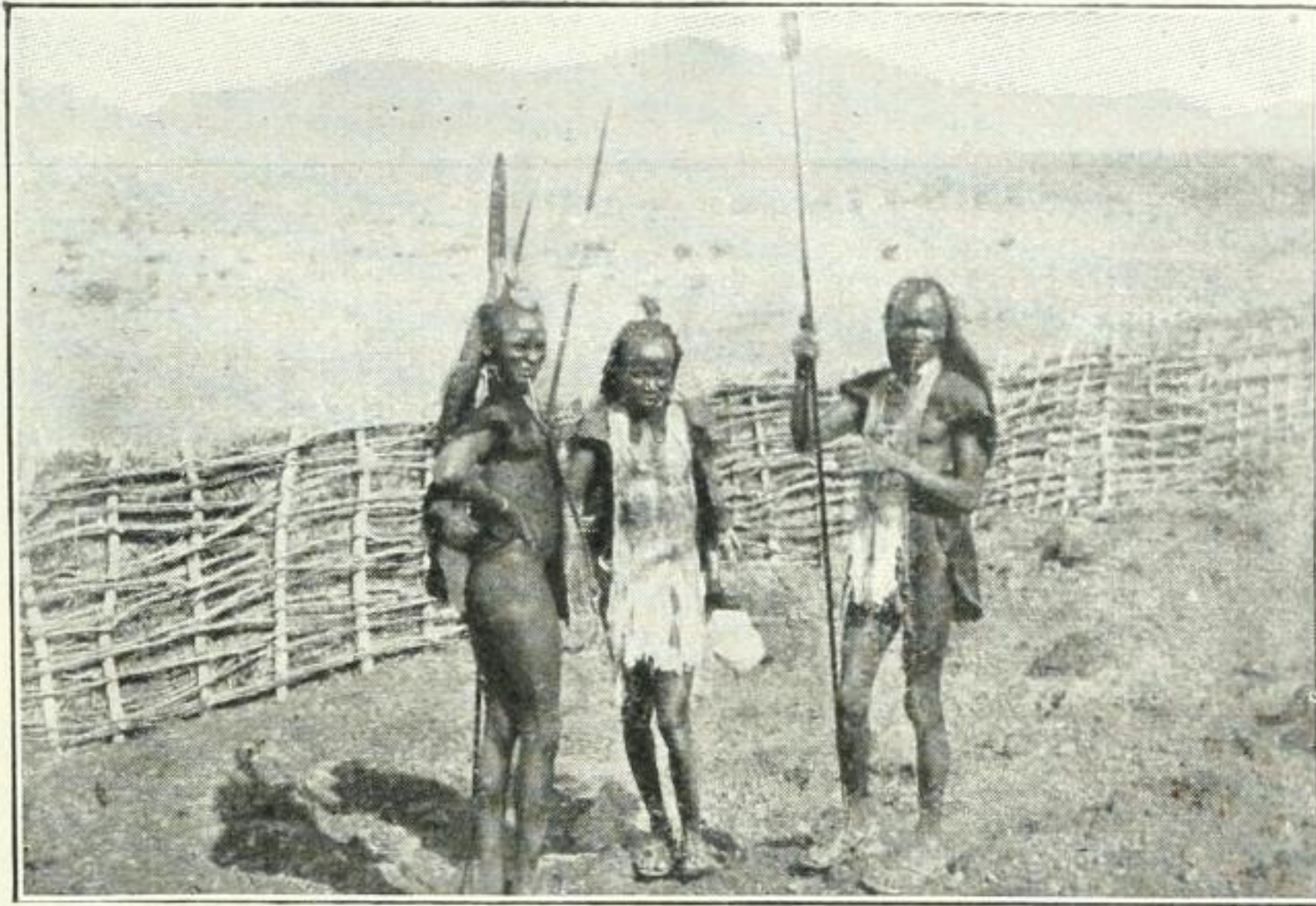


Continuing our journey next morning, we caught our first glimpse of Lake Baringo lying far below us, and soon afterwards I was met by a search-party from camp. Next day, as we reached the bottom of the escarpment, a party of Suk and Wanderobo hunters, who had seen our tents in the distance, met us, carrying green boughs as a sign of friendship. They were fine, tall men, mostly naked, the Suk with their hair worn in a curious bag-shaped chignon that hung down almost to their waists, carrying their long, slender spears, while the Wanderobo were armed with both spears and poisoned arrows. They brought us a present of a sheep and guided us to the Government station, which we reached two days later. Here the Collector, Mr. Hyde

trophies for him to take home. After his departure I spent some two months enjoying the hospitality of Mr. Hyde Baker and in making short shooting excursions in the district, during which I had several interesting experiences,

besides that already recounted with the rhinos. The lake was full of hippos and crocodiles. The former we would try to approach in a small Berthon boat, a relic of Lord Delamere's expedition, so as to get a shot at the brain when they rose to breathe. There was only just room in the little craft for the two of us, and even then it required great care

not to upset. Even on the smoothest day there was such a ripple on the water that I found shooting most difficult; however, after many failures, I one day wounded a beast. It sank, and a



SUK HUNTERS—THEY WEAR THEIR HAIR IN A CURIOUS BAG-SHAPED CHIGNON.  
*From a Photo.*



*From a]*

MR. COBB AND A CROCODILE HE SHOT AT LAKE BARINGO.

*[Photo.*

Baker, gave us a hearty welcome, and after a few days' shooting in the neighbourhood the date for Mr. Cobb to leave me drew near, and we had a busy time packing the

minute later I was nearly thrown out of the boat. Swinging myself round as far as possible, I saw the beast's great head rise within a foot of the after part of the boat, and fired into it, while



Mr. Hyde Baker paddled away for all he was worth. It was a narrow shave; a few inches nearer and we must have been upset, which, as we were far out in the lake, would have meant the loss of our rifles, even if we had succeeded in reaching shore ourselves without being attacked by the hippo. While baling out the water we had shipped, a great commotion in the distance attracted our attention. Surrounded by a circle of foaming water, nearly hidden at times by clouds of spray, we could see two huge hippos in a desperate encounter, throwing themselves half out of the water as they attempted to gash each other with their formidable tusks. After a fight lasting nearly half an hour one appeared to have got the worst of it and fled, plunging through the water, sometimes below it and at others throwing himself well above the surface in his mad endeavours to escape from his antagonist, who closely pursued him. It was a grand sight, and I only wished we could have approached closer, but two enraged hippos are best given as wide a berth as possible. Some two hours after I had fired

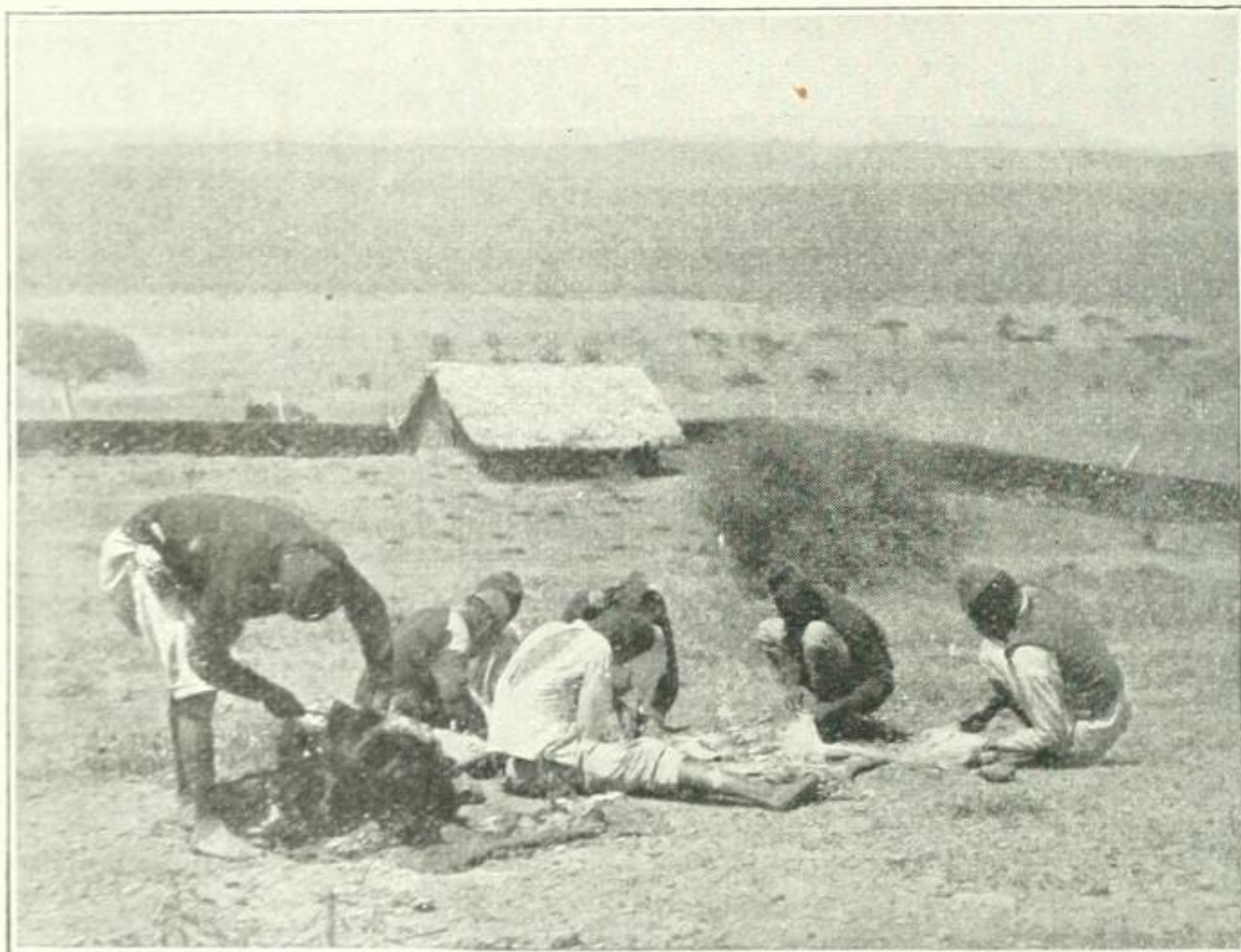


MASAI WOMEN CARRYING AWAY HIPPOPOTAMUS MEAT FOR FOOD.  
*From a Photo.*

at the beast that so nearly upset us its body floated and was towed to shore. The skinning—a long process from its immense thickness—had to be left till next morning, when a long procession of Njemps Masai women carried the meat to the boma to be distributed. Meanwhile some of the Nubie police were busy skinning and cleaning the skull to be preserved.

Among the most interesting visitors to the station were the Suk. This warlike tribe inhabits the country round the southern end of Lake Rudolf, and it is only quite lately that some sections of their tribe have been induced by the Collector of Baringo to enter into friendly relations with the Government and move down to the western shores of Lake Baringo. Every few days some of them would come into the boma on some business or other, where one of the chief objects of interest to them was a fine

black cat, which they never seemed to be tired of admiring. They wondered at its allowing us to stroke it, for these people have no domestic cats, and judged our poor pussy's nature to be the same as that embodiment of devilry, the wild cat



NATIVES SKINNING AND CLEANING A HIPPO HEAD FOR PRESERVING.  
*From a Photo.*

*(To be continued.)*