

By Mary L. Jobe Akeley

+

CARL AKELEY'S AFRICA

ADVENTURES
in the
AFRICAN JUNGLE

By Carl and Mary L. Jobe

A K E L E Y



With Illustrations

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African Jungle

of reprinting Theodore Roosevelt's 'Joy of Africa' which my husband considered a classic. I am indebted to my secretary, Virginia Deering, for her care of the mechanical preparation of the manuscript copy; to Sam M. Jones for his work in arranging the material, particularly that in the Somaliland chapters, to Sophie DeNeen and to Kent H. Stiles, for assistance in proof reading; to my old friend Dr. Henry W. Mitchell for helpful criticisms; to Dr. and Mrs. Richard F. Akins, who generously placed at my disposal their beautiful country home in whose parlor and quiet I was enabled to write a considerable portion of this book. It is my sincere desire not only to give my readers a few happy hours when they may project themselves into our life in a remote land but also to portray with fidelity its surroundings and its strange animals. If this volume inspires an appreciation of the fast vanishing wild life and of the rapidly changing nature of our continent and also land, it may be a more friendly contribution than a usually conceived of the tropical regions of the high continent, then I shall not have failed in my purpose.

Mary L. Jobe Akeley

American Museum of Natural History
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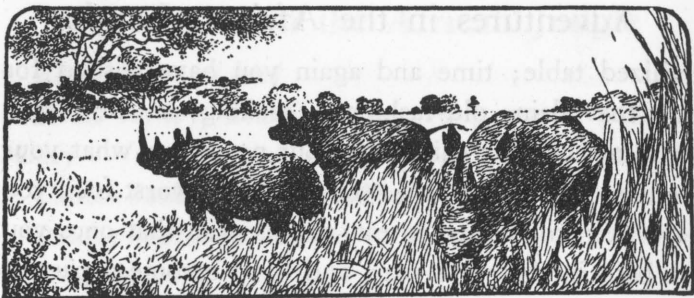
Photo. by Carl Akeley.

AS THE RHINOS CHARGE WITHOUT PROVOCATION PHOTOGRAPHING THEM IS DIFFICULT.



© A. Radclyffe Dugmore.

DUGMORE'S PHOTOGRAPHS OF CHARGING RHINOS ARE AMONG THE BEST EVER MADE IN AFRICA.



CHAPTER X

RHINOCEROS

BY CARL AKELEY

YOU'RE a tenderfoot in Africa and there's a row in the jungle! Some huge, violent beast is plunging about in the thick thorn bush. You cannot see him. So he has all the terrors of the unknown. Your heart jumps right up into your throat. You think a quick S.O.S. prayer. Suddenly you glimpse a huge lead-colored bulk cutting circles in the wild landscape. Did you ever see a pig try to play? He is the most awkward thing on earth—except a rhinoceros. Now a long, sabre-like horn is ripping around in the foliage. Grunt! Snort! Grunt! Snort! Swish! Swosh! He is off and back in a thunderhead of dirt and dust and noise. All the lesser jungle folk rush to cover. Old Father Rhino is having one of his frequent fits of bad temper. Or it may even be Mother Rhino—the old vixen! Her temper is just as touchy and uncertain as her spouse's. They just cannot bear themselves nor any other living thing. They have a bad reputation. Look

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out! He's coming! The bushes crash. A face that looks like all the devils at once comes rushing in your direction. You gulp down that unruly heart that clogs your throat. Someone who knows all about rhinos fires a shot. It ploughs up the sand in front of the animal's face and covers him with a screen of dirt and dust. He swerves and vanishes in the jungle, or else stops stone still in his tracks. In any case, you breathe again and think 'your life is saved.' Now, let us see whether you are right or wrong.

Big game hunters have one favorite pastime. They love to argue about which are the most dangerous of African wild animals. Almost invariably they place the rhinoceros—or rhino, as he is known everywhere in Africa, somewhere near the top of the list. But does he belong there? He is, I admit, a formidable beast, a living threat of death or danger. But it is safe to say that very few of these hunters have waited to see what would happen if they did not meet a rhino's charge with a volley of rifle bullets. It would take a lot more than curiosity, even scientific curiosity, regarding a rhino's habits and character, to keep a man, who is in his right mind, from shooting when one of these ungainly creatures of unusual size and fierce aspect makes a rush in his direction.

The rhino wears the grouchiest expression of any of the jungle beasts. The lion's hostility is fiercely swift,

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but it is dignified and usually reluctant. The buffalo is treacherous, vindictive and vengeful. The elephant is crafty, sudden, direct and purposeful. But the rhino just goes crazy drunk and runs amok. The lines of his jaw suggest determination, which he does not possess. His sharply pointed ears cock belligerently, and two horny spikes surmount his nose at such an angle that you often wonder how it would feel to be impaled on the longest and sharpest of them or tossed from them to whirl through space. Moreover, whenever the rhino catches the scent of man, he starts to charge about, often in aimless uncertainty. Because his manner is so terrifying, he has succeeded in getting himself shot up, just as he has established for himself a reputation for ferocity. Since he is a 'bad actor' you are always on the lookout for him.

I had hunted in Africa for some months when something happened to change my idea of the rhino. It prevented me from accepting the traditional view of the beast and shooting to save myself every time one got wind of me and came snorting and puffing in my direction.

I was caught unarmed by an old rascal one day on the high banks of the Tana. The animal came charging through the bushes toward me, and I had no weapon but a camera at hand. Twenty-five feet of open ground separated me from the scrubby forest through which he

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was plowing. There was nothing within reach to climb. He could travel much faster than I could. He would speedily run me down if I attempted to escape from him. My only hope for safety was to lie in an overhanging bush, growing over the brink of a cliff that made a sheer drop to the crocodile-infested river thirty feet below. The bush might or might not hold my weight, but I determined to swing out on it. I trusted that the rhino would rush past me into the river and that by some lucky chance I would not join him there.

The bushes parted and crashed down. The rhino plunged headlong into the open where, for the first time, he could see me. Trembling, I jumped backward toward my bush. Then the unexpected happened. The rhino stopped short, drooped his head and almost closed his small pig-like eyes. His whole attitude indicated that he was going to sleep. He ignored my presence so completely that only my sense of humor kept me from making some reply to his insult. By this time my gun boy was aware that my camera studies had been interrupted. He poked me in the back with my gun, but I had no heart to shoot the great dozing hulk before me. A more stupid, more harmless, more ludicrous object I had never beheld.

With my gun half aimed, I talked to him, to rouse him from his doze, but he stood there motionless, refusing to notice me, until my *safari*, coming through the

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bushes, provoked another charge. I could hear the thump-thump of the loads dropping to the ground as the black boys took to the trees or dashed out of his way, but he drove aimlessly through them and then sauntered off into the bush. The stage had been set for a tragedy but the play proved to be a farce.

After you have discovered that the rhino is the greatest bluffer in all Africa, you will find that the old chap furnishes most of the comedy for the drama of the jungle. His bluff succeeds because of his sinister aspect, rather than because he executes any cunningly contrived plan. If by accident you once get close enough to him to study his appearance, you will soon see that he really looks more stolid and dull than dangerous. His narrowing forehead rises in a peak that would resemble a dunce-cap if its outline were not broken by his perky ears. His shoe-button eyes seem sewed on at the wrong place. Folds of thick, wrinkled hide nearly bury them, and his two horns are always in the way when he wants to look directly in front of him.

Should a rhino happen to run over you, that would be dangerous of course. It would probably also be fatal. But I am convinced that the rhino is much too loopy to have an accurate objective or a fixed purpose, and that, if he does run you down, it is a chance happening. I do not argue from a single instance, but rather from a long list of close-up encounters, when I insist that the rhino's

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claim to be one of the four most dangerous African animals is all a bluff and that in reality he is as stupid as the elephant is wise.

Rhinos have bad eyesight. Their range of vision is probably not over fifty or sixty yards. In addition to the great horns on his nose blurring the target of his charge, he is extremely near-sighted. He probably sees 'men as trees walking,' only vague shadows at twenty or thirty paces. Therefore, when a pair of horns breaks the line of vision of a pair of half blind eyes, an angry and excited rhino literally does not know where he is going. Under such handicaps he starts a charge, and unless the wind enables him to follow scent, his charge usually develops into a ludicrous display of aimless anger. But when these absurd charges do chance to be driven home, look out! A rhino would probably attack a mountain or an ant hill if he did not happen to like the smell of it. And when the object of his random assault is large enough, he may hit it.

A friend of mine was on a train on the Uganda Railway when a resentful old rhino, probably smelling it, set out on his customary charge. The train was standing still in the middle of the plain when the occupants of the car were brought to the platform by a terrific jolt. The rhino, rushing ahead at full speed, had crashed into one of the coaches. The impact knocked him down, but he scrambled to his feet and trotted off a bit groggily,

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apparently satisfied that railway trains were not to be routed by such a method.

Victor Forbin, writing in the Parisian magazinē, *La Nature*, tells us that another train on the same railway was actually derailed by a rhino's furious onset. It was night. The lights of the train, its dim bulk, its rush along the rails, deeply insulted a strolling rhino. He promptly attacked at a furious gallop. Biff! He knocked loose from the locomotive a steel plate, which dropped beneath a wheel, and the rhino's puffing enemy was at once derailed. But the beast had made one charge too many and lay beside the track completely 'knocked out.'

But even rhinos, reckless though they are, may fall into a panic and bolt as blindly as they attack. A few years ago a hunter's camp was invaded one moonlit night by a group of rhinos. The campers were in terror, dreading that the animals would charge their scent in a moment more. But before the great beasts could destroy either tents or occupants, one blundering rhino upset a plank on which the kitchen utensils had been stored. The terrible clatter of plates, cups, pans and kettles was a new noise to him, and more than he could stand; so off they all lumbered in a headlong panic of flight.

The rhino's clothes are much too large for him. His skin does not fit. It lies loosely draped upon his massive frame and gathers up in great folds and wrinkles. These overlapping creases form ideal hiding places for myriads

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of ticks. These parasitic pests can torture the animal keenly. No hide is ever so thick and tough but that some African tick can burrow into it. But the rhino's miseries are considerably lessened by the tick bird. They are quiet looking little fellows, about the size of a catbird, but they get in much effective work. Sometimes they are known as 'the red-beaked ox-feeder'; for they also feed on the ticks infesting domestic cattle. These hungry little birds explore every fold and crease of the rhino's heavy hide, ridding him of the many ticks which molest the mighty beast.

The rhinoceros does not merely tolerate the tick birds. He cherishes them as 'permanent boarders.' The birds have an added value—they keep a keen lookout for the rhino's enemies. When a hunter appears in the offing, these sharp-eyed sentries rise instantly from the rhino's back and fly screaming about until they arouse the great drowsy beast, who will crash through the tall grass to safety, or else will charge the intruder—all according to the direction of the wind. Many a sportsman's shot has been ruined by these birds who surely pay well for their keep.

One day I happened upon a rhino as he dozed in the shade with the usual array of tick birds on his back. A second old fellow ambled leisurely into the picture. Hazily aware of an intrusion, the first animal came to attention and got under way, his charge accompanied by

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a whirr of wings. The newcomer, suddenly alert, rushed to meet him. Heading straight at each other, they gathered speed and force that promised a hair-raising encounter. Had the collision occurred, I should have had a priceless incident to tell. But as it happened, the story is without a climax. Within twenty feet of each other both rhinos stopped abruptly. Number one sauntered back to his tree and his tick birds, and resumed his interrupted nap. Number two proceeded on his way as if nothing had occurred.

Another time, I drew a charge from three rhinos, when I was sitting on the ground out of reach of my gun. There was nothing to do but to remain seated, and watch their approach. All three of them rushed past me at a distance of ten or fifteen feet, apparently as well satisfied with their charge as if it had resulted in my destruction.

I believe that usually the rhino's charge is merely a rush of investigation. Whenever he catches a scent, he blunders off in the direction from which it comes, just to find out what it is. The method was successful until the white man came to Africa with his rifle, because everything but an elephant or another rhino would promptly get out of the way of the great beast's onrush; and also both of these animals are large enough for even his poor eyes to see before he gets himself into trouble. However, since few men with guns have been willing to

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let a rhino come within seeing distance without shooting, the result of the rhino's clumsy attacks is that these animals are being killed off in Africa.

My opinions regarding the rhino are based only on one man's experience—my own; but I have had close contact with a great number of rhinos. I have met many scores of them and have been charged many times; but as I think back over my experiences, I can recall but one case where possibly the charge was in earnest. A single shot turned the beast. Yet many men have been killed, and I have every reason to believe that the rhinos of some regions are more truculent and purposeful than those I have met and that their percentage of bluff is considerably lower.

My old friend, one of the greatest students and lovers of African wild life, Major A. Radclyffe Dugmore, has had many interesting encounters with rhinos. His photographs are certainly among the best ever made in Africa. Once, near the Nanuyuki River, he came upon a pair of rhinos and succeeded in making a short film of the old one. "But she did not behave as I wished," he said. "We saw her lying asleep under a large thorn tree and stalked her until we were within about sixty yards when a current of air carried our scent to her, whereupon she promptly got up, turned round and round, snorting and putting her tail up to show that she was alarmed; but of course she did all this on the farther side of a small

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thorn bush, so that I could not get a clear view of her. I moved slightly to one side with my cinema camera, expecting that she would make a dash in my direction and that I should be able to make a really good film of her and then dodge behind a big tree when she came too close for comfort. My plan was right enough, but she decided not to interview me at closer quarters. Instead she turned, and going in a comical zig-zag fashion, soon disappeared in the bush."

On another occasion Dugmore saw a group of three rhinos standing on the top of a low hill. Making a wide detour he and his companion walked toward the animals, a fine-looking bull, a cow and a youngster half-grown. Outlined against the sky, their dark gray bodies were in strong relief to the rich golden yellow grass.

"With the utmost caution," he says, "we got nearer and nearer, the camera ready for action and my companion, De Bruin, ready with his small-bore rifle. I carried no weapon more deadly than the camera, because I did not want to have any temptation to shoot, even in self defense. If the animals charged, I must take my chance, as I was determined not to kill. I had left my rifle behind. With the three great beasts in front of me, I wondered whether I had been wise. I do not mind one rhino, as it is possible to dodge if he charges; but with three, the gentle art of dodging becomes somewhat complicated. A cow with her calf is a much more serious

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proposition than two or more full-grown ones, and a whole family has a way of making one feel somewhat uneasy.

"When we got within a hundred yards, the wind carried a suggestion of scent to the animals. The old bull stood as still as a statue, the cow became mildly agitated and turned from side to side, her calf close beside her. The young have better eyesight than the older ones, and the comical little fellow stared at us wondering what we were. Then the youngster, thinking his fears were groundless, lay down while his parents kept a careful watch. Unfortunately, though approaching from the safest direction, I was not in proper range. So down on all fours we went, moving twenty yards to one side and farther forward. Now I made some more pictures with the three animals posed in a compact group. A current of air next carried our scent the wrong way, and the old cow and her calf became greatly alarmed. In a comical way they swung round and round, with tails held straight up as danger signals. Fortunately the breeze changed again. The baby suddenly remembered that he had had nothing to eat for a long time, and so he rushed to his mother and took his dinner."

At last, needing action for the camera, Dugmore suggested to De Bruin that he fire a shot into the ground near the animals. The ringing shot made the great beasts jump about. They headed straight for the camera. Dug-

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more continued to turn the crank, obtaining a splendid film. The naturalist finishes the story by saying, "What was to happen to the camera I scarcely dared think. I was too busy wondering what would happen to me. But all my fears and worries soon vanished, for the three frantic creatures suddenly turned for some unknown reason and I got a splendid view of them disappearing with marvellous speed over the top of the hill. Never have I enjoyed anything so much as photographing their tail view."¹

But Africa is not the only home of the rhino. They are found in India and in the Indo-Malayan regions. The Indian animal is the largest of the Asiatic rhinos. The first live rhino ever sent to Europe, since the days of the Roman shows, was sent from India to Emmanuel, King of Portugal, in 1573. And it was from a sketch taken in Lisbon that Albert Dürer composed his celebrated but fanciful engraving, which has been reproduced in so many old books on natural history. This Indian rhino has been hunted by breaking him out of the jungle with a line of elephants. The Javan rhino is much smaller than the Indian beast and has an extensive range, being found near Calcutta, Burma, the Malay Peninsula, Java, Sumatra and Borneo, where it chooses to inhabit the wooded hilly countries rather than the grassy jungles.

There are two kinds of rhino in Africa: the black

¹ A. R. Dugmore: "The Wonderland of Big Game."

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rhino, which I have been telling about, and his extremely rare brother, the white rhino. It is sometimes called Burchell's Rhinoceros. Unlike the black rhino, who has a prehensile upper lip-feeler for feeding on bushes and long tufts of grass, the white rhino has a square mouth adapted to cropping grass. It is therefore found in open countries and where there are broad grassy meadows between the strips of bush. Years ago, the white rhino was frequently seen in South Africa, but now they are quite extinct south of the Zambesi, except in Zululand, where, according to latest reports, there are twelve which are strictly preserved. Today, a few white rhinos exist in the British Protectorate of Uganda north of Victoria Nyanza and also a very few in the Belgian Congo. In both regions the rare beast is protected.

Because they are somewhat larger than the black rhino, sportsmen have always been eager to shoot them. Occasionally other men report having seen a white rhino in regions far away from their usual habitat, but invariably they prove to be black rhinos covered with the dust of the white mud in which they have been wallowing. I saw one such near the Northern Eusso Nyiro. At a distance, and with the sun shining on him, he looked a pale grayish-white.

When either running or walking, the white rhino holds its head very low, its nose almost touching the ground. Like elephants, they feed during the night and

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in the cool hours of early morning and evening. The great hunter, the late Frederick Courtenay Selous, has related that when a small white rhino calf accompanies its mother it always runs in front and she appears to guide it by holding the point of her horn upon the little animal's rump; and that when the mother changes her pace from a trot to a gallop, the same position is always maintained.

The double horns of a rhino are not attached closely to the skull, as in the case of most horned animals. They are really protuberances on his hide. A record black rhino horn measures $53\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and a white, $62\frac{1}{2}$ (female), while an average horn will not measure more than 20 in the black and 30 in the white. The horns bring a high price and are frequently sent to China, where they are said to be used for medicinal purposes.

Rhinos begin their blundering career quite early in life. Late one afternoon, at the end of a march down the Tana River from Fort Hall, I sat in front of my camp in my steamer chair, dozing and dreaming that I was listening to the violent squealing of pigs. As the racket grew louder and louder, I sat up wide awake, and realized that the squealing was a reality. The noise was just below camp and grew steadily nearer. Before I had time to investigate, several porters came into view carrying a long pole. Trussed to the middle of the pole was a black mass, kicking as hard as it was squealing. It was a

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baby rhino—and he was certainly an ugly little fellow. One of my companions, wandering a little way from camp into the thorn bush, had discovered the young rhino. The boys had captured it, and the commotion had begun at once. The mother, feeding only a little way off, now came snorting and charging in to protect her offspring. A rifle shot had hurt her only slightly, but it was enough to make her turn and plunge off into the jungle. The pole was then cut, the abandoned baby slung on it, and the noisy procession set out for camp.

For the next few days, the unruly infant kept us all busy. An improvised nursing bottle was rigged up and filled with milk, and we all took turns offering it to him in an attempt to make friends. But for a long time we did not approach beyond the limits of his tether, for the little wretch charged madly at anyone who came near him. And if there was no one near by whom he could charge, he threw himself at the tree to which he was tied—snorting and squealing, true to the traditional instincts of the rhino. After a time, however, he became friendly, and, eventually, entirely docile. In spite of their blustering dispositions, baby rhinos may become gentle and even somewhat affectionate pets.

Another baby rhino gave me an unforgettable surprise one morning as I was crossing a flat covered with dense grass as high as my head. I was leading the *safari*, spreading the grass apart with my hands to make a path for

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my boys to follow. I soon reached a little gully three or four feet deep and just about as wide. It was quite hidden until I was right upon it. I soon found a convenient boulder in the middle of the gully and started to use it as a stepping stone. Pushing the grass aside to get a better view of my landing place, I reached my foot toward the boulder just as it began to move! I backed quickly, wondering if I was 'seeing things.' Then I peeped through the grass screen again and I saw that my boulder was a baby rhino. I had not frightened it; for while I waited, it moved slowly down the little gully. Fifty yards below, where the ditch ended, the baby's mother soon appeared. She did a lot of snorting and pawing about, sending my black boys scrambling up the trees. But in a moment she pushed her baby in front of her and they both galloped away.

Since the rhino will charge without provocation, it is very difficult to get close enough to him to make photographs. Because photographic records are one of the important purposes of scientific expeditions, I once undertook, before going to Africa, to construct a rhino decoy. With steel tubing, wire and a covering of burlap, I built a realistic, but inoffensive, rhino. It required two men, one inside the hind legs, the other inside the front legs, to maneuver the dummy. The one in the front who was able to look out through the snout had room to manipulate a camera placed in the head of my fake rhino. The

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chief difficulty was to imitate the rhino's walk. To have the legs of the dummy rhino move with the stride of a man, would have been a 'dead give-away.' Finally, I so arranged springs in the jointed legs that I secured a fair imitation of the rhino's gait. A coat of slate-colored paint, applied in camp after I reached Africa, completed the job. I was then ready to go out in rhino disguise to hunt with my camera along the banks of the Tana. It proved a knotty problem, however, to find a native willing to play the rôle of the rhino's hind legs. Therefore, I never had the chance to give my decoy a fair trial.

When I returned to America from that expedition, I left my rhino effigy stored in Nairobi with a firm of *safari* outfitters. I had quite forgotten about him until one day when Martin Johnson, about to return to Africa for his five-year photographic expedition, was in my studio talking about various sorts of blinds. He happened to mention an idea suggested to him by 'Willie.' "Who is he?" I asked. I soon discovered that Johnson referred to my old rhino decoy, which had been unearthed one day quite by accident in the Nairobi warehouse. No one had remembered to whom the thing belonged. But it was loaned to Johnson, who began to experiment with it near the town. The chief experience that the photographer got out of his day with the dummy was a good deal of amusement.

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Rhinos have disappeared from the region about Nairobi. Should Johnson, keenly interested in the development of the decoy idea, take my device along to the country where real rhinos abound, perhaps we may hear an interesting story. It is even possible that some grouchy old rhino may regard the decoy as an intruding stranger and may press home a real charge.

Sometimes in African hunting a real prize is bagged quite by accident. This time, the trophy fell to another. I was camped near Lake Elementeita. Another *safari*, that of Mr. Abel Chapman and his brother, was located about a hundred yards from me on the shore of the lake. Chapman was eager to secure a hippopotamus. He hoped to kill the animal at night as it fed on shore, because salvaging a dead hippo in water is a task of enormous difficulty. The moon was long past its full. The hunters retired early, leaving instructions to be called when it should rise.

Shortly after midnight they were awakened by an *askari* who told them that a hippo was close to camp. The whinnying of a pony had given the alarm. Drawing on coats and field shoes, and summoning their gun boys, Chapman and his brother hurried out of their tents. The night was still gray and starry, but they could easily make out the shadowy form of a great beast about three hundred yards distant.

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When within fifty yards of the animal, Chapman dropped on one knee to take aim. With a loud snort the massive creature rushed at them. Both men fired. One gun boy, knowing that the snort and charge did not belong to a hippo, fled into camp. The other gun boy stood firm. Fortunately a second gun was unnecessary. On came the beast another five yards. Then he dropped, plowing up the ground with his snout as he fell.

From the camp the boys now hurried out with lights so that the hunters might inspect their hippo. Then it was that Chapman discovered they had killed not a hippo at all, but an unusually fine rhino bearing three horns. It was a beautiful specimen and a very rare one indeed. For days I had been looking in this country for just such a rhino and, ironically enough, the prize of the whole region had deliberately walked into the camp of my neighbors.

The shot that brought down the big tri-horn was one of the best. Crashing into the neck between the ears, and smashing into the spinal column, it narrowly missed the great horns as the rhino charged forward headlong. No bullet aimed in broad daylight ever did its work more effectively. Had the shot been less fortunate, the wounded and infuriated rhino might easily have done so much damage that he would have impaired seriously my belief in the bluff of the rhino. The prize was lost

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to me, but my theory remained safe. Gladly, however, would I have traded all my pet theories for that rhino—one of the most desirable specimens ever obtained by any hunter in all Africa.



CHAPTER XI

BOB

BY MARY L. JOBE AKELEY

BOB was a little, chubby-faced Baganda boy the color of ebony. He might have been ten or eleven years old when I first saw him, but his age always puzzled me. As I came to know him better, he often seemed not much more than eight or nine, so innocent was he and almost baby-like. Again, when he tackled a man's job and felt hurt when ordered to let a stronger boy do it, or when he would undergo the physical hardships of the trail without even a murmur, then he appeared much older. But there was no way to tell. Birthdays do not count in Bob's tribe, and there is no way to date them if they did. Bob was born and had lived all his life in a land where time stands still, where the only seasons you can notice are the periods of long rains and short rains and the dry weeks in between. Bob dwelt on the Equator where there is no spring, summer, autumn nor winter, and where no