

# THE LAKE REGIONS

OF

## CENTRAL AFRICA.

*A Record of Modern Discovery.*

*By JOHN GEDDIE.*

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WITH THIRTY-TWO ILLUSTRATIONS.

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and by many they are believed to represent the aboriginal people of the continent who have been dispossessed by negro and other immigrants. Rumanika had also to tell of another pigmy people, who had the further remarkable distinction of wearing tails. But the strangest marvel of all was a people "who had long ears descending to their feet; one ear formed a mat to sleep on, the other served to cover the owner from the cold like a dressed hide." Seeing, probably, that his listener looked incredulous, Rumanika added, to clench the truth of his narrative, "They tried to coax one of them to come and see me, but the journey was long, and he died on the way." Everybody must regret this untoward accident; a specimen of the long-eared tribe, if he could have been brought to Europe, would have created a tremendous sensation in scientific circles.

Some of the notes on natural history picked up in Karagwe have also the merit of novelty. The rhinoceros—the black two-horned variety—is a denizen of this country. Mr. Stanley had the fortune to shoot here a white rhinoceros, which, however, like the "white elephant," is only a dirty-gray coloured brute. This animal had evidently just escaped from the claws of some wild beast, a hand-breadth of his thick hide being torn from his rump. But, if we are to believe the natives of the country, it is the rhinoceros's big cousin the elephant who is his most unpleasant neighbour. If they meet in a jungle path, the rhinoceros has to squeeze his ponderous body into the thicket, or prepare for a battle-royal. In

such a quarrel his horn is an ugly weapon, but it is no match for the tusks and the superior weight of his rival. The elephant will sometimes treat him contemptuously—as a schoolmaster would deal with a naughty boy—and, breaking off a stout twig, say as thick as a man's thigh, he belabours the unlucky beast with it until he is glad to save himself by flight. At other times the elephant will force his stubborn adversary against a tree and pin him there with his tusks, or will throw him down and squeeze the life out of him. These tales are probably apocryphal; but there are authentic records of contests in the forest between these two huge beasts in which the bulkier animal has not always come off victor. The rhinoceros is a headstrong and self-willed creature, and his vicious-looking head does not belie his actual character. The fits of ungovernable rage in which he is said to indulge, when it is his habit to root up trees with his horn and run "amuck" among his acquaintances, may probably be merely a playful way he has of displaying his vast strength. But an old bull-rhinoceros is not a pleasant object to encounter unarmed in a forest path; and if the crusty veteran happen to come across a surly bachelor elephant whose temper has just been ruffled by expulsion from the herd, the spectator may look out for a scene worth witnessing—first of all, taking care to secure a safe place of retreat. Sir Samuel Baker, who "bagged" many a rhinoceros in the course of his journeys, has remarked that the black rhinoceros almost invariably charges



SIR SAMUEL BAKER SHOOTING A RHINOCEROS.

an enemy that he smells but does not see, while he generally retreats if he observes the object before obtaining the wind.

On the southern margin of Karagwe, the limit of the region drained into the Victoria Nyanza is reached at a ridge five thousand six hundred feet above sea-level, beyond which the waters flow towards the Tanganyika. So far as has yet been explored, this height seems to represent the average level of the outer "rim" of the lake basin. Outside of Karagwe, we look in vain for Rumanikas among the petty kings to whom court must be paid. Garrulity and lying are met with in abundance, but no more genial kindness and zealous sympathy. The chiefs are adepts in black-mailing, which they sometimes vary by pilfering or barefaced robbery. At one of these villages, the caravan which Grant was hurrying forward—the chief of the expedition being several marches ahead—was set upon by a gang of rascals, armed with spears, who killed several of his porters, put the rest to flight, broke open and plundered bales and boxes, and, clad in their spoils, danced jeeringly round the white man as he sat on the wreck of his fortunes. In the same neighbourhood Stanley encountered the arch-bandit of these regions, Mirambo, whose name is a word of terror from the Victoria Lake to the Nyassa, and from Tanganyika to Zanzibar. To the explorer's astonishment, he found this notorious personage—

"The mildest-mannered man  
That ever cut a throat ;"