

IN THE TORRID SUDAN

BY H. LINCOLN TANGYE, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF 'IN NEW SOUTH AFRICA'

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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inspecting each shadow, quiet-stepping and silent we moved, till we stood over the fresh bones of a waterbuck, not a day or two old. Not a moment was lost, but for hundreds of yards the thick bushes were walked through and nothing was seen. Twenty-four hours later two lions appeared to a traveller downstream, and one of them failed to escape.

In certain localities on the Dinder are said to be the somewhat scarce rhinoceros, far more common in East Africa. It was well until recently not to stumble on them in the Sudan, for, while they were forbidden game, they are also of the most truculent character. The presence of mankind, made known to these pachyderms by a tell-tale breeze or casual noise, is sufficient to bring down the charge of the "heavy brigade" with purposeful intensity and exactness. Under such circumstances, even the game regulations of the Sudan must expect to be broken and asperities of officialdom softened. Not being numerous, these animals may be regarded as all but non-existent to the traveller here.

The "white" rhinoceros, whose colour is black, now all but extinct, is never seen here, though in the regions of the Bahr-el-Gebel, on the Congo side, they are still said to exist.

It was in the Zambesi Valley in 1895 that I saw the remains of, I believe, the last individual of its kind that was killed in South Africa, far in the north of Mashonaland. The front horn of this

beast was nearly a yard long, and the specimen is set up entire in the South African Museum.

The rhinoceros of the Sudan has a prehensile lip, fitted for gathering twigs, instead of the stumpy, grass-clipping muzzle of its cousin, who, while greatly exceeding the other in bulk, is by no means superior in fierceness and agility.

In the regions where termites infest the country, black hillocks show up amidst the grass. Often these assume the most curious shapes, and it becomes a matter of moment to decide whether they are in reality animals grazing, or merely the structures of the white ant.

I have looked at these objects intently to ascertain their actual character, and been subject to a common illusion. One so often sees that which one wishes to see, and the movement of grass blown by the wind becomes the movement of the hillock in stationary grass, thus giving apparent life to an inanimate object!

In Rhodesia the ant-hills attain an enormous size, being often as much as 80 feet high, crowned by small groves of trees; here they were miniature in comparison.

Clumps of the finger-leaf palm were scattered here and there, and on nearing one Ibrahim made his usual crouching stop, and I instantly followed his lead. We crawled breathlessly under its cover, progressing uphill, and just as we reached it a roan antelope lifted his head from the far side over the palm. My admiration was not reciprocated, and

by the time I had walked round the clump he was far away, putting every possible tree-trunk between us, though only half a dozen yards in a direct line through the clump had at first divided him from us.

It is somewhat strange, considering the extraordinary development of the senses of smell, sight, and hearing, and the eternal vigilance of animals who live amongst beasts of prey, that it should be possible to approach so closely, especially with the disadvantage of hard shoe-leather and the laboured breathing caused by movement in strained and unaccustomed attitudes, with the weight of a rifle in one hand.

The Abyssinian frontier was now within a few miles, marking the end of the somewhat hurried journey up the Dinder, and there was a distinct change in the character of the country.

Here three baby lions, carried in boxes on camel-back, were met, accompanied by the slayer of their mother, on his way downstream. The little creatures, with their huge wild eyes, were quite tractable after their few days' captivity, and submitted to caresses with almost the equanimity of kittens. Months later, when grown out of all recognition, one licked my hand through the bars of his cage in Regent's Park, which unhappily witnessed his death and that of his companion some time later.