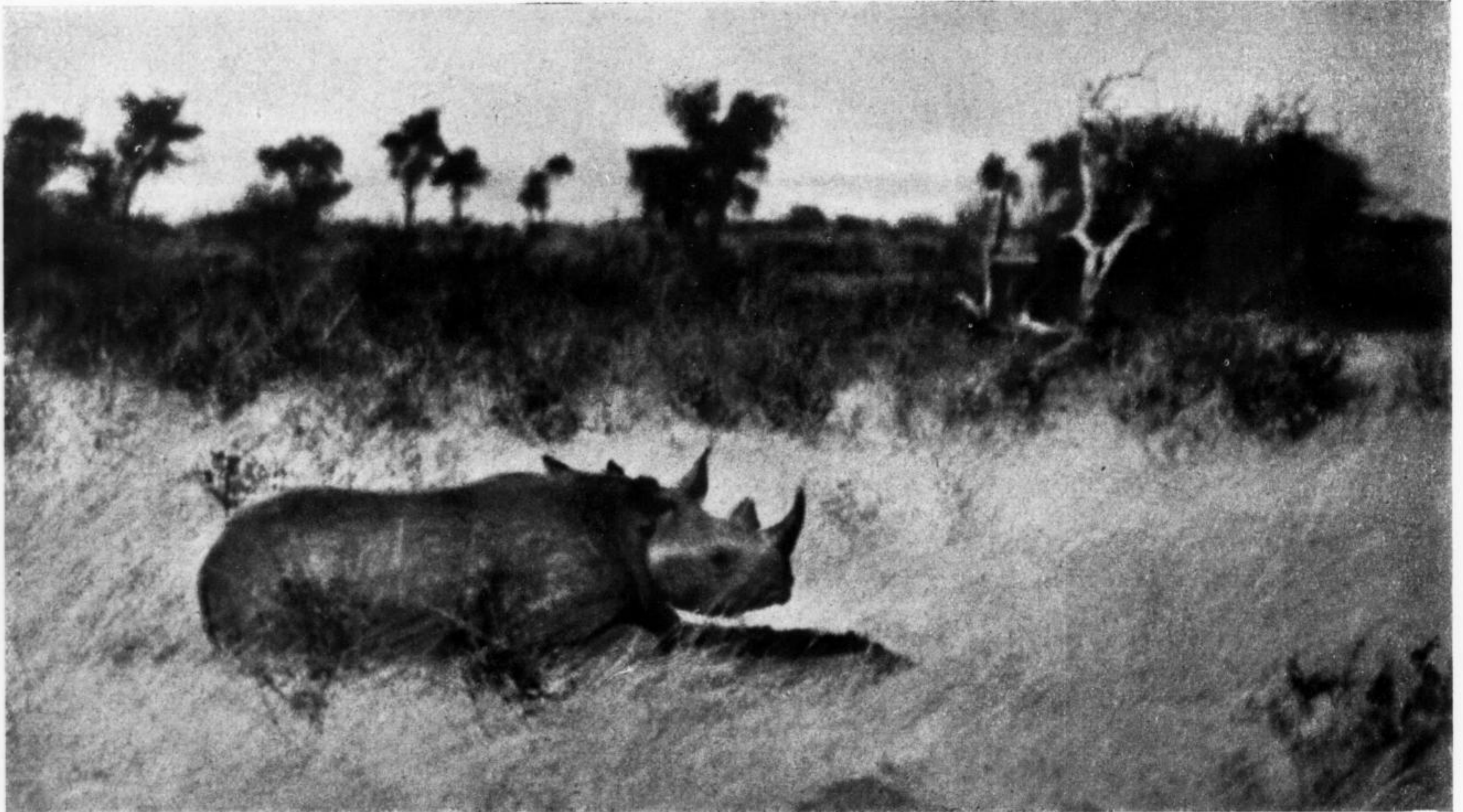


## CAMERA EXPERIENCES WITH RHINOCEROS BICORNIS.—II

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RHINOCEROS BIRDS AND THEIR HOST.

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THE rhinoceros seeks his chosen place for the midday siesta usually between the hours of nine and ten in the morning, and resumes his activities at about three in the afternoon. Where they are unmolested they will lie down on one side and sink into a deep slumber without further preliminaries; but where they have in any way been disturbed they will remain restive and apprehensive for several days, and at such times they become extremely fastidious in the choice of a resting-place. I have watched one of these creatures for hours from a ledge of the Lisudwa hills where I had a good bird's-eye view of the country below, covered with short grass in places and interspersed with young acacia trees and scrub. An individual depicted in one of the previously

published illustrations remained restive and stood up for over an hour; it then finally sat on its hindquarters and remained in this attitude for a considerable time, still in a disturbed frame of mind, turning its head now in this direction, then in another, listening intently all the while. It had been startled before by our appearance on two consecutive days. The moment its perturbed senses, all on the *qui vive*, detected the discordant sounds from our boys whom we had sent down for water, the creature made no further bones about it; it stood up and trotted off for over a mile. There was no question but that the alert animal had distinctly heard the sound of human voices at a distance of not less than three hundred yards. Their hearing is very acute once their suspicions have been roused.



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CURIOUS ABOUT THE CAMERA.

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By moving slowly and cautiously in open country, where the rhino is usually much less suspicious and wary, it may often be approached without causing alarm to the tick-birds which happen to be on the animal's body at the time. In fact, by making careful movements, taking a few steps at favourable intervals and standing stock still alternately, I secured the first picture reproduced, though the keen hearing of the rhino had already conveyed to him a suspicion of my approach and he had become fidgety. The unwary birds were in no way alarmed or disturbed. Another exposure depicts the same animal facing the camera after pivoting this way and that on a small mound in an endeavour to locate exactly the origin of the intermittent noises caused by the rap of the focal plane shutter at each exposure.

On one occasion, when tramping across the valley of the Southern Guaso Nyiro from Mount Shombole towards the base

the pig-like creature loomed up above the tall grass, remaining motionless except for the twitching of the ears. It had evidently detected the sound of our approach, and, standing stock still, we waited for it to lower its head and continue feeding before proceeding cautiously towards the vast bulks until the desired distance was reached for a satisfactory exposure. Determined to make the best of conditions, I was on this occasion using a portrait lens and tripod, and kept shifting cautiously towards my prospective "sitter." The beast kept raising its head uneasily at short intervals, and felt, as it were, by instinct that everything was not quite as it should be, although we were on the right side of the wind. It finally raised its head, swayed it in our direction, and could not fail to glean a blurred view of our close proximity in spite of its exceedingly bad eyesight. Gazing with its beady, twinkling eyes and nervously



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GAZING INTENTLY IN OUR DIRECTION.

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ALMOST INCLINED TO INVESTIGATE THE STRANGE APPARITION.

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of Mount Sambu, we espied a pair of rhinoceroses in the distance. They were feeding some distance away from the swamp, on the edge of a large, bare, open plain which extended south to the lake shore and west to the foot of Mount Sambu. The coarse grass, interspersed with clumps of reeds and plants, among which the two animals were feeding at leisure some thirty feet apart from one another, was mostly about four feet in height and grew in tufts. The two vast bodies were stained with the light-coloured earth in which they must have wallowed quite recently, and showed a light grey hue as they lurched slowly through the parting vegetation.

Of a sudden one of these old-world beasts, the one nearest to us, raised its head, and the massively outlined proportions of

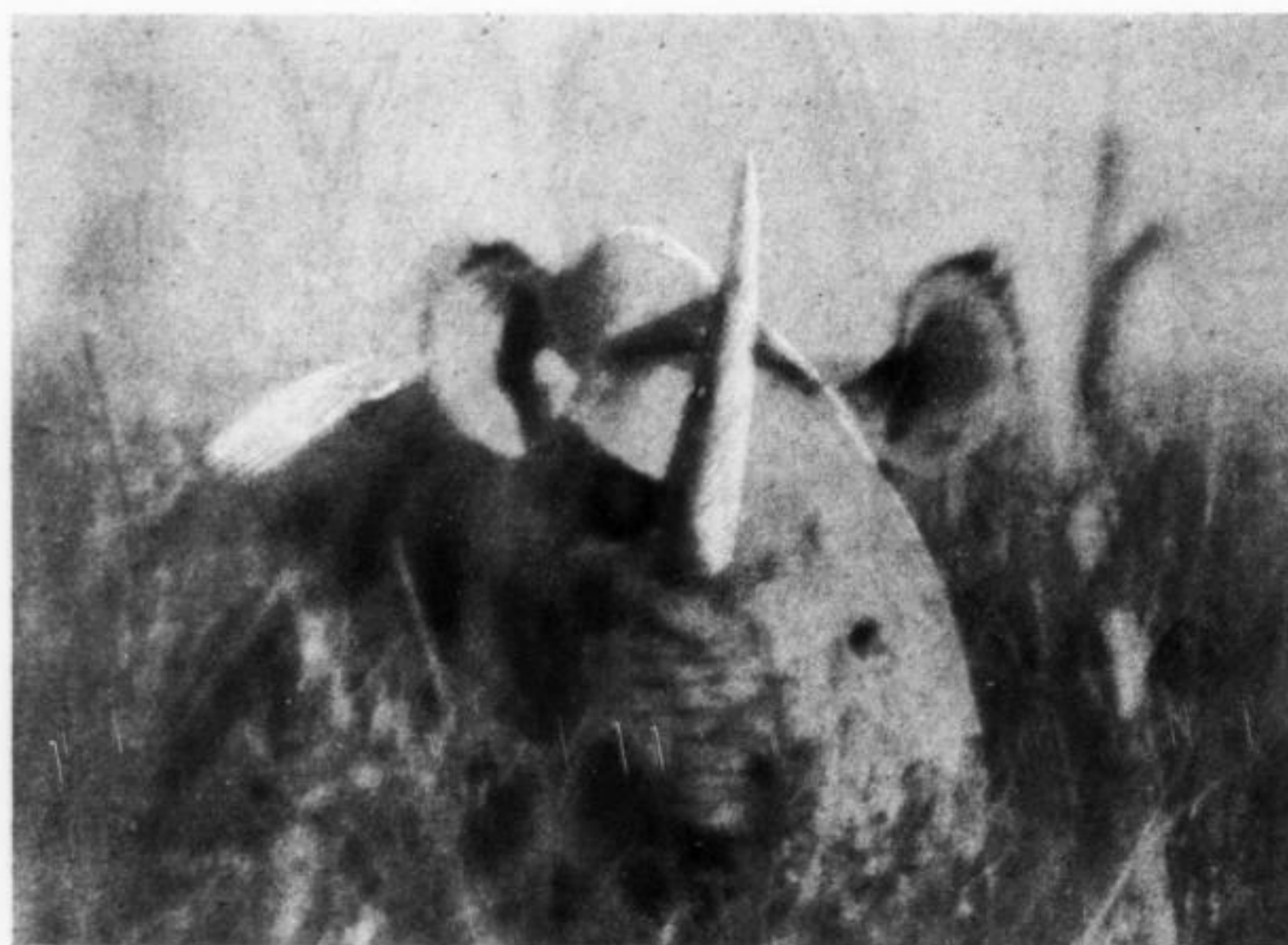
twitching ears, a dull curiosity finally overcame the animal's uneasiness, and it decided to investigate the object of its inquisitiveness. With head well erect the ponderous animal moved slowly forward in our direction, stopping after every two or three steps, puzzled with the unusual sight and straining its defective eyes to get the object well in view. Its image grew on the focussing screen with every slight forward movement of the placid beast, and accurate focussing with my reflex camera became a difficult and trying matter. Prepared, if necessary, to sacrifice the camera should the "sitter" become flurried at the last moment, I kept focussing until the vast bulk of the animal occupied a satisfactory proportion of the ground glass, and pressed the release evidently at the instant when the beast had



lowered its head and was moving out of cover into the more open patch of ground on which we stood, having, presumably, decided that the strange objects required a closer examination. The click of the camera had but the effect of inviting the old fellow to step forward into the small open ground at the end of which we stood with the camera. The gun was now held in readiness in case anything should go amiss.

A sudden yell from one of us, however, accompanied with a few blasphemous terms of endearment, brought the beast out of the depths of its thought, and throwing up its head it wheeled round in what looked rather a hesitating fashion at first, as if uncertain what to do next in such embarrassing circumstances. It trotted out on to the bare plain and stood for quite a minute gazing at us, giving me ample time to direct the camera lens to where it stood. Trotting a few paces round, the creature again wheeled in our direction, as if it was not satisfied as yet with the interrupted investigation. From the accompanying illustration it will be seen that the good-natured but inquisitive beast had almost made up its mind to approach the strange objects for a second time, but thought better of it ultimately, swung round and trotted off, closely followed by its mate, which was at the outset a certain distance away, too far to permit me to include both of them in the picture. It was a comical sight to see the pair of them trotting off one behind the other, with elevated heads and tails erect, like a pair of gigantic warthogs.

It is a well known fact that these creatures are, perhaps, the most erratic in their behaviour of all the large game animals of the African continent. They are easily flurried, and it is largely due to this that they will often become a nuisance to the traveller. Their awkward custom of standing motionless and alert behind some scrub or bush listening intently to the approach of strange sounds, and suddenly barging out from the most unexpected direction as one's porters have almost stumbled on to them, is occasionally attended with mishaps in the nature of loads scattered and chop-boxes broken, as the boys naturally drop their burdens in their anxiety to keep clear of the clumsy, dull-witted animal, which is in reality only too keen to make its frantic escape. Imagining itself surrounded by the line of porters, it may at times repeat its rush through the caravan, with fatal result to its ignorant self. Being suddenly confronted with a human being at close quarters, and particularly in bush country, an old bull may occasionally stand restive for a short while, snorting defiance before taking itself off at a trot. On detecting a strange object they are quite likely to trot up to it with head



FACE TO FACE WITH RHINOCEROS BICORNIS.

We were travelling light from our base camp, and our few porters had just pitched our small 40lb. tent on a ledge of the Lisudwa hills, which are situated below the impressive Nguruman Range, some eight miles from Lake Natron, when one of the boys informed us of the presence of a large bull rhinoceros. The peaceful animal had evidently chosen a suitable thorn tree on the broken hillside, some two hundred yards from our camping ground, and had occupied the chosen spot between the hours of nine and ten previous to our arrival. The hum of human voices from the camp was apparently detected and had awakened the old beast from his heavy slumber. At all events, as I approached him from down-hill over the broken ground, full of jagged, loose-strewn lava rock, I obtained a glimpse of the massive head with the restive twitching ears cocked and two horns stuck aggressively in the air, facing in the direction of the camp and thereby giving me a side view of the head. From the general attitude of the upper part of the body it appeared that he was still seated on his hindquarters with his fore-legs stretched in a manner often seen with the domestic pig as it sits on its haunches. I happened to be standing some ten or twelve yards below in an ugly, rock-strewn, dry rain-water course, and my movements were circumscribed on either side by patches of thorn-scrub. I was about to prepare for an exposure when he suddenly raised his body, wheeled round with alacrity and hurled himself down the hillside, choosing the watercourse as a line of escape, and giving me barely time to dispute my ground by a shot at the animal's shoulder. With astonishing quickness he swerved at the impact of the bullet, and it was wonderful to see with what speed he went clattering down the hillside over the broken ground and galloped for miles over the plain below. We had a magnificent view of the fleeing animal. This gave us a singular opportunity to observe the gait and actions of the galloping rhino, which I should have liked to place on record with an appropriate photograph, but it was not to be on this occasion.

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IN TYPICAL BUSH COUNTRY.

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