

# BIG GAME SHOOTING IN BRITISH EAST AFRICA

## RHINO AND HIPPO AND GIRAFFE

By A. ARKELL HARDWICK

**S**TRETCHING away from the northern slopes of Mount Kenia is an immense tract of flat country, extending as far as the south end of Lake Rudolph on the north, the Lykipia Escarpment on the west, and the sea coast on the east, which simply teems with all kinds of game. It is without exception the finest place for big game shooting in Africa—Somaliland not excepted—both as regards the quantity of game and the quality of the sport obtainable. Elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, giraffe, buffalo, and lion are found in plenty, and there are many varieties of antelope and gazelle, such as eland, greater and lesser koodoo, oryx, waterbuck, Grant's gazelle, Waller's gazelle, and *thompsoni*, besides vast herds of zebra and a few wild pigs. Beyond a few waterholes known to native hunters, as the "Wandorobo," there is no water between Mount Kenia and Lake Rudolph except a river called by the Masai the "Guaso Nyiro," meaning "clear water." This river takes its source somewhere on the north-west slope of Kenia and is fed by the snow that is continually melting on that magnificent peak, the highest in Africa (18,680 feet), with the exception of Kilimanjaro (19,000 feet). After leaving Mount Kenia the Guaso Nyiro runs almost due north for about fifty miles, then turns due east for perhaps another hundred miles, then takes a southeasterly direction, and finally disappears in that mysterious swamp discovered by Astor Chanler, and called Lorian. The river cuts right through the heart of the game country, and one only requires to follow it up or down, camping on the banks, to enjoy the most magnificent sport, such as even South Africa in its most palmy days could not afford.

I had a six-months' shooting trip on the Guaso Nyiro in 1900, when our party consisted of three Englishmen—Dr. Horace,

Captain Williams, and myself—and forty-eight native bearers.

By far the most plentiful of the large animals is the black rhinoceros, considered by many people to afford good sport. A wounded rhino is certainly dangerous, and its stupidity also makes it an inconvenient animal to meet on the march when one has other things to think about. It can see very little, but its senses of smell and hearing are extraordinarily keen; it will often wind a caravan when quite a mile away, and, as a rule, it endeavors to escape by charging up the scent and trying to break through one's men. Of all the animals, the rhino and buffalo are the most dreaded by the natives. When these beasts take it into their heads to charge a caravan, the natives become panic stricken, throw down their loads, and climb trees and hide behind bushes; anything to get out of the way.

An experience of this kind happened to us on the Athi River, at the commencement of our trip. We had started at daybreak, intending to make a long march. About an hour and a half after starting we passed two rhinos in the open, one of which was down wind about three hundred yards from the path. I had a look at it and passed on. Before I had gone a quarter of a mile farther a tremendous outcry from the rear made me pause and look round. The rhino had winded the men behind and charged them. They had thrown down their loads and scattered all over the plain, leaving the rhino in undisturbed possession of most of our goods and chattels. There he stood snorting and stamping and looking very ugly. I wanted to get on as the sun was already high, and it was fifteen miles to the next water; so I went back and tried to drive him away, as can sometimes be done, by shouting; but he refused to budge. I did not care about shooting him, as I had only my .303—a very good



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one, but not suitable for rhino unless solid bullets were used at very short range, say ten or twenty yards, for a head shot. I had only five or six soft nosed bullets in the magazine, for my servant with my cartridge bag had long since disappeared with the rest of the men. As the brute refused to move I had no other course open but to shoot him, although I disliked the job with a small bow rifle in the open. I got within fifty yards and put a bullet in his shoulder. He spun around like a top, and then came for me for all he was worth. He looked so nasty that I thought I would not stop, and I ran some ten yards to the right hoping he would pass me; but not a bit of it. He had fairly got my scent and meant to pay me back with interest for my bullet, and he altered his course accordingly. To run would have been fatal, for I should have been overtaken in the first fifty yards. There was nothing to do but face him and trust to a lucky shot killing him. I knelt down to get better aim, and put a bullet somewhere in his head; but it had no more effect than a pea-shooter on a locomotive. The second shot struck him in the chest, the third in the withers; the fourth hit him in the head again when he was within twenty yards, and luckily turned him. He made off to the left; I struck him in the flank as he turned and hastened his departure, and very glad I was to see him go. He was still going well when he disappeared over a rise in the ground a mile away, and I saw him no more. He had six bullets somewhere in his anatomy, but I expect the expanding bullets did little more than penetrate the skin, although the shock possibly hurt him a little and made him think better of it than to continue charging in the face of such a rapid succession of blows, as the affair could not have been more than thirty seconds in happening.

Although there is generally some excitement in shooting a rhinoceros, the same cannot always be said of the hippopotamus. The hippo is mostly got in the water, where he is a comparatively easy beast to shoot. If, however, a little trouble is taken, one can waylay him either in the early morning or at dusk, when he comes out to feed. There is then the element of danger necessary to ensure good sport; for although, when bit, these beasts generally make for the water, if one should happen to be between them and the water the consequences are likely to

be serious. The immensely powerful jaws and gleaming ivory teeth of the hippo are quite as dangerous as they look; and to be caught means to be seized in a pair of jaws capable of biting a piece out of the side of a boat. We shot hippo principally for food for our man. They are very fond of it, although we found it tasteless, and of the consistency of rubber. The fat, however, is very good, and much preferable to beef fat for cooking purposes.

On one occasion we were coming down the Nyiro on the north bank, as the country to the south was absolutely impassable, being strewn with huge boulders and blocks of lava, and overgrown with mimosa scrub and the terrible "wait-a-bit" thorn. We had seen no game for a week, and for two days the men had eaten nothing. We made a ten-mile march, which was the most the exhausted men were capable of, and camped on the river, beneath a group of Dom palms. We breakfasted on a solitary partridge which had been shot the day before, a meager sort of meal to three hungry men. After we had finished, we slept under the palms a little, first sending half the men to see if there was any game around. Two of them returned in an hour or so and reported a hippo in a rocky pool in the river about a mile farther up. We hastened to the spot, and carefully approaching the bank, hid among the boulders and waited. Presently a faint ripple disturbed the surface, and suddenly, across the pool under an overhanging rock, appeared two red nostrils covered with coarse black hair. We held our breath and watched. In about fifteen seconds they disappeared again as suddenly and as silently as they had appeared. We waited for an hour or more in silence, but nothing occurred, save the periodical appearance and disappearance of the nostrils on the water line, to indicate the presence of the huge body below. As the head did not appear and give us a chance of a shot, we held a whispered consultation, with the result that Dr. Horace and I decided to cross the river, leaving Captain Williams on the watch. The doctor took the .577 express, and I the .303. We went down the river to where it became broader and shallower over some sand banks, and after sending a couple of men forward first, in case of crocodiles—of which there are a great many in the river farther down—we stripped to our shirts and waded across, breast deep. We cautiously made our way to a point op-

posite Captain Williams, who told us by signs that the hippo was still there almost underneath our feet, and coming occasionally to the surface to breathe. We stood with sodden shirts fluttering in the breeze, waiting for our hippo. Another half hour of absolute silence on our part passed when the hippo suddenly put its nose above water a little farther out in the stream. I did not see it, but Horace did, and in the nick of time sent a steel tipped bullet from his express through the brute's head. He had no time

the body away, and jammed it tight between two rocks at the top of a small waterfall. The pressure from such a volume of water was very great, but the men needed food so badly that we made herculean efforts to dislodge the body with ropes and poles. After half an hour's hard work we managed to get it free, only to see it sinking in deep water among the rocks in the center of the channel. Our men flatly refused to go into the water and look for it, for the reason that there were all sorts of



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to place the gun to his shoulder, and the recoil tore one of his fingers badly. He did what he expected to do—missed the brain, but stunned the beast with the shock. The water in the pool fairly boiled for a minute or so.

Then the hippo came to the surface twenty yards farther down, and I immediately put a .303 bullet through its brain. Our men gave a yell of delight and rushed down to secure it, but, to their dismay, before they could reach it, the current washed

queer holes in the rocks, where one might be drowned or crushed, to say nothing of the probable presence of crocodiles. We sounded with poles till our arms ached, and were about to give up in despair when some of the men, bolder or more hungry than the rest, jumped in and commenced to dive. Pretty soon one man came to the surface shouting that he had found the hippo. We did not believe him, but, as I was undressed, I jumped in and dived to the bottom, and, sure enough, there he was, lying on the

bottom in ten or twelve feet of water. I came up and—as the men refused—took down one end of a stout cotton line; after swallowing a lot of warm, maneuvering in the swift current, I managed to make it fast round his leg just above the foot. Success at last seemed certain, and, the men pulling gently on the rope, the body soon came to the surface. The men raised a shout which could have been heard a mile away, but it died into a wail of bitter disappointment when the rope broke, and down went the hippo to the bottom again. I was nearly exhausted, and shivering with cold, but I managed to dive again, and again make fast the rope. After a great deal of coaxing and careful pulling, we at last succeeded in getting our beast ashore, just at dark. Our men at once fell to work with knives and swords; the cooking pots boiled merrily, and the natives, round their fires, gorged themselves on the meat far into the night.

One day, when encamped on the north side of the Guaso Nyiro, news reached us that there were giraffe in the neighborhood. While we had often seen these extraordinary animals, we had not as yet attempted to shoot them, but on this occasion I determined to go out and get one. I started at two o'clock in the afternoon, riding my mule, and taking two men, as the giraffe were reported to be about two hours away. I carried my Martini rifle, as the .303 is scarcely heavy enough, in my opinion, to bring down a giraffe, except it is hit in a vital spot, which necessitates getting very close up to the animal, and this is not always possible. After leaving camp, I struck across the belt of bush that runs parallel to the river, and got into open, sandy country, with a few thorn trees here and there, and a range of low hills in the background. I went on and on, but saw no signs of giraffe till I almost reached the hills mentioned, when I suddenly sighted them about five hundred yards away. I dismounted, and esmined them through the glasses. They had not observed us, but there was no possible chance of reaching them from where I was. In the best place I was dead up wind, and in the second place the country was absolutely open and level. Leaving the two men in charge of the mule behind a clump of thorn trees, I made a long detour, which took me three quarters of an hour, and finally, after a lot of dodging and crawling, got to leeward, and about

two hundred and fifty yards from them. There was a gentle dip in the ground between us; I was on the top of one bank, flat on my stomach behind a tuft of grass, and they were half way up on the other side. There were indications that their suspicions had been aroused, so I determined—unsportsmanlike though it was—to risk a long shot, and to fire at the biggest bull I could see. I did so, and heard the thud of the bullet distinctly. The herd immediately made off, and I could detect no sign of weakness on the part of the animal I had fired at. They galloped to the top of the rise, and evidently spotted my two men and the mules about a quarter of a mile away, for they immediately right-about-faced and came down full speed toward me. When they got within thirty yards they saw me, and turned sharply to the left. As they turned, the same old bull gave me a capital shoulder shot, of which I was not slow to take advantage. He appeared to take no notice whatever of the shot, and, to my great disappointment, disappeared among the trees that covered the side of the hill to my left. I got up and stood, looking after them, when I heard a crash as of a heavy body falling, and breaking trees and bushes in its fall. I hurried to the spot, and there was my giraffe stone dead. I found two wounds on him—the first shot had hit him in the stomach, and the second fairly behind the shoulder. I discovered afterward that the second bullet went through the ribs, slightly flattening as it did so, and then passed clean through the heart, almost tearing it to pieces, and lodging in the other shoulder. Yet the brute gave no sign when hit, and ran nearly one hundred yards after receiving such a mortal wound.

I went to look for my men, but they had disappeared, and I could not find them any where. I shouted till I was hoarse, but there was no sign of them. I then went back to the giraffe and climbed to the top of the hill. For half an hour I stopped there, and still there was no sign of them. I thought it was getting serious, as I was quite ten miles from camp and it was nearly sunset. At last, however, I spied them loafing about half a mile away, and shout as I would I could not make them hear. I had a syren whistle, which I brought into service, but that did not answer either. Finally, sighting my rifle at eight hundred

yards, I planted a bullet in the sand within fifty yards of them. That brought them. I left one man in a tree as a guard over the giraffe, and went back to camp with the other, reaching there long after night. I sent some men back immediately to the giraffe with water and the means of making a fire. they cut it up, and brought it into camp next day. The flesh, to a white man, is detestable, but the marrow bones were excellent.

Another method of shooting giraffe is by

a large animal. Needless to say, a large bore rifle, such as a .577 express, cannot be used with comfort in the saddle.

Another animal met with in the scrub is the wild pig, and managed to secure two or three fine pairs of tusks while coming down the river. One day we had halted for lunch, and, as the sun was absolutely broiling and there were no trees, we got the men to cut the inside out of a large bush. We crept into the hollow thus made, ate our frugal meal, and then slept a little, the



"One simply gallops after the giraffe at full speed to get alongside before it sees you and breaks away."

running them down on fast ponies. I have not done it myself, as we had no ponies with us. Dr. Horace, however, told me that he used to shoot them that way. On sighting that giraffe, one simply gallops after it full speed, and, getting alongside, dismounts and fires before it can get out of range. It is very seldom one can successfully shoot from a horse's back. I have heard of its being done, but it is a very unreliable method, and a small bore rifle needs to be used with the greatest precision to kill such

men doing likewise. We were awakened by some of the men pulling at our feet, and shouting, excitedly, "*Ungrove, Bwana!*" or "*Pig, Master!*" We looked out cautiously, and a large boar and three or four sows were feeding unconcernedly about thirty yards away. We had made no sound, and had no tents pitched, so that they almost literally walked into camp. Horace took his .450 express and dropped the old boar; the others made off into the grass. The boar lay perfectly still, and Horace made



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so sure of his shot that he never even examined the beast, but, telling the men to bring it in, crept under the bush again. The men went to get it, when the boar suddenly jumped up and cleared out, although evidently badly wounded. As Horace was almost asleep again, I went after it,

and found it standing still, a good distance away. I get quite close, and shot it through the brain. Horace's bullet had gone through its shoulder, and it must have died soon anyhow. The flesh was horribly tough and absolutely tasteless—not in the least like pork.

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## IN HERON HAUNTS

By HERBERT K. JOB

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

**O**FTEN have I been there—east, west, north, and south; in meadow, marsh, cedar swamp, cane brake, floating morass, spruce, and cypress forest; on northern and tropical islets; by lake side, river shore, and pool margin; wherever it is wet, where travel is hard and dangerous, where insect scourge is worst, where turtles splash

and snakes crawl, where rank growth, strong odors, and decay hold carnival; such are the heron haunts. Here is the advice of Gideon of old appropriate: "whosoever is fearful, let him return." But for those who love the wilds and their creatures, such places have rich reward.

The average heron—like the rest of us—