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# After Big Game in East Africa

by F. A. M. WEBSTER

*Illustrated by Ernest Prater*

The ambition of all sportsmen is to shoot big game, and hundreds of demobilized officers and others are wondering how this desire can best be realized. In the following narrative the Author gives some valuable hints as to the fitting out of expeditions, cost, and the game available. He speaks from practical experience, as he has hunted all over East Africa. He served in the German East African campaign, and describes the conditions as they exist to-day, while his own adventures make thrilling reading.



If your luck takes you east of Suez, and in the course of your wanderings you come to the palm-fringed, coral-bound, tropical coast-line which runs from Port Amelia to Kismu, in British East Africa, you may land at pretty well any port of call you fancy and begin big-game hunting within a comparatively short time of setting your foot on shore.

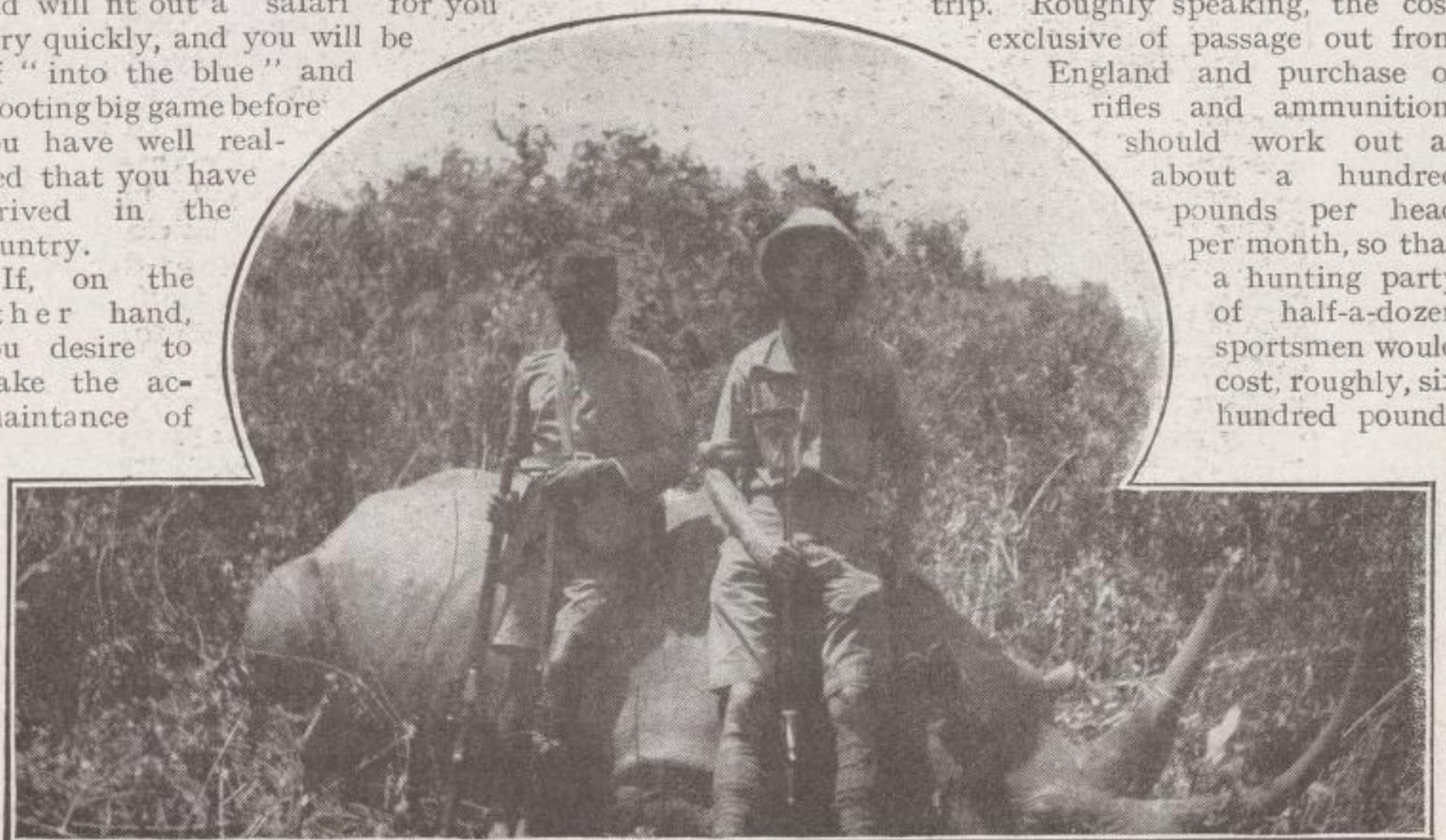
If you have a desire to travel in comfort and to do your shooting within fairly easy reach of a civilized town, you will take a boat from England to Mombasa and travel by train up to Nairobi, the capital of British East Africa. Once you have arrived here Mr. Dawson, or Newland and Tarlton, will tell you where game is to be found and will fit out a "safari" for you very quickly, and you will be off "into the blue" and shooting big game before you have well realized that you have arrived in the country.

If, on the other hand, you desire to make the acquaintance of

the unknown and unknowable wild, and are not afraid to penetrate the dim, mysterious, well-nigh impenetrable fastness of the bush, where frequently your porters will have to hack every foot of the path with their pangas, or big knives, then you will land at Tanga, where, incidentally, one of the greatest battles of the German East African Campaign was fought, and go by train to Mospi. I believe Dawson, the hunter, has an agency there under the charge of Captain Miller, so there should be no difficulty in fitting out a safari.

In either case, my advice to the would-be hunter going out to East Africa for the first time is to get into touch with Dawson, or Newland and Tarlton, at Nairobi, directly such a journey is contemplated and obtain an estimate for the trip. Roughly speaking, the cost

exclusive of passage out from England and purchase of rifles and ammunition, should work out at about a hundred pounds per head per month, so that a hunting party of half-a-dozen sportsmen would cost, roughly, six hundred pounds



Lieut.-Colonel S. N. Faulkner, with a rhinoceros shot near Meru, on the foothills of Mount Kenia. The front horn measured thirty-one and a half inches and the back one twenty-four inches.

a month; but sportsmen going out singly might have to spend a bit more, and there would be, of course, the purchase of licences in addition to be considered.

So far as the safari itself is concerned: working on the basis of a party of six, it would be necessary to pick up the following personnel in East Africa. One white hunter, two white assistants, a hundred native porters (termed "Wapagazi"), and six native hunters.

As I have said, such a safari would cost about six hundred pounds a month for a party of six, but that price should include the curing and setting up of trophies obtained during the expedition.

While on this point of fitting out an expedition, one cannot emphasize too strongly the necessity of taking experienced and fearless hunters into one's employ. Big-game hunting is a tricky business in any case, but the sport becomes doubly dangerous when undertaken in such a country as East Africa. In the first place,

the animals one meets are naturally savage, while one frequently comes upon game unexpectedly at a few yards distance. Then the bush itself is so dense that any but the most experienced frontiersman will irretrievably lose himself within a very short time of entering those dim and silent strongholds of Nature. Again, a white man going out from England for the first time can hardly hope to master the Swahili language by studying a textbook on the voyage out, and is, therefore, likely to get into trouble with the natives unless he has with him a fellow white man who knows the people and speaks their tongue. Nor will one's personal native servants hesitate to impose upon a "Bwana" (master) whom they recognize as a "greenhorn."

If, however, one speaks the language and knows the country there is a great deal of pleasure to be got out of fitting up your own caravan. Good personal "boys" can be found in plenty at Dar-es-Salaam, Tanga, or Mobasa, at fifteen to twenty rupees a month, and, now that the

war is over, caravan-porters and native hunters should be both plentiful and cheap at Mospi and Nairobi. It is hardly necessary, I suppose, to remind the "old hand" that he should make sure that the food he buys is suitable to the tribesmen he employs, otherwise he will find himself up country with a caravan of sick men who will starve rather than eat the kind of "posho" he has provided for them.

The purchase of camp kit and one's own food-stuffs are matters for deep and careful consideration, for upon them depend not only one's personal comfort but, in a very large measure, one's health as well. The matter of the selection of guns I will leave alone—except

to say that, personally, I would never be without a .318 Express rifle.

As regards camp kit: a good sleeping-bag and plenty of blankets are necessary, for the nights are bitterly cold in some parts of Africa. One needs a good light X-pattern bed and a cork mattress. On no account sleep on the ground; "jigger" fleas, which are plentiful, become positively dangerous if they effect a lodgment in the spine. A small folding-table, a portable chair, a collapsible bath, a double safari tent, and a mosquito net are needed. Clothing should be light, and plenty should be taken so that sweat-soaked garments can be changed at the end of the day's march. Personally I have found short knickers, puttees, and a short-sleeved bush-blouse (half tunic and half shirt) the most comfortable. And, of course, good strong boots.

Many firms supply a "Sufuria," containing within a large bucket all the plates, knives, forks, spoons, kettles, pans, and cooking pots one is likely to require. Food should be the best obtainable

and plenty of it, for one must live well to keep well in a tropical, malarious country.

Finally, everything possible should be packed up into wooden "chop-boxes," so that each, when packed, weighs fifty pounds, for that is a porter's load, which he will carry on his head for



The Author with his personal "boy," cook, and native hunter.



The ideal costume for big-game shooting in East Africa.

twenty or thirty miles a day, or more, if put to it. If there is any scarcity of male labour it will be found that the native women make excellent substitutes, and can go as fast and almost as far as the men.

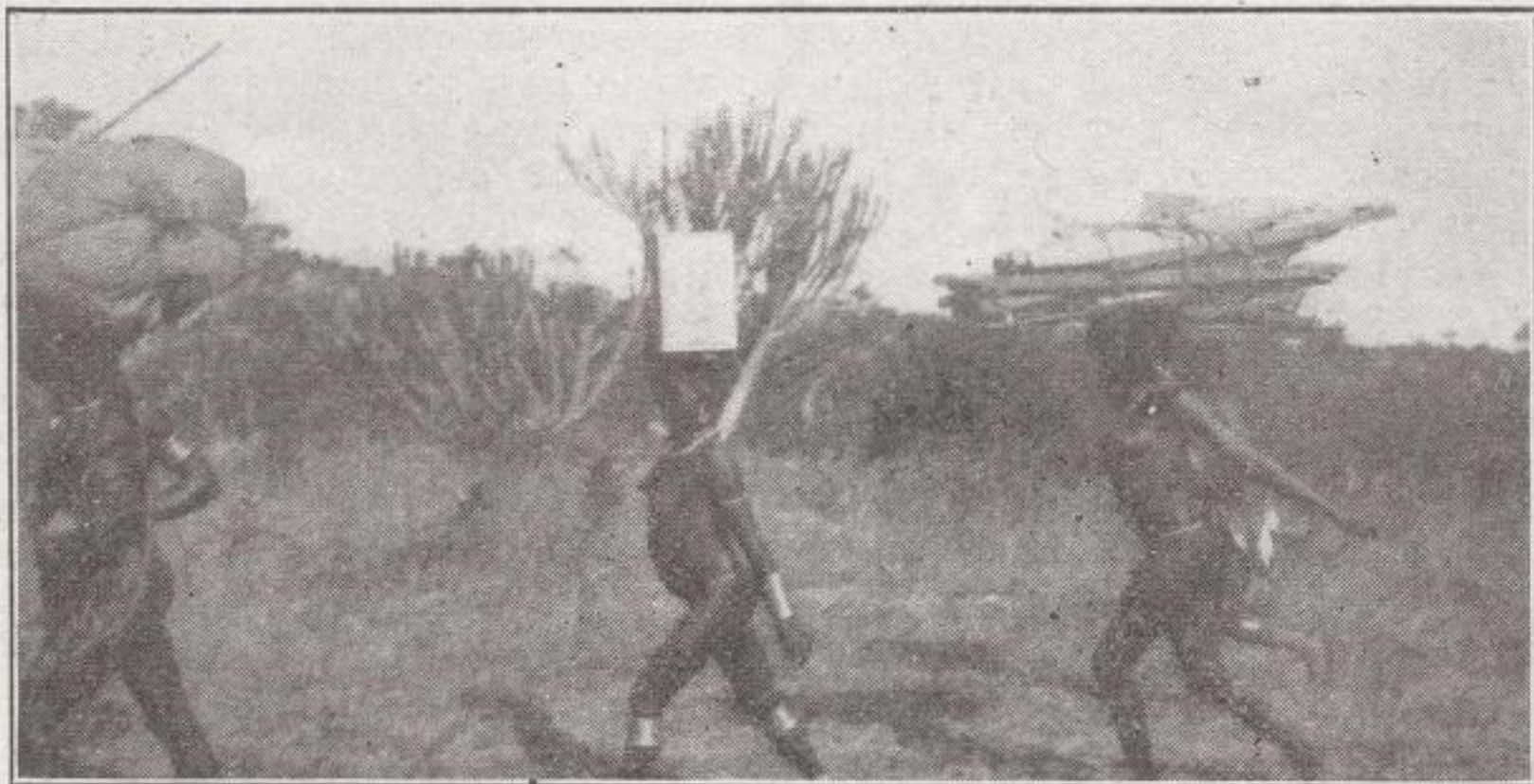
The master who is a good shot will find that he gets the best service, for the East African native is a great eater and a lover of fat meats, such as the flesh of the eland, antelope, or the hippopotamus; indeed, he will eat until he is positively ill and his stomach painfully distended if he is allowed to do so, in which case he will be unfit to travel next day.

Around Nairobi game is still very plentiful despite the rapid advance of civilization in that locality, a state of things largely due to the fact that game is strictly preserved on that part of the Athi Plains which lies between the Uganda Railway and the Mbagathi Road, and woe betide the luckless individual who infringes the game laws, for Somali keepers will spring up from the very ground at his feet and will dog his footsteps until they have established his identity

To me the delight of big-game hunting in East Africa has always lain in the uncertainty of it, no less than in the primitive conditions under which life is lived.

For the first few days after setting out you have to keep a close eye upon your porters, otherwise at the end of the day's march you will discover that a number have thrown their loads into the bush and have made off home. However, if you keep them well in hand for the first few days and kill sufficient game for them to have a really good gorge there is not likely to be any desertions afterwards.

All sorts of queer things may happen on the line of march. You may notice each man carefully pick up his feet as he passes a certain spot on the path, gesticulating and exclaiming as he does so: "Eh! Siafu!" This will mean that a column of biting ants is crossing your trail, and it behoves you also to pick up your feet carefully, for as a friend of mine once remarked: "Once disturb a column of ants and they will swarm all over you; then the leader



Porters on the march.

and finally haled him before Captain Percival, the Chief Game Warden, to be dealt with and fined.

Six or seven years ago a good head of Impala buck could always be counted upon within five miles of Nairobi, while lion, leopard, rhinoceros, and buffalo were still plentiful on the slopes of the Ngong Hills which overshadow the capital.

During these last four and a half years, however, huge standing camps have been pitched at Mbagathi and manœuvring troops have swarmed all over the countryside, with the result that all the game have gradually become more shy and more difficult to stalk, while the wilder and rarer species have been driven farther afield and are rarely seen.

The only buffalo to be found in the Kikuyu country to-day are the herd preserved by Sir Northrop Macmillan on his estate at Ol Donyo Sapuck. Rhinoceros, too, are but rarely seen; lions, however, still come down to the Athi River, within five miles of Nairobi, fairly frequently; indeed, five of these beasts were shot in that locality by Mr. Tarlton as recently as Christmas, 1918.

will stand on your head and clap his hands, whereat his thousands of followers will all bite you simultaneously."

On one occasion a friend of mine was leading his safari along a path through high grass when, without rhyme, reason, or warning, a big rhinoceros charged straight through the column and finished off a couple of luckless porters. My friend immediately halted his caravan and followed the rhino's track into the bush. After a while he sighted the animal and, firing at once, wounded him. He heard the crashing of a heavy body through broken branches and a few minutes later the wild shouts of alarm from the natives he had left on the path. Going hastily back he found the rhinoceros had worked round in a circle and had again charged through the column, but without doing any material damage this time, although porters' loads lay scattered in every direction. While the hunter was standing there wondering what he had better do, the animal made his third appearance and immediately charged again, but this time he was in the open. On he came like an

express train, with head up and the big horn on his nose covering the vital spot, but at twenty yards he dropped his head—as is the custom of the beast—and at once exposed the vulnerable part of his back. Luckily my friend was an experienced shot and a very cool hand, so he took his time even at that close range and dropped the rhino in his tracks; but so great was the speed at which it was travelling that it finally came to ground literally at the hunter's feet.

Up early in the morning, one makes a fifteen or twenty-mile march before the sun has gained the full strength of his power, and thereafter camps in the shade for the rest of the day. Perhaps the best meal of all is made from the heart or liver of a freshly-killed buck which is cooked before the warmth of life has died out of it. Nor do I know anything more delightful than to sit at the door of one's tent on an evening of brilliant moonlight and watch the porters and hunters squatted upon their haunches around the camp-fire of blazing logs, listening to the quaint native songs which they sing softly.

Once when in such a camp I was awakened very early by my personal boy with the news that a big rhinoceros was in a river-bed in the bush not half a mile away. In a very few minutes I had slipped into my clothes, grasped my rifle, and was off after the game.

The bush was very dense and the going extremely difficult. So thick was the undergrowth that one was moving continually in a dim mysterious twilight—grey-green lichens grew on all the tree-trunks, great festoons of livid, clammy creeper hung down from the branches overhead, and there were roots in plenty to trip the feet of the unwary. Over one such root I tripped and went down heavily just as we were nearing the river. There was a crash ahead, a grunt, and I saw a greyish-dirty hide disappearing through the scrub not twenty yards ahead. There was no time for a shot, but it was a good chance lost through an unavoidable accident.

All that day we tracked and followed, but never caught a sight of our quarry. Once I heard a sound like wood being sawn, and knew that there was a leopard not very far away, but he eluded us. On our return we ran right into a tribe of baboons and my companion threw up his

rifle to fire. Luckily I was just in time to prevent his doing so, for there were fully forty of them, and they would have torn us limb from limb had he wounded or killed one of their number. Long after they had passed we heard them barking as they made their way along the rocky valley. My companion was much incensed at having been prevented from firing, saying he particularly wanted a baboon skin to make into a tobacco pouch. As I pointed out to him, it would be cheaper to buy a pouch when he reached a town, and that any way I had yet to learn that dead men had any particular use for tobacco.

Our day was not destined to prove entirely fruitless, however. Darkness had almost closed in by the time we reached the edge of the bush, and then, against the skyline, we could just make out a magnificent Impala buck feeding. What little wind there was blew directly from the antelope towards us, so we were able to crawl to within easy range before risking a shot. The nearer we approached the creature the more clearly was I able to discern the fine proportions of the horns I coveted. As luck would have it, and by the laws of the chase, it was my turn to fire first. No one who has not shot big game can possibly realize the anxiety with which I dwelt upon my aim, nor the care I took to make every due allowance for the rapidly fading light. At last I was satisfied; held my breath, and pressed the trigger. I heard the thud of the bullet and saw the big buck go crashing down, kicking and struggling.

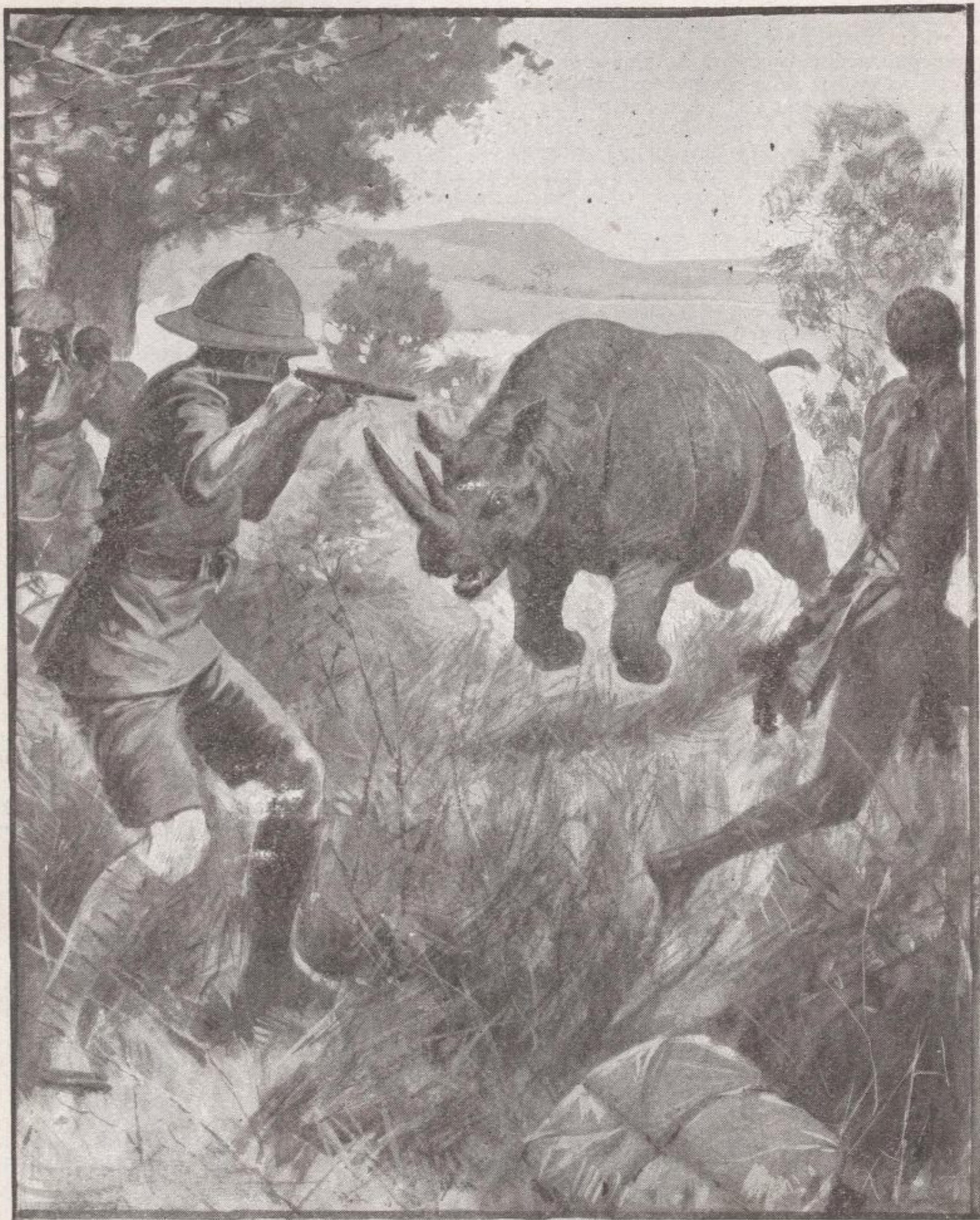
While I reloaded my rifle, my native boy, a Wakamba, dashed forward and quickly dispatched the animal with his hunting-knife. When we came to take the head I found that it was a trophy to be proud of. Indeed, it is one which I have at home now and often look upon with pleasurable recollections.

Very shortly after this I saw what I shall always consider to be a most remarkable shot. Mr. Le Mare, of the 4th K.A.R., was spending

a week-end at my camp, and towards evening we had gone out to try and get a buck for Sunday's breakfast. Knowing the locality well we had no difficulty in going straight to a spot where buck were usually plentiful. And there, sure enough, we found a small herd of Thompson's gazelles feeding.



Temporary hut erected by the Kikuyu for the accommodation of a shooting party.



"On he came like an express train."

The herd comprised two bucks and five does. They were, however, a long way off, across a valley, and without any chance of getting nearer without disturbing them, so it was decided to risk a long shot. We tossed for first shot and I lay down to fire but missed, and the herd was away in every direction in a moment.

We were, however, determined to have fresh meat for breakfast, and so followed the herd up on to the high ground whither they had gone. I took the right of the plateau and Le Mare the

left. Having walked some distance without finding anything, I stopped and looked over towards my companion. To my surprise I saw him running as hard as he could go. Suddenly he stopped and from a standing position let drive with the ordinary '303 service rifle he was carrying. As soon as he had reloaded, he commenced to run forward again. I dashed forward on a converging path to see what he had bagged. Imagine my surprise when I found he had dropped a "Tommy" at fully

four hundred yards range, running directly away from him.

The extraordinary nature of the shot will be realized when it is remembered that the hunter fired standing and when out of breath, that dusk was falling, and that he fired at a rapidly-moving target travelling directly away from him. The bullet was found to have entered directly under the tail, traversing the whole length of the body, and making its exit through the breast.

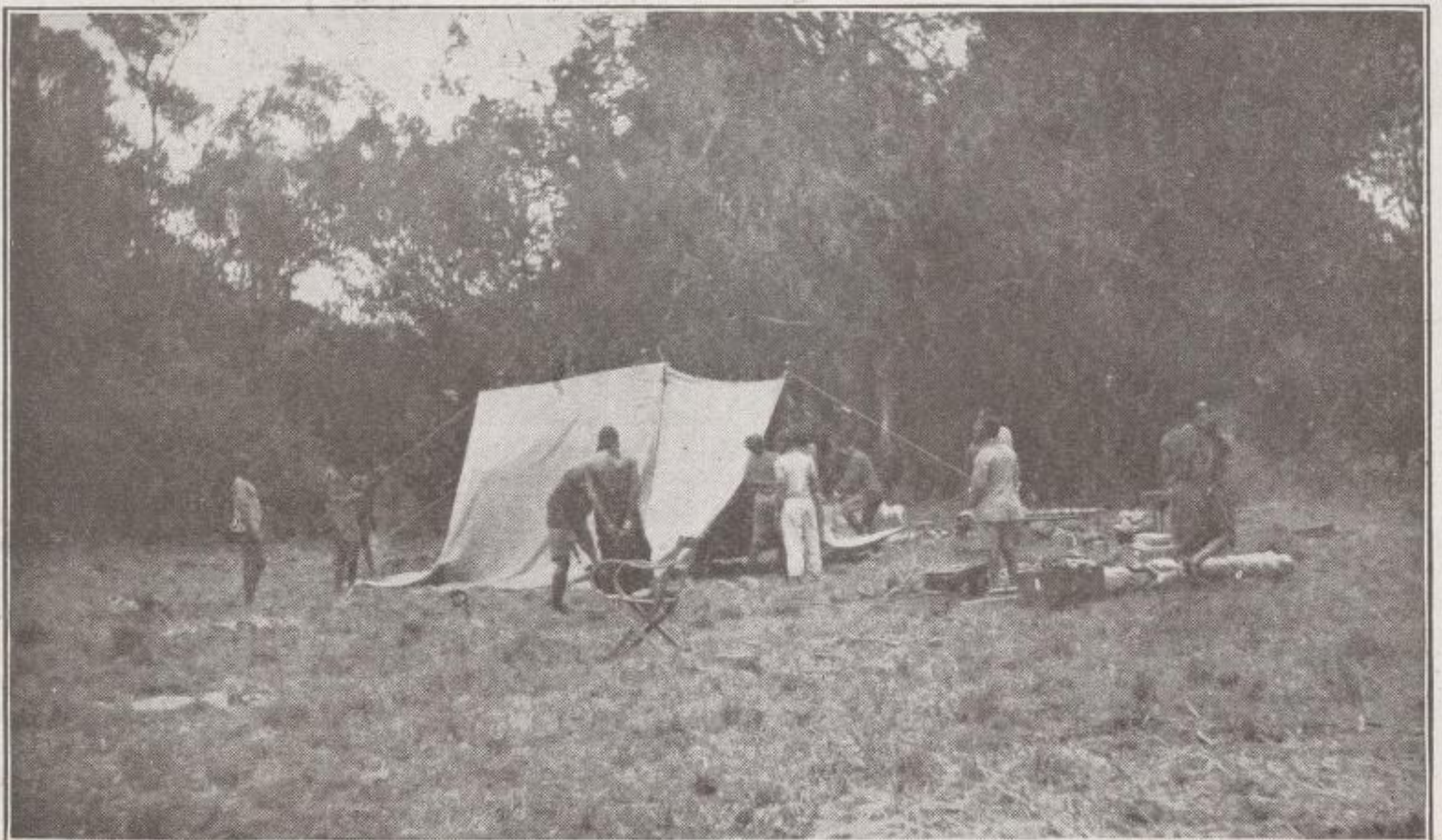
Very few sportsmen carry a revolver, in addition to hunting-knife and rifle, when they are out after big game. Personally, I would never be without one, especially after an experience I once had with a wild pig in the bush.

Two of us had started out before daylight for a promiscuous hunt through the bush, prepared to take our chance with any game luck might send across our path. We were pretty sure of buck in any case, as their custom is to feed on the high land at the edge of the forest at night and to return to the open plains soon after dawn. Light was flooding fast across the purple sky as we emerged from a thin belt of scrub on to an open plateau. We at once spotted a herd of buck some distance away on the other side of the clearing. Sinking down to stalk them we crept forward on our hands and knees to some bushes farther on, and so stage by stage we drew nearer until we were well within range. We each selected a bull and calmly prepared to fire. The butts of our rifles were to our shoulders, our cheeks cuddled down to the stocks, and our eyes glancing over the sights; but before either of us could press the trigger a lioness bounded out of the forest and made straight for the herd. There was a chorus of frightened snorts and the next instant buck and lioness had vanished into the thick undergrowth.

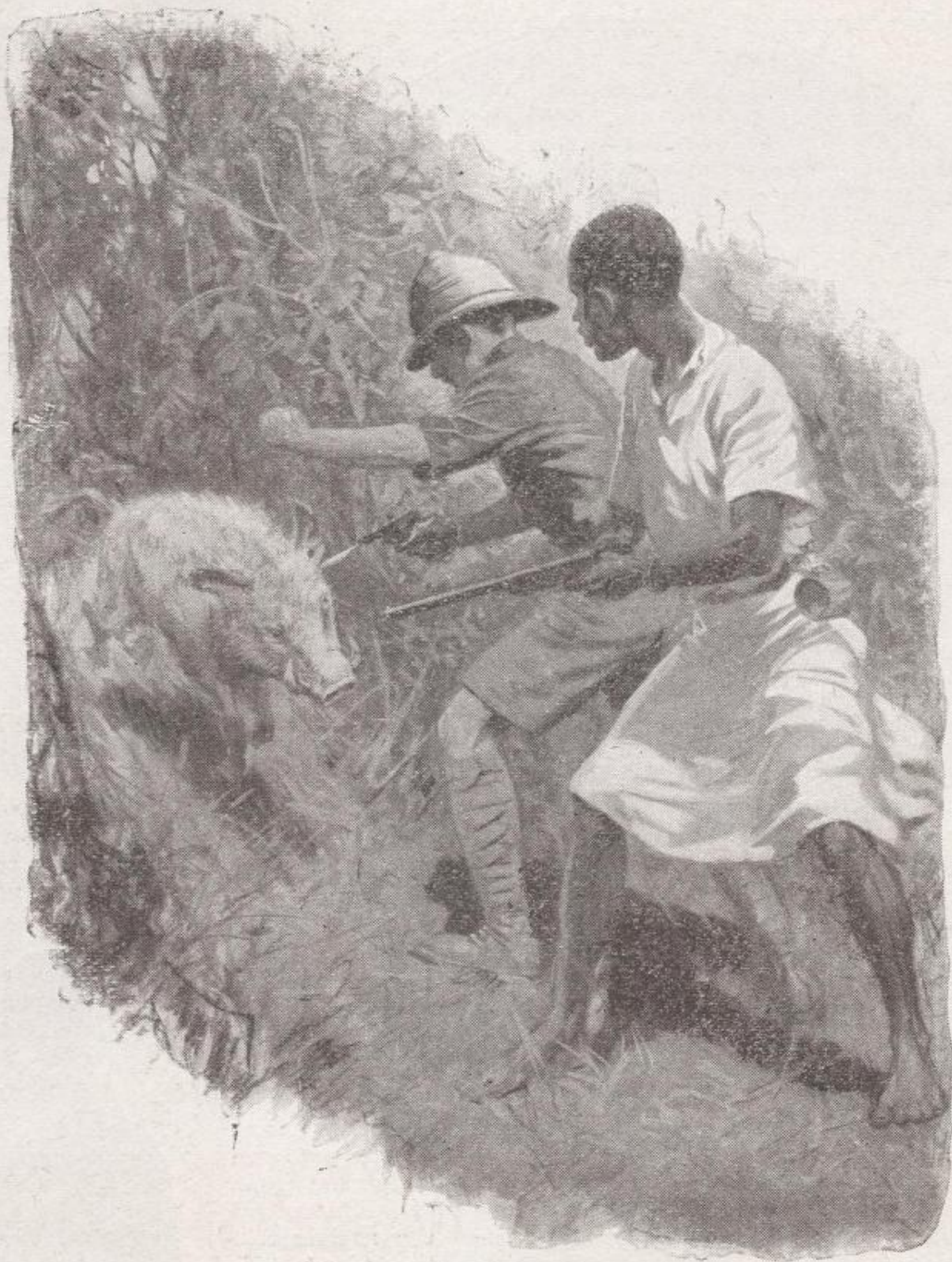
Needless to say, we followed as quickly as possible in the hope that we should find the lioness at her "kill," and so be able to add her skin to our trophies; but search as we would neither we nor my native hunter—a very clever fellow named Kapamballa—could find a trace of her tracks upon the rocky ground over which she had passed.

We determined to advance farther in the hope of striking her trail once more. Crossing the stones we entered upon a path so narrow that only one could proceed along it at a time. On either side grew bush so thick that it would be impossible to force one's way through it. Along this path we trudged for perhaps two hundred yards, my friend leading, I following close behind him, and Kapamballa, our native boy, bringing up the rear. Presently I felt my left boot loose about the ankle, and looking down discovered that the lace had broken. Handing my rifle to Kapamballa, I knelt down to mend the lace. Meanwhile my comrade pushed on alone, saying he would wait for me in a clearing just ahead.

He had hardly passed from my sight when I heard his rifle ring out followed by a squeal. Leaping to my feet I prepared to rush forward, when I caught sight of a wild pig with eyes fairly blazing and blood spurting from his flank charging down upon me at full speed. There was no time to turn and take my rifle from Kapamballa; no opportunity for him to fire, for I was in front of him and fairly blocking up the path; nor could I fling myself to one side and thus avoid the charge, the bush being too thick for that. I had a momentary terrified vision of little beady eyes, foaming jaws, great tusks, and upstanding bristles. At the same instant I drew my .450 Colt revolver and let drive. Luckily at such short range the bullet



Making camp at the end of a long day's march.



"I drew my Colt revolver and let drive."

was heavy enough to drop the brute in his tracks about three yards from my feet, but I gave him another for luck, and "just to make sure," as he lay kicking and struggling on the ground.

There was a good head and some fine tusks to be taken back to camp after the little adventure, but I cannot help admitting I have often thought since that I was extremely lucky not to have felt the sharpness of those same tusks in my leg.

By the laws of hunting, which says "first blood hunter's meat," the head was the property of my friend who had fired first and wounded the pig, but he was good enough to give it to me as a memento of an eventful morning.

Talking of queer happenings on early morning shooting expeditions reminds me of an incident that occurred to Lieutenant-Colonel Faulkner

when out after guinea-fowl at Athi Stones, a station on the Uganda Railway, a little way down the line from Nairobi. As lions, leopards, and big buck are often met with in that neighbourhood, Faulkner gave his boy, Martini, his .318 Express rifle to carry, while he himself took a double-barrelled shot-gun, his primary intention being to collect guinea-fowl.

Now in that place the stones are really curious, some of them being as much as a hundred yards across with flat but very uneven surfaces. Crossing one of these stones, bare-footed, Martini lagged some considerable distance behind his master, so that he was well out of reach when Faulkner spotted a nebulous shape sneaking away across the far end of the rock. Remember, it was early morning, when animals seen even at a short distance are hard to identify.

Faulkner, thinking the shape to be that of





A fine buck killed by the Author.

a hyena, let drive with the shot-gun to "accelerate" the brute's progress. Instantly there was a shattering roar, and a huge form, larger than that of any hyena ever seen, bounded high into the air. The next moment Martini came rushing up, shouting: "Be careful, Master! It is a lion!" Whether the dose of small shot the big cat had received in his stern determined him to retire, or whether the wild shouts of the boy frightened him off, I do not know; but I do not think it is every big-game hunter who can say that he has, for fun, "peppered" the King of Beasts.

While on the subject of lions, there is one interesting point upon which most big-game hunters are now agreed. It is that the lion himself very rarely makes his own "kill"; there are many well-authenticated instances of lions feeding off carcasses in the last stages of putrefaction, and I have known them carry off dead ox-meat and buck from my own kitchen.

Generally speaking, the lion will only do the killing himself when it is necessary for him to get away with the meat directly the beast has been slain. He will spring, for example, over the thorn fence into the cattle boma or mule lines, make his "kill," and spring out again with his victim before anyone has time to attack him. The method of hunting which lions infinitely prefer is the following: When game has been located the lioness chooses a concealed spot where she crouches and lies in wait for the animals which her lord and master will drive towards her. Meanwhile the lion goes "up-wind" of the game so that his scent will be carried down to where they are feeding. Needless to add, the moment lion is "winded," the animals are off "down-wind" as fast as

their legs will carry them. When the herd in wild panic sweeps past the spot where the lioness lies concealed she springs instantly out and, alighting upon the back of some hapless beast, makes the "kill" for herself and her partner.

It must be clearly understood that the foregoing is not a definite statement of fact, but is advanced as the opinion of several well-known hunters with whom I have been associated.

Finally, in speaking of big-game hunting in East Africa, it may be said that a keen sportsman can kill pretty nearly any species of game he hankers after in that land. In the Kikuyu country around Nairobi may be found lion, leopard, rhinoceros, giraffe, and eland, although all the former are more or less rare in that neighbourhood nowadays. Impala buck, Grant's gazelle, Reed

buck, and Bush buck are still fairly plentiful, while the plains are simply alive with wilde beeste, hartebeeste, zebra, and Thompson's gazelle. Up on the borders of the Conquered Territory all sorts of game abound. In Lake Victoria there are many hippopotami, and on the slopes of Kilimanjaro the natives told me that the snow-leopard might still be found.

In Uganda still rarer species of antelope are to be found, and here, too, the hunter is right in the elephant country and will have more than a fair chance of wild buffalo, too, which, incidentally, is the most dangerous beast of any that the sportsman may be called upon to tackle.



Martini, with the guinea-fowl shot by Lt.-Col. Faulkner after he "peppered" the lion by mistake.