FROM RIFLE TO CAMERA

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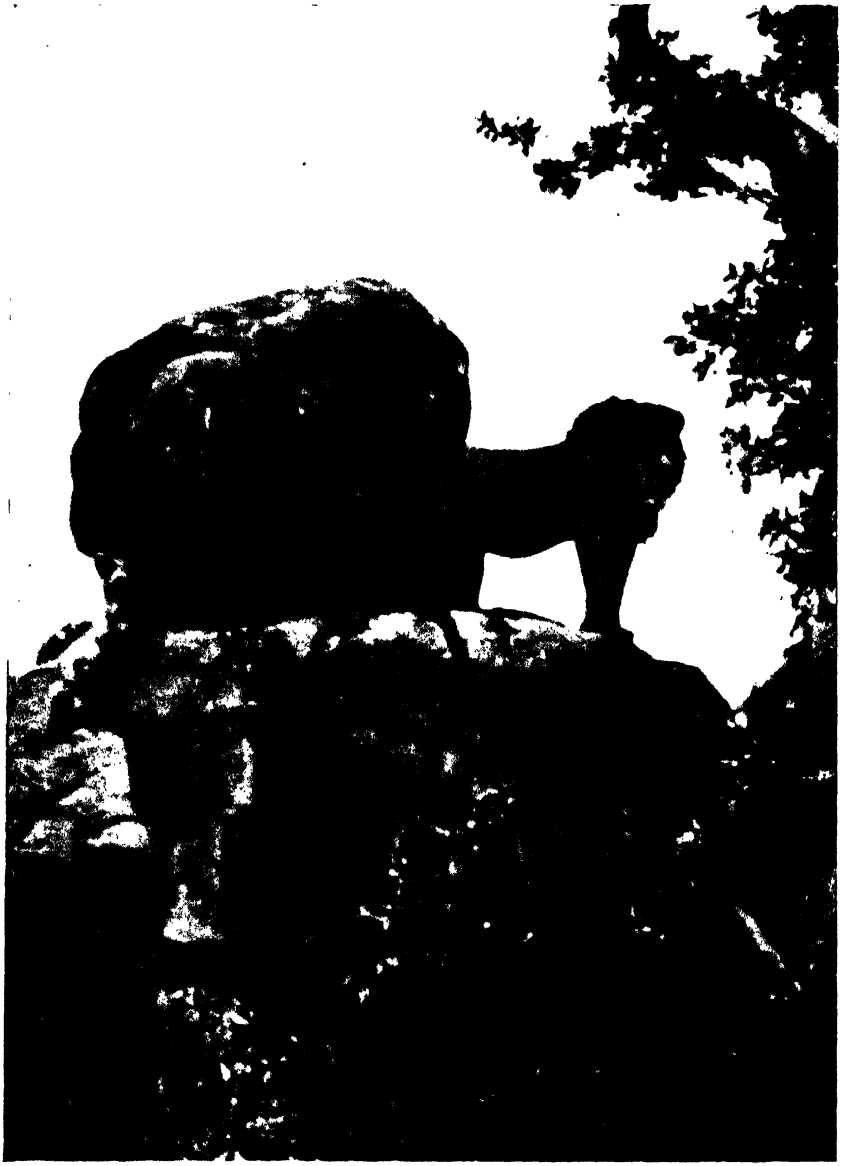

Halt! Who goes there?

(A caption suggested by the late Lord Baden-Powell.)

From

RIFLE *to* CAMERA

THE REFORMATION OF A BIG GAME HUNTER

by

COLONEL SIR JAMES L. SLEEMAN
C.B., C.M.G., C.B.E., M.V.O., M.A.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
by the distinguished Big Game Photographer,
MAJOR A. RADCLYFFE DUGMORE, F.R.G.S.

Fully Illustrated

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DEDICATED TO

THE LAST VICEROY OF INDIA
AND
THAT SPLENDID SPORTSMAN

HIS EXCELLENCY REAR-ADMIRAL
THE EARL MOUNTBATTEN OF BURMA

P.C., K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., K.C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C.

WITH WHOM I HAD THE HONOUR TO SERVE DURING THE ROYAL TOUR OF NEW ZEALAND BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES, K.G., IN 1920

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

It may be considered strange that one who hunts with the camera should write an Introduction to a book compiled by a big game hunter, but there is a closer link between the two than may seem apparent at a casual glance.

To explain my position and so lend weight to my remarks about this somewhat unusual book, let me say that in the days of long ago—1881 to be exact—I received from my father a very strict and valuable education in the use of firearms. I came to regard shooting as a sign of manhood and, in my youthful conceit, I thought that those who did not shoot were namby-pamby. When I was twelve years old I shot in Northern Africa, Algeria, and Morocco, and became more and more filled with the spirit of the chase; but with the passing years my ideas changed and I took up ornithology, which had a marked effect on my outlook. The killing of birds, even for scientific purposes, became utterly distasteful to me, and the photography of Nature subjects, particularly birds, claimed my attention, and I gradually worked up to big game.

The thrills offered by this new form of sport made a great appeal to me. It was far more difficult and exciting than mere shooting and, I might add, that at times it was just as dangerous, for under certain conditions risks are unavoidable. With my growing enthusiasm for hunting with the camera, especially in that wonderland of big game—Africa—I urged others to follow in my steps, promising them keen excitement, untempered by any feelings of remorse such as many experience when the stalk has ended in the death of some beautiful wild creature. I claimed that this camera work was devoid of all cruelty and destruction and that it could but foster a greater appreciation of the glories of the more remote countries where animals and birds live their natural lives.

Yet even this bloodless sport has been brutalized and commercialized by some for the benefit of the cinema-going public. It will be clear therefore, that both hunting proper and with the camera should be indulged in only by those with sufficient knowledge and experience to avoid the infliction of unnecessary suffering on wild animals. Ignorance and thoughtlessness have been responsible for the perpetration of many horrors on harmless and often defenceless creatures. To condemn all who shoot or use the camera because some fail to play the game, would be unfair to the majority who act with proper consideration for their quarry. I condemn only that which is done in a way that violates all our ideas of decency. There is nothing to be said against shooting if it is done by those who understand what they are doing and keep strictly within moderation. After all, it is the sportsman who has been chiefly responsible for most of the laws which have been passed for the protection and preservation of game.

In all these accounts of tiger and other shooting described so well in the following pages by my friend Colonel Sleeman, it is made amply clear that his chief object was the destruction of animals which were causing

death, not only to wild and domestic animals, but also to human beings, and consequently the shooting was justified in every way. We do not condemn those who kill insect pests; therefore, why condemn those who rid the country of tiger, leopard and other destroyers of life? All the hunting described by the author was carried out with a very definite object and in a proper sporting manner, and nothing can be said against the argument that by the sacrifice of one animal, hundreds may live.

Of the risks run by the author and his companions, though modestly described, there can be no doubt, and that they escaped with more or less whole skins is cause for congratulation and wonder. The well-told stories of his experiences are bound to interest the reader who has ever indulged in shooting, while he who has not is sure to be thrilled by the excitement of the incidents related. But this book should do more than that, for it should bring home to the would-be sportsman the importance of his responsibilities when hunting. Not only should he understand the habits of animals and the proper use of the rifle—since an ignorant person can be more dangerous to those who accompany him than to the quarry—but he should also study the anatomy of the animals so as to know which are the vital places where a bullet will make death as quick and painless as possible.

Colonel Sleeman has dealt with this matter in a convincing way, and I trust that what he says will be taken to heart by any reader who intends to go in for big game shooting. To be an efficient shikari, one must go through a long training and learn to know and understand the wilds, whether jungle or veldt, to be patient and persevering, and above all, to restrain one's powers of destruction.

The old days of hardships and simple conditions are almost gone and things are being made more and more easy for big game hunters. The armchair sportsmen are only too often driven to their camps in luxurious motor-cars, live a life of absolute comfort and frequently brag outrageously of their prowess as hunters—the success or failure of their trip being judged only by the numbers of heads they can show to their admirers, for size and points count but little.

Not many years ago I happened to mention quite casually that I was going to a certain place two or three hundred miles away and that I was walking the whole distance. This was in Kenya. Those who heard my remarks stared unbelievingly, as though I were mad, and asked why I did not motor at least part of the way. I replied that in a car one saw little and learned almost nothing, so I preferred to walk.

That my point of view is endorsed by Colonel Sleeman will be appreciated by the reader of this delightful book, which contains much that is both interesting and instructive concerning the act of good sportsmanship. It is indeed, a serious book of actual experiences and accomplishment enlivened by those humorous incidents which so often relieve the tension and strain inseparable from a dangerous calling.

A. RADCLYFFE DUGMORE

A POSTSCRIPT

A POSTSCRIPT to an introduction may seem a trifle strange, yet in violating custom I have such an excellent excuse that I trust I shall be forgiven. When Colonel Sir James Sleeman gave me his manuscript to read a few years ago I found that it was composed almost entirely of accounts of shooting experiences and it was not easy for me to enter completely and with proper enthusiasm into the spirit of this form of sport (as I find no pleasure in shooting) but I wrote the introductory remarks not only because the Author is a family friend but also because I realized that all the killing had been done with a definite and commendable object and care had been taken to stress the necessity for good clean sportsmanship. Then came a great change in Sir James Sleeman's 'development', shall I call it for lack of a better word? Before his book in its original state was published he became a convert to hunting with the camera instead of the rifle (a sport I have for so many years advocated with all my limited powers of persuasion) and, like converts in general, he became most wildly enthusiastic, so much so indeed that anyone who reads his descriptions of photographing the most dangerous big game of Africa, such as rhino, lion, elephant and buffalo, will realize that his keenness for the sport made him run risks which I do not believe many of the shooting fraternity would have dared. How he managed to escape I do not know. But when you read the wildly thrilling and fascinating stories of his adventures and achievements with the camera, you will be as glad as I am that he lived to set forth some, at least, of his most exciting experiences. I truly envy him the wonderful opportunities he had and am more than glad that this book has been enriched so greatly by these photographic chapters, to say nothing of the illustrations of the big game alive and in their natural surroundings.

This, then, is the excuse for adding a postcript to my original introduction, a task that has given me both pleasure and satisfaction.

A. R. D.

13th January, 1947.

WITH grateful thanks to Mrs. Rutherford Collins and Miss C. D. Fern for their kindly help in the preparation of this book.

Also to The Associated Press for permitting the inclusion of the photo of the 'Ringing' of a tiger in Nepal, and the Zoological Society of London for the photo of an Himalayan Wolf.

CHAPTER I

A "BOBBERY PACK" AND PECULIAR DUCK SHOOT

In forty years of varied hunting, there are certain experiences which stand out in memory; red-letter days which were not necessarily ones of great events.

Towards the end of the South African war I was one of three Scout officers made responsible for a large area of country which was separated from a strong enemy concentration by the Modder river. To one who had served in its early stages, on the way to Pretoria, with their long marches, hunger and thirst, it was a pleasant duty to each in turn to take out a fighting patrol of fifty men to search this country, remaining the night at a drift, or ford, some forty miles from our camp and reinforcement, in order to secure it from the enemy.

The Boer outnumbered us in this sector by hundreds, so this solitary task was somewhat hazardous; but it had its compensations inasmuch as this vast area of game country had been compulsorily deserted by all other human kind and was thus at our disposal. The only shot-gun available had been taken from a Boer prisoner who had used it for firing bullets and this had not improved its shooting quality. But the gun was still sufficiently accurate to enable us to supplement our rations with Koraan or bustard, the Namaqualand partridge—a form of sand grouse—duck and guinea fowl. The difficulty of obtaining scatter-gun cartridges compelled attention to the shooting, while making it permissible to "fire into the brown" when opportunity offered.

Amusing experiences sometimes came our way. Once I saw a herd of springbuck moving along the other side of a valley but too distant to allow any hope of getting near them. Armed with the inaccurate ·303 carbine then carried by mounted officers and with ample supplies of His Majesty's cartridges I fired ahead of them in the hope that the strike of the bullets would turn the herd in my direction. This acted like a charm until soon they were heading straight for the rock which gave me cover. Judging my moment by the thundering of hooves growing louder, I looked up just as a fine buck in his leap over me all but removed my helmet! Before I could recover from the surprise, they were round a bend and were gone.

In course of time we got together a "bobbery pack" from dogs found in a starving condition on deserted farms or brought in by the Basutos, who were aiding our warlike efforts: those same auxiliaries whose participation had been denied in Parliament, but who, armed to the teeth, were very much present. The pack, surely, was unique, with mongrels whose antecedents the boldest would hesitate to guess and including many types, from fox-terriers to a wolf-hound. Despite their fantastic appearance they learnt with surprising rapidity to work as a pack; even though it remained difficult to prevent their eating their quarry or savaging us if we interfered.

The chief drawback to our hunting country was that the most likely cover ran along the Modder river, on the opposite bank of which alert enemy outposts could scarcely be expected to allow a hunt to proceed without molestation during the hours of daylight.

As a consequence we generally left this desirable piece of country alone but I could not resist the opportunity offered by a bright moonlight night when, following a long patrol, I had reached the drift at which we were to spend the night. Having placed my pickets and together with a somewhat corpulent N.C.O. and a man to act as whippers-in, I started to draw this cover; no easy task, for on test the steeply-sloping river bank was found to be intersected by numerous deep spruits, or water channels, while much of it was covered by thorn bush of such character as to, in places, form a veritable zariba.

It was, moreover, a hunt rendered the more unique in that on the opposite bank could be seen the flickering fires of the enemy. Fortunately, the river was broad, for a bobbery pack seldom works mute and this one invariably made up in noise what its members lacked in breeding. Twice we got away on jackal but on each occasion the quarry went to ground amid a veritable pandemonium and free-for-all. The whips, however, did their duty nobly, adding colour to the scene by descriptive language until presently there came a burst of music from the "pack", such as denoted both a hot scent and something beyond the ordinary. I was following as best I could and climbing up a deep donga, when I heard a curious rattling sound above and looking up I saw an enormous porcupine silhouetted and magnified against the moon, with long quills extended and coming straight for me! There was barely time to hurl myself aside before it brushed past, closely pursued by a pack I feared almost as much, but the corpulent whipper-in just behind me was less successful, as I gathered from a gulp of pain and a burst of rich profanity following a thud. In that flying instant the porcupine had succeeded in inserting several large quills, though by good luck in the least dangerous, if sensitive, parts of his anatomy. During the painful extraction which followed my knowledge of expressive language became considerably increased!

Meanwhile the music of the pack receded into the distance, while, this task completed, I still had to deal with several "hounds" so badly quilled that they had been compelled to stop in their mad career. Most had quills right through their legs, or embedded in their chests, and the natural sagacity of a dog is shown by their realization of their danger, although probably their first experience of porcupine, for they stood like rocks while the quills were extracted: had they followed their fellows they would probably have driven the quills through heart or lungs. The result was that not a "hound" suffered serious injury. Meanwhile the porcupine had been killed, and after recovering it from the pack—a matter of great difficulty, it was found to weigh some forty pounds. It tasted like pork, making a welcome variant from Service rations.

I now come to the story of an incident in which, if the element of sport was small, at least it was of an unique character. This came about after we had spent some months performing what had become an almost

routine scout duty, by when we had become lulled into the thought that the enemy were content to remain on the far side of the Modder river. It is at such times in war that the unexpected happens and I woke one night about 2 a.m. to the sound of a galloping horse and frantic appeals for help coming from an excited kaffir bearing the news that a strong force of Boers were attacking the garrison of a farm belonging to one Ortel, who had incurred their displeasure owing to his loyalty to the British cause.

As we discovered later, there was more to it than that, for some three hundred Boers had eluded our patrol and crossed the river elsewhere, with the full intention of putting paid to our account; in which they would certainly have succeeded, seeing that we had in camp less than a third of their strength and would have been found unprepared for such an unanticipated eventuality. Fortunately for us, however, having no up-to-date almanac to refer to, the Boers had miscalculated the phase of the moon upon whose light they had relied for the success of their plan, and finding it waning when still two miles distant, had instead switched their venom upon this farmer.

It was by this time a pitch dark night, as we saddled up and, leaving a garrison to protect the camp, galloped for the best part of the seven miles separating us from the scene of action and across country so pitted with antbear holes and criss-crossed with overthrown wire fences as to be considered dangerous to ride across even in full daylight.

There is a saying that horses have eyes in their feet, and it certainly seemed so during that weird ride, for often the twang of stretched wire came to my ears as we thundered along, yet not a horse came down. But, fast though we had travelled, we were too late, for we arrived to find the enemy had departed, taking Ortel with them, and leaving behind a distracted wife and daughters, for they had threatened to shoot him.

Although we attempted a pursuit, the Boers succeeded in recrossing the Modder river before we could gain contact, which was perhaps as well, seeing that they heavily outnumbered us. This impudent invasion of the territory under our charge, however, touched our *amour propre*, and it was this and the sympathy we felt for those terrified women, and a desire to ascertain Ortel's fate, which was responsible for urging me on to an action two days later which might well have cost me my commission. For when, the following day, it became my duty to take out the next patrol and I telephoned to the Intelligence Officer in Bloemfontein (later Major-General H. L. Reed, V.C.) to report my setting-out, it was to be told that the enemy on the farther bank of the Modder river were showing such great activity that I was on no account to attempt to cross it.

I reached Kruitfontein drift that same evening and could not resist the temptation to cross to the other side, where we discovered such signs of recent enemy presence as to become spurred on to even more reprehensible action; excusable only in that even Nelson made use of his blind eye on one historic occasion. As a consequence of this, at 3 a.m. the next morning certain of my small command were surrounding a farm nine miles within enemy country on the other side of the river which I had been ordered not to cross! After a spirited resistance, four fighting Boers, one with a wife

and two small children, and some wagons, oxen and horses fell into our hands and were hustled back to the drift at the fullest possible speed; for my prisoners were astounded at our audacity, saying that some three hundred Boers were bivouacked within three miles and must have heard the firing. Actually, as we learned later, their horses were hobbled and scattered, which gave us just time to place the river between us.

Inexcusable as my action had been, the subaltern is seldom at a loss for reasons to explain his conduct, and I had planned the whole enterprise carefully, leaving all the British troops to guard the crossing and confining the active part of the operation to the Basutos under my charge. In consequence, had I later suffered court-martial for such rank disobedience to orders, I should have been prepared with an excellent defence, as the very existence of such armed Africans had been but recently most strenuously denied in the House of Commons: in other words, I had made use of a formation which had officially no existence and so could have presented a case to which there could have been no answer! Here, however, I made a mistake from the point of view of kudos, for the pace following this capture had been fierce, with the result that, feeling sorry for the woman, children and oxen, I laagered for the night instead of pressing on to my headquarters as I could have done: a resolution which was to cost me dear.

It is said, with some truth, that the South African war was the last in which chivalry played any prominent part, and certainly neither side had then learnt the higher kultur shown by the Germans and Japanese during the two World Wars which have since happened in the treatment of P.O.Ws. Consequently, and after giving their parole, my captives proved pleasant and intelligent fellows with whom I spent an interesting evening, listening to their experiences over two years of war and doing what I could to soften the blow of their capture, for they were splendid fellows of good fighting type and felt this most bitterly.

It was then that I ascertained that Ortel was still alive, although remaining in captivity, and heard at first hand the privations which the Boers—under splendid leaders such as Smuts—had endured. Even now, when the Afrikaners has fought so gloriously for the British cause in the two World Wars which have followed since, few realize who did not take part in it what their predecessors had to endure in their long drawn-out and gallant fight for their country, deprived as they often were of even essentials. However, to resume my story. After arrival at my Headquarters the next afternoon having so flagrantly disobeyed orders, it will be appreciated that it was with some trepidation that I reported my capture by telephone to the same Intelligence Officer who had made it so clear that I was not to cross the river. But whether it was that success provided the antidote to disobedience or the machinery of forgiveness was oiled by my having made use of troops who officially were non-existent, instead of blame, I was so highly complimented upon having captured the first P.O.Ws for months in this sector that I hung up the receiver with visions of a D.S.O. dangling before my eyes.

Alas! these proved of short duration, for when I marched through Bloemfontein the following morning at the head of my prisoners' escort and captured stock—like a victorious Roman emperor in my imagination

"Seeall" the Wolf-boy, found with a pack of wolves when estimated to be ten years of age.

A Himalayan Wolf.

A Panther 'padded' on an elephant's back.

A Sloth Bear 'padded'.

Beating for tiger through such high grass that only six elephants are showing of the fourteen in the beat.

Baron Von Mannerheim, the former Regent of Finland and his tiger.

On the way to a tiger kill.

Preparing the line for beating.

The beat in progress.

at least—it was to meet with the staggering news that an Armistice had been granted that morning and that the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Kitchener, had decreed that although my prisoners had been captured two days before, as they had not been delivered to a P.O.W. camp and "in order to avoid complication" they must be escorted back to the place of their capture and there set at liberty! Not only was it a bitter pill to swallow after all the risks we had taken, but it was made even less palatable by the sympathy which I received during the journey back from my former captives, who not only stated that they had been taken in fair fight, but that as two of the previous armistices had already failed, this one, too, would probably follow suit, when the complete execution of my orders might see me land into trouble and the positions of prisoners and captors reversed.

There was such an element of truth in this that when we reached the Modder river two days later, I decided to leave all my escort behind and to fulfil my orders to the letter by going on alone with the Boers; a resolution arrived at by a quaint mixture of pique, deflated pride, resentment and caution, for I was very young and sick at heart. The remaining travel did not prove as grim as it might seem, for I had by this time established friendly relations with my erstwhile prisoners to such a degree that when we finally reached our destination, they invited me to shoot a nearby dam for duck which, having been left largely undisturbed during the war, were in great abundance. It was hospitality, too, which was carried to the length of enlisting their services, as also the loan of a shot-gun and some ancient cartridges.

The *modus operandi* was for the four Boers to take position about the dam and to stir up the duck in its reed-covered centre with their Mauser rifles which—though ricochetted bullets sometimes whizzed by unpleasantly close—gave splendid sport as the disturbed duck flighted over; even if some of the ancient cartridges I was using "fizzed" a bit before going off, which, if anything, added to the quaintness of the proceedings. There was, too, a certain thrill in that I was not unconscious of the fact that at any moment by the stroke of a pen at distant Vereeniging the war might start again, and I should find myself a prisoner.

But there was little time for gloomy foreboding of this nature, for the sport proved brisk and I was enjoying myself immensely when I saw to my consternation armed and mounted figures bearing down upon us from every point of the compass, which at first suggested that the worst had happened. But one grave disadvantage of having set a bad example is that it is so often copied, with the result that soon they proved to be my faithful scouts who, contrary to strict orders, had followed well out of sight, until, hearing the firing and thinking it denoted my having run into trouble, they had come to my rescue. Their arrival was, indeed, opportune, for by this time we had between us accounted for such a sufficiency of duck as to prove a welcome change from service rations for the whole of my party, and, lashing these to our saddles, after saying farewell to my former prisoners, we made our way back to the river and enjoyed one of the best dinners any of us had had for a long time.

That is the end of my story, for this was to prove the final armistice, which made my capture one of the last, if not the last, of the South African War.

CHAPTER II

WOLVES AND WOLF-CHILDREN

FOLLOWING the South African war, my regiment went direct to India, being stationed at Sitapur, where, short of officers, we were kept hard at duty until the "rains", when parched plains become lakes with amazing rapidity.

At such a time it is impossible to do much in the way of soldiering, so I decided most foolishly to seize the opportunity of hunting and to visit a distant part said to contain exceptional black buck. My C.O. had served many years in India and knew the risk of fever under such conditions, and at first tried to dissuade me, but it was never the practice of the British Army either to coddle its officers or to check their initiative. So finally he consented, though often since have I had occasion to wish that he had prevented my going, for it was to leave behind a permanent legacy of fever. To add to my folly and hardened by long exposure to war conditions, I decided to reduce impedimenta to the minimum, taking a bivouac tent only, scarcely high enough to sit up in and which leaked like a sieve. In order to make the most of my leave I left at midnight in a springless bullock wagon which bumped its way along an unmetalled road throughout a night made horrible by rain dripping through its thatched roof and seething insect life. At dawn I left its pestilential shelter and rode on ahead through a torrential downpour, arriving at my destination only to wait for hours beneath a veritable shower-bath for the arrival of the bullock cart.

At such a time in India snakes are driven from their holes by the flood and I had been joined by a shikari carrying the largest dead Krait I ever saw, fully four feet in length and very poisonous, which he had stepped upon in the darkness but kicked off before it could bite! Another from the adjacent village who was to have joined our party had been killed by a cobra that morning.

Then followed miserable days for, apart from the depressing conditions offered by Nature, my bearer, who had shown no enthusiasm for the trip had, with typical cunning, packed my underclothes together with the culinary condiments and had taken great pains to see they arrived in a saturated condition, the result being so nauseating in either taste or appearance, that I would there and then have abandoned the shoot but I wished to pay him out and I feared the jeers of my brother officers were I to return prematurely.

Even more grim was the situation to become, for the following night I ran a high temperature and suffered those distressing and alternating periods of bitter cold and intense heat so peculiar to malaria, a fever which increased in virulence each day of my stay although, most conveniently, coming to a climax during the night and permitting my going hunting by day. Looking back I must have been a tough lad, for I stuck things out

during that ten days' leave, leaving camp before dawn and walking up to thirty miles a day in my quest for black buck. During the brief intervals in which the rain stopped, I would undress and sit naked in the sun waiting for my clothing to dry, the only occasions when one felt approximately comfortable.

Once I waited for some hours, concealed in the reed of a river bank for a crocodile whose grisly appearance at length gave me that neck shot which should have severed its vertebræ and prevented it from re-entering the water. But even that success was to be denied me, for its convulsions caused it to fall into the river and sink.

I did, however, succeed in shooting two black buck with exceptional horns, but this district had suffered a long drought with the consequence that game was extremely scarce; a fact probably responsible for what was about to happen.

It was the last day of the shoot and I was returning to camp towards evening, fever-worn and tired, for we had been out since before dawn and had covered some thirty miles in great heat, followed by my shikari and two coolies carrying the carcase of a black buck lashed to a pole.

Around us stretched a wide, bare plain and, after long travel, we were plodding along in silence when suddenly my shikari seized my arm and whispered "Wolves." It was a surprising remark to hear, seeing the desert-like character of the country we were in and which offered insufficient cover for a rabbit but, turning, I saw not twenty yards away to our left, the astounding sight of a pack of over forty wolves loping along by our side as compact and well-disciplined as that of the Beaufort. How they got so close without our knowledge or from what direction they had come still puzzles me, seeing that the nearest cover was over a mile distant. I can but surmise that they had adopted the tactics of a good fighter pilot and had come up fast from behind, then eased up when parallel. Although I had never encountered wolves before, I knew that the Indian variety is not normally courageous and my immediate reaction was one of delight at being presented with this opportunity of adding this rather unusual animal to the bag with my last remaining cartridge, for sport had been so poor that I had left camp with but two. When fine-drawn by hunting even the weight of a few cartridges tells. Aiming at the fearsome-looking leader, I was about to fire when my shikari grasped me firmly by the arm and I turned to find him positively grey with fright and imploring me not to shoot. He explained that the wolves were desperate through flooded dens and hunger and, attracted by the dead animal we were carrying, meant mischief and would attack on the slightest provocation. As I looked more closely I noticed the sinister way in which the wolves gazed fixedly ahead as if totally unaware of our proximity, and yet almost imperceptibly were edging in.

For fully four hundred yards we moved along in this preposterous fashion; a disturbing period which was scarcely enlivened by a pathetic effort on the part of the Indians to maintain a loud and cheery conversation, although to judge by their appearance it did not in the least degree represent their inward feelings, for they were positively "goosey" with fright.

The wolves were now so close that I could plainly see their cruel fangs, and saliva dripping from their mouths; details—I should add—which did not serve to increase my own enjoyment. Meanwhile the sun was setting and I realized that with darkness the danger might grow, for such animals, however cowardly by day may become aggressive beneath the cover of night. With but one cartridge left and no tree into which we could climb, or possible help available, I was forced to the conclusion that the best plan would be to kill the leader, in the hope that this would bring confusion to the pack.

All this while the pack might have been some ghostly manifestation, for never did a single wolf look in our direction, which made the situation the more eerie. Scarcely had I formed this decision before, on some obviously mysterious signal—unseen and inaudible—the pack quickened its pace until some twenty yards ahead, when it abruptly turned across our front, doubtless as a prelude to envelopment and attack. Without losing any time over spending my last cartridge, I aimed at the gaunt and vicious-looking leader and bowled him over. Perhaps fortunately my solid ·303 bullet did not take immediate effect, with the result that the wolf was up again in an instant, and although severely wounded, he had had more than enough and went off at speed, followed by his loyal pack.

Military axioms are singularly applicable to big game hunting and the importance of pressing a pursuit came at once to mind, so exchanging my now useless rifle for my shikari's *lathi*, or heavy brass-tipped bamboo staff I followed, shouting loudly. Fortunately so, for soon I could see the stricken wolf falling back until passed by the remainder of the wolves and left to his fate. He then turned at bay and I was faced by a horrible vision of bristling fur, bloodshot eyes and fangs laid bare. All now depended upon the use of my primitive weapon and, feeling like some gladiator, I advanced towards him, with good fortune getting home on its head with my first blow, and so put finis to his evil career.

The pack had now disappeared into the growing darkness and we were not to see it again. This curious encounter was also a lucky one for, although destined to shoot in India until over thirty years later, never again did I meet with wolves.

It is a peculiar fact that Indian wolves, and in Oudh particularly, have achieved a reputation for bringing up wolf-children to a greater degree than those in other parts of the world; for there are many well-authenticated cases of children having been found living with them, some of whom had, obviously, spent several years in their company. It is a story far too strange and fascinating to spoil, so I will tell it in the words of my grandfather, Major-General Sir William Sleeman, K.C.B., who recorded it in a pamphlet he wrote when British Resident at the Court of the King of Oudh at Lucknow in 1851:

> Wolves are numerous in the neighbourhood of Sultanpoor, and, indeed all along the banks of the Goomtee river, among the ravines that intersect them; and a great many children are carried off by them from towns, villages and camps. It is exceedingly difficult to catch them and hardly any of the Hindoo population —save those of the very lowest class, who live a vagrant life—will attempt to catch or kill them.

It is very remarkable that they very seldom catch wolves, though they know all their dens, and could easily dig them out as they dig out other animals. This is supposed to arise from the profit which they make by the gold and silver bracelets, necklaces and other ornaments, which are worn by the children whom the wolves carry to their dens and devour and are left at the entrance to these dens.

There is now, at Sultanpoor, a boy, who was found alive in a wolf's den near Chandour about two and a half years ago. A trooper was passing along the bank of the river about noon when he saw a large female wolf leave her den, followed by three whelps and a little boy. The boy went on all fours and seemed to be on the best possible terms with the old dam and the three whelps, and the mother seemed to guard all four with equal care. They all went down to the river and drank without perceiving the trooper, who sat upon his horse watching them—as soon as they were about to turn back the trooper pushed on to cut off and secure the boy; but he ran as fast as the whelps could and kept up with the old one. The ground was uneven and the trooper's horse could not overtake them. They all entered into the den and the trooper assembled some people from Chandour, with pickaxes and dug into the den. When they had dug in about six or eight feet, the old wolf bolted with her three whelps and the boy. The trooper mounted and pursued, and as the ground over which they had to fly was more even, he headed them and turned the whelps and boy back upon the men on foot, who secured the boy and let the old dam and her three cubs go on their way.

They took the boy to the village but had to tie him, for he was very restive and struggled hard to rush into every hole they came near. They tried to make him speak, but could get nothing from him but an angry growl or snarl. He was kept for several days at the village and a large crowd assembled every day to see him. When a grown-up person came near him, he became alarmed and tried to steal away; but when a child came near him, he rushed at it with a fierce snarl like that of a dog and tried to bite it. When any cooked meat was put before him he rejected it with disgust; but when any raw meat was offered, he seized it with avidity, put it on the ground under his paws, like a dog, and ate it with evident pleasure. He would not let anyone come near when he was eating, but made no objection to a dog coming and sharing his food with him. The boy was soon after sent to the European officer commanding the Oude Local Infantry at Sultanpoor, Captain Nicholetts, by order of the Rajah of Hasunpoor, who was at Chandour, and saw the boy when the trooper first brought him to that village. This account is taken from the Rajah's own report of what had taken place.

Captain Nicholetts' servants took great care of him, but can never get him to speak a word. He is very inoffensive, except when teased, Captain Nicholetts says, and will then growl surlily. He has come to eat anything that is thrown to him, but always prefers raw flesh, which he devours most greedily. He can never be induced to keep on any kind of clothing, even in the coldest weather. A quilt, stuffed with cotton, was given to him when it became very cold this season, but he tore it to pieces and ate a portion of it, cotton and all, with his bread every day. He has eaten half a lamb at a time without any apparent effort and is very fond of taking up earth and small stones and eating them. His features are coarse and his countenance repulsive; and he is very filthy in his habits.

Captain Nicholetts, in letters dated the 14th and 19th September, 1850, tells me that the boy died in the latter end of August and that he was never known to laugh or smile. He understood little of what was said to him, and seemed to take no notice of what was going on around him. He formed no attachment for

anyone, but used to sit petting and stroking a vagrant dog, which he used to permit to feed out of the same dish with him. A short time before his death, Captain Nicholetts shot this dog, as he used to eat the greater part of the food given to the boy, who, in consequence, seemed to be getting thin. The boy did not seem to care in the least for the death of the dog. The parents recognized the boy when he was first found, Captain Nicholetts believes, but when they found him to be so stupid and insensible, they left him to subsist upon charity. They have now left Hasunpoor, and the age of the boy when carried off cannot be ascertained; but he was, to all appearance, about nine or ten years of age when found and he lived about three years afterwards. He used signs when he wanted anything, and very few of them except when hungry: and he then pointed to his mouth. When his food was placed at some distance from him he would run to it on all fours, like any four-footed animal; but at other times he would walk upright occasionally. He shunned human beings of all kinds and would never willingly remain near one. To cold, heat, and rain he appeared to be indifferent; and he seemed to care for nothing but eating. He was very quiet and required no kind of restraint after being brought to Captain Nicholetts. He had lived with Captain Nicholetts' servants about two years and was never heard to speak till within a few minutes of his death, when he put his hands to his head and said "it ached", and asked for water. He drank it and died.

At Chupra, twenty miles east of Sultanpoor, lived a cultivator with his wife and son, who was then three years of age. In March, 1843, the man went to cut his crop of wheat and pulse and the woman took her basket and went with him to glean, leading her son by the arm. The boy had lately recovered from a severe scald on the left knee which he got from tumbling into the fire. As the father was reaping and the mother gleaning, the boy sat upon the grass. A wolf rushed upon him suddenly from behind a bush, caught him by the loins and made off with him towards the ravines. The father was at a distance at the time; but the mother followed, screaming as loud as she could for assistance. The people of the village ran to her aid, but they soon lost sight of the wolf and his prey.

She heard nothing more of the boy for six years and had in that interval lost her husband. At the end of that time two sipahees were sitting on the border of the jungle, which extended down to a stream when they saw three wolf cubs and a boy come out from the jungle and go down together to drink. The sipahees watched them until they had drunk and were about to return, when they rushed towards them. All four ran towards a den in the ravines. The sipahees followed as fast as they could, but the three cubs had got in before they could come up with them and the boy was half-way in when one of the sipahees caught him by the hind-leg and drew him back. He seemed very angry and ferocious, bit at them and seized in his teeth the barrel of one of the guns which they put forward to keep him off and shook it. They, however, secured him, brought him home and kept him for twenty days. They could for that time make him eat nothing but raw flesh and they fed him upon hares and birds. They found it difficult to provide him with sufficient food and took him to Koeleepoor, and there let him go, to be fed by the charitable people of the place till he might be recognized and claimed by his parents. One market-day a man from the village of Chupra happened to see him in the bazaar and on his return mentioned the circumstances to his neighbours. The cultivator's widow, on hearing this, asked him to describe the boy more minutely, when she found that the boy had the mark of a scald on the left knee, and three marks of the teeth of an animal on each side of his loins. The widow told him that her boy, when taken off, had lately recovered from a scald on the left knee and was seized by the loins when the wolf took him off and that the boy he had seen must be her lost child.

She went off forthwith to the Koelee Bazaar and in addition to the two marks above described, discovered a third mark on his thigh with which her child was born. She took him home to her village where he was recognized by all her neighbours. She kept him for two months and all the sporting landholders in the neighbourhood sent her game for him to feed upon. He continued to dip his face in the water to drink but he sucked in the water and did not lap it up like a dog or wolf. His body continued to smell offensively. When the mother went to her work the boy always ran into the jungle and she could never get him to speak. He followed his mother for what he could get to eat but showed no particular affection for her; and she could never bring herself to feel much for him. After two months, finding him of no use to her, and despairing of ever making anything of him, she left him to the common charity of the village. He soon after learnt to eat bread when it was given to him and ate whatever else he could get during the day, but always went off to the jungle at night. He used to mutter something but could never be got to articulate any word distinctly. The front of his knees and elbows had become hardened from going on all fours with the wolves. If any clothes are put on him he takes them off and commonly tears them to pieces in doing so. He still prefers raw flesh to cooked and feeds on carrion whenever he can get it. The boys of the village are in the habit of amusing themselves by catching frogs and throwing them to him and he catches and eats them. When a bullock dies and the skin is removed, he goes and eats of it like a village dog. The boy is still in the village and this is the description given of him by the mother herself, who still lives at Chupra.

However difficult it may be to credit such happenings, such as may, indeed, make Romulus and Remus assume a character not so mythical as we have always thought, it must be remembered that, at the time of writing, Major-General Sir William Sleeman had been in charge of the operations for the supression of Thuggee, the most secret and dreadful organization of murder ever known, for over twenty years; that he had unmasked during that time the great majority of its ringleaders, surrounded as they were by protective measures of the most intricate description and adepts at subterfuge and concealment. In other words, he was quite the last man to be taken in by any cock-and-bull story of wolf-children, while he had also the assistance of his trained investigators to help him in his enquiries. Not, however, that such stories of wolf-children require any corroboration, seeing that since then over twenty cases of other wolf-children have been recorded and vouched for, including that great Indian authority, the late Sir John Hewett: one of the greatest administrators India has ever known.

That wolves in India are not always harmless is shown by A. Mervyn Smith in his book *Sport and Adventure in the Indian Jungle* (Hurst and Blackett Ltd.) which was published in 1904, or over fifty years after the experiences which I have related. In this he states that an engineer in the Public Works Department, with great experience of that country, was of the opinion that none of its wild beasts were equal to the wolf in savage ferocity, wanton destructiveness, and wild daring; as also that native watchmen guarding a brickfield near Gya were so frequently carried off by a pair of wolves that at last no one would remain after dark anywhere near it. But Mervyn Smith's story has a greater significance than that, for it contains the most authenticated account of a wolf-child which I have yet seen. This was of

a village between Nagpore and Jubbulpore, called Sat-bowrie, where certain of its inhabitants commenced to disappear without trace, until an officer of the Thuggee Department established by my Grandfather some seventy years before, one Lieutenant Cumberledge, was sent to investigate, in case an outbreak of that hideous religion of murder had broken out afresh. These coming to naught it was next thought that a man-eating wolf was perhaps responsible, as the victims—if victims they were—always vanished at night and were generally taken from the verandah of their huts. The fact that not a bone of these unfortunates was found was significant, seeing that other man-eating animals will usually leave the larger bones, but wolves seldom leave a vestige.

During Cumberledge's stay a woman was taken from her hut, a youth of seventeen from in front of a village shop and, finally, a goldsmith, the only marks detectable being those of four rounded holes some fifteen inches apart and placed two and two together. These Mervyn Smith recognized as being similar to those made by a wolf-child which he had lately seen at Seoni and which crawled on his knees and elbows. (Not, as children do, on hands and knees!) Finally they tracked down the she-wolf responsible for the killings to where she had taken up her abode in the ruins of a temple, and killed her; catching the wolf-child two days later, and bringing him into Mervyn Smith's camp. Notice the similarity of the descriptions, over fifty years apart, as recounted by Mervyn Smith:

His hair was long, hanging down to his shoulders, and matted in places. His legs and arms were thin and sinewy and showed many a scar and bruise; the stomach large and protuberant, the shoulders rounded.

His teeth were worn to stumps in front, but the canines and molars were well developed. On being given a piece of roast mutton he first smelt it, and then fell-to greedily, tearing off pieces with the side of his mouth and swallowing them without mastication. The bone he kept crunching at and gnawing for hours; this explained the worn state of his front teeth.

When taken into the tent he showed a great dread of the light, and no persuasion or threats would get him near it. He at once made for a corner, or under the camp stretcher, and coiled himself up. But he was not allowed to stay in the tent as it was found that his hair swarmed with large ticks, and the smell from his body was overpowering.

He was apparently about ten years old. With difficulty we got him to stand upright. He measured four-feet-one-inch in height. His knees, toes, elbows, and the lower part of his palms were hard, and covered with a horny skin, showing that he habitually crawled on knees and elbows.

This method of progression was probably acquired from having to crouch low when entering and leaving the wolf's den. He would not tolerate clothing of any kind nor would he use straw. He preferred to scratch a hole in the sand and cuddle himself up in it.

Now we come to rather a pathetic part of this admirable description:

On being shown the skin of the large she-wolf he became quite excited, smelled at it several times, turned it over, and then uttered the most plaintive howls it has ever been my lot to listen to. They resembled somewhat the first cry of a jackal; hence the servants called him *Sooal* (jackal). After this he would

never go near the skin, but showed evident signs of terror when taken near it. He would sleep all day, but became restless at nights, and would then try to escape to the woods.

He would not touch dog-biscuits or rice stewed with meat, but would select all the meat and leave the rice.

He appeared to be particularly partial to the offal of fowls. When on one occasion the cook threw away the entrails of a chicken in his presence, he instantly seized it and swallowed it before anyone could prevent him. He also showed a strong predilliction for carrion. His sense of smell was so acute that he could scent a dead cow or buffalo a long distance off, and at once began tugging at his chain to get to it.

To quote Mervyn Smith once more he writes:

It would require no stretch of imagination to believe that he had often shared in a meal with his wolf-companions, of a freshly-killed child, even if he did not himself help to carry off the little victims.

So much for *Seeall*, the wolf-boy, whose photo is shown in these pages; one, moreover, who is further stated to have developed sufficient intelligence later to learn the Gond language and to converse fairly well. Save that this former wolf-child was subsequently sent to the charge of a missionary in the north-west of India his subsequent history remains a mystery.

To return to my story, this experience of wolves ended my first hunt in India and I returned to Cantonments with such a raging burst of malaria as was to keep me in hospital for several months, such as afforded ample time in which to regret not having taken the advice of my senior officers.

CHAPTER III

A STORY OF THREE BEARS

CURIOUSLY enough it is not an infrequent experience that a beginner in big game hunting meets with quite unusual and undeserved success, and it was to prove so when Langridge and I first entered the Indian jungles forty-four years ago.

Guests of the Rani Sahiba of Kherigarh, and with an elephant apiece to aid our hunting, we were conducted to our distant camp by Kaur Mandhata Shah, a fine old *Taliqdar*, or Baron of Oudh, who had shot with my grandfather half-a-century before. With the typical inconsequence of the novice I had treated the matter of armament with scant respect and, largely guided by that impecuniosity peculiar to a subaltern whose pay was then but 5s. 3d. a day, had purchased a second-hand Winchester ·500 Repeater, the chief merit of which was its capacity to deliver five rounds without replenishment. It was, however, an unorthodox weapon for Indian shooting, so proved anathema to my companion, Langridge—a stickler for hunting etiquette—and I was to suffer much criticism before its possession enabled me to turn the tables, seeing that the customary double-barrelled rifle could not possibly have dealt with the situation that I shall now describe.

Our daily programme was to enter the jungle on our elephants an hour before dawn, there to separate and meander along throughout the day on the chance of getting a shot. In this form of hunting, known as *shumming*, a howdah would make progress through dense jungle well-nigh impossible, and one sits instead upon the front of an elephant pad, or mattress almost a foot in thickness with legs astride the neck of the elephant and behind those of the mahout—a comfortable and fairly secure position in the event of a tiger springing upon the elephant's head, as they are apt to do.

On this particular day my elephant was ploughing her way through dense jungle when a tiger which had in all probability been asleep sprang up before us and, with a characteristic "woof-woof" charged from sight before I could fire. Bitterly disappointed the mahout now advised that we should make for the nearest jungle track, acting on the assumption that the tiger might follow us out of curiosity. Presently we reached a narrow, overgrown and winding path and went along it for some little way, when I took up my position upon an overhanging bough which afforded a view of the way we had come. This done the elephant went on to act as a lure. Having been strictly warned against movement or firing before the tiger passed beneath me, I found it was a test of patience when presently I saw the tiger come out of the jungle exactly where we had left it and come striding towards me.

Youth always prefers to purchase its experience and belonging as I did to a good shooting regiment, the temptation to shoot proved irresistible

—for at twenty yards away it seemed a certainty—and I stupidly raised my rifle. Those keen eyes instantly detected the movement and simultaneously the tiger turned into the jungle before I could make certain of my shot. Although I waited until dark hoping that a moment of temporary insanity would bring the tiger back, it was as a bitterly disappointed man that I later made the long journey back to camp that night.

However much of a griffin (or newcomer to India), I can at least be said to have possessed that essential attribute for all correct hunting, namely persistence, with the result that the following afternoon saw me again waiting in the same tree, although this time in a less conspicuous position, there to maintain a mosquito-ridden and profitless vigil, until night put an end to my hopes.

Tenacity of purpose, however, remained, and yet a third day I repeated this seemingly futile experiment—this time to meet with the reward of perseverance, for just as it grew dark I saw the dim shape of the tiger coming down the track towards me with that peculiar rolling gait of the larger carnivora. Determined not to blot my copybook this time by taking any chances, I waited, but again it turned abruptly into the jungle when about only fifteen yards away. Driven to prompt action by what I had endured I aimed into the jungle ahead of its receding tail and fired.

Fully twenty seconds of puzzling silence followed and I was just beginning to hope that I had killed it, when the stricken beast giving vent to blood-curdling roars, somersaulted over and over across the track like some circus performer and went crashing through the undergrowth beyond for some little distance. Next came three diminishing groans, the last so faint as to be almost inaudible. My fluke had come off: I had achieved the summit of a sportsman's ambition—a tiger!

The mahout who had been waiting with his elephant a mile away had heard my shot, but by the time he arrived it was pitch dark, and nothing would persuade him to make search that night. So there was nothing perforce but to leave my precious trophy with the hope that, hyenas and jackals permitting, the morrow would reward me with the finest of all trophies. Pride was to have a fall! for when we returned at break of dawn it was to see spots instead of the anticipated stripes looming through the undergrowth, and to realize that I had killed a huge panther! My disappointment was so keen that although this was the first to fall to my rifle I could scarcely bear to look at it, and this was only lessened when later I found it to be within the record class for size and abnormally light in colour.

When invited to this shoot we had been asked by the Forest Officer to make a particular effort to account for as many sloth bear as possible in a distant jungle where they were both so plentiful and aggressive that they had already killed eleven woodcutters that year, with the not unnatural result that volunteers for this industry were not queueing up. This bear has a vicious temper and an unpleasant habit of hiding on the approach of man, and then as he comes closer the bear—either through fear or hate, or probably a combination of both—loses its head and wildly attacks. As, moreover, a sloth bear usually goes for one's face and has claws over three inches in length, the wounds are often of a terrible nature; many an

unarmed woodcutter has had to go through life with eyes gouged out or jaw-bones wrenched away.

In order to fall in with the Forest Officer's wishes we made the long travel and reached this gloomy and difficult jungle where, following our wont, we separated and began our quest. About two hours later my elephant came to an abrupt stop immediately in front of a large bush, from which was emanating a curious sound, a blending of moan and purring of puzzling character. Not so to the mahout, for he pointed his *gazbag* or iron goad into his centre and excitedly whispered, "Reech". Without any knowledge then of Hindustani I clearly grasped that I was expected to spring into action.

If I detected anything at all it was only the faintest of shadow, but anxious to comply, I aimed blindly at this and pulled the trigger. As if my shot was the key to Bedlam, instantly the jungle resounded with piercing shrieks and bellows of rage; such a medley of fearsome noise as to cause my startled elephant to back rapidly. Fortunately he did, for the bush now disgorged an enormous sloth bear which, rising high upon its hind legs, came straight for the elephant with obvious evil intent. It was well that I had reloaded, and I fired again, and this caused the bear to change its mind and sent it scurrying off into the jungle.

Thanks to having my magazine rifle there was just time to insert another cartridge, when out rushed another sloth bear equally as determined as the first to make our flesh creep, and instantly successful so far as the elephant was concerned, for by this time it was literally dancing with fear. Consequently I had to lean well over to deal with this animated mass of shaggy fury, and even while I was firing the elephant spun round and bolted, overbalancing me so that I had to let go of my rifle and grasp a pad rope, or I should have followed my weapon to the ground. Almost upside down I was now forced to take the roughest ride in my life, for the elephant, shrilly trumpeting and distraught with fear, dashed madly through the jungle and through or over whatever lay in her path.

Even in ordinary circumstances it would have proved sufficiently nerve-racking, but to participate in such formidable going from an inverted position considerably accentuated its disagreeable quality. For it cannoned off big trees and pushed down smaller ones, swept beneath massive overhanging boughs which I missed by what seemed fractions of an inch, while fearful thorn-bush was dealt with as if it were diaphanous veiling. Two deep *nalas* or dry watercourses were taken without falter, the ponderous beast skidding down the near and heaving herself up the far banks with astounding, if uncomfortable, agility.

With arms all but wrenched from their sockets the temptation to let go was only resisted by the knowledge that a frightened elephant is apt to mistake one for whatever it is afraid of and turn upon one. At long last impact with a tree combined with a vigorous application of *gazbag* ended the terrifying career.

So dense was this particular jungle that the route we had taken was very like a tunnel; it showed that the wild ride which had seemed endless was actually only five hundred yards or so. But what a five hundred!

A period was allowed for the restoration of shattered nerve, and after

much "coaxing" the elephant was persuaded to return towards where we had met the bears, but nothing would induce her to complete the last fifty yards, so I had to dismount to recover my rifle, which by good luck I found undamaged.

Only the previous night Langridge had gone to great pains to explain that sloth bear can take a lot of punishment, owing to their long fur concealing the vital points of aim. Moreover, the shooting I had been called upon to do had been so hurried and taken from such an unstable platform that it was unreasonable to hope for any success. But now afoot, curiosity prompted my following the trail of the first bear into the jungle and before I had gone a hundred yards I almost blundered into it in the dense undergrowth, fortunately to find it dead. By this time the mahout had succeeded in bringing his elephant up and I went to cut some liana with which to help in the bear's "padding".

While doing this, to my delighted surprise I came upon the carcase of the second bear, not fifty yards from the other, and this exceptional stroke of luck was still to be capped; for Langridge had now arrived upon the scene—having heard my fusilade in the distance—who, after examining my trophies and infinitely to my amazement expressed his opinion that, fine as were both these specimens, "the other was the best of the three!"

It then transpired that *en route* he had passed a dead bear lying behind the bush into which I had blindly fired my first unaimed shot; there I was to find an enormous sloth bear shot through the centre of the forehead, which must have killed it instantaneously. By this astounding fluke I had bagged three bears in three shots!

My regiment had but recently come to India and this was the first big-game shoot of any of its officers. Those who know subalterns will imagine with what ceaseless repetition I told envious brother officers on my return of how I had accounted for three bears within fifteen seconds, until its curiously reminiscent nursery ring lent itself to satire and no Guest-night was complete without my being "invited" to tell the story of how I killed "Fifteen bears in three seconds".

Eventually tiring of such suspicious ribaldry I wrote to Langridge and asked him to confirm the happening. I thought it fortunate that he was a clergyman and that I had had him as a witness. In reply he gave an extract from his diary of the day in question: thus was honour vindicated, for it ran: "Went with Sleeman into the Reechaya jungle. Heard him fire three shots. Went up to find he had killed three bears. In my opinion his shots were fired within twelve seconds." So, with three seconds in hand over my own estimate my reputation was sustained, although those who have served in the old Regular Army in which sport played so great a part will appreciate that not even such irrefutable evidence prevented a distorted version of my story from lasting throughout my army career until I terminated it as a Brigade Commander.

But this success, however undeserved it was, was to stand me in good stead later, for the incident as related by my mahout lost nothing in the telling, while I was to hunt those same jungles often during the following years. Both shikari and mahout now erroneously credited me with almost

superhuman hunting attributes, which was fortunate, seeing that Indians, whose lives may depend upon the reliability and markmanship of the *Sahib* they are out with, like to be assured of his capability before bringing him into contact with dangerous game. Many an ardent but inexperienced sportsman has been "led down the garden path" and away from all danger by mahout or shikari for this reason; many are the tigers which have been diverted by bits of paper and other devices from their "kill".

They were to repose in me a degree of confidence which indeed at times was to prove embarrassing, opportunities such as would certainly not have come my way but for the "Three Bears", and it was all that I could do to live up to this unmerited reputation.

We returned from this shoot to be again the guests of the Rani Sahiba of Kherigarh at Singhai Palace, during which time I took part in the ancient sport of hawking, then the favourite pastime of Kaur Mandhata Shah, a courteous old sportsman who had killed over seventy tigers. Apart from the interest of the hunting itself there was also the fascination of being engaged in a form of hunting which could have differed little from that of a thousand years before, for it was conducted from horseback, the cadgers, the falcons with their hoods, bewits, and bells, and the rich colours of the East presenting an arresting picture; hunting of a kind, too, never to come my way again.

CHAPTER IV

A PHOTOGRAPHIC SURPRISE

THE next happening was that of a tiger kill; a water-buffalo, news of which was brought early one morning by a poor Indian who could ill afford such loss. Langridge and I reached the scene some hours later to find that the tiger had made a neat job of it, for while the victim had been a powerful beast and although its neck was broken, the ground about had suffered small disturbance.

Opinions differ in regard to how the tiger kills, but evidence pointed to probability that this particular one had approached to within about twenty yards of the buffalo without detection. Then had followed a swift run-in and a spring upon the buffalo's shoulder, with one fore-paw taking a firm purchase beyond, the other seizing the nose while powerful teeth sank into its neck: almost simultaneous preliminaries by means of which such co-ordination and leverage become possible as not only to dislocate the neck of the victim as it falls but also utilize its own weight in killing.

Often since have I had occasion to marvel at such proof of amazing brute force and clever skill verging on the uncanny, seeing that such killing usually takes place in the black darkness of deep jungle.

Under the circumstances, both of us being new to the game, decided to erect a *machan* or platform in the nearest tree, upon which to await the tiger's return. Unfortunately, in our ignorance, we refused to accept the shikari's advice and cut the branches required from the immediate vicinity of the "kill", adding to this folly by making a *de luxe* pattern, twice the size either necessary or advisable. This done, we drew lots to decide who was to occupy it and Langridge winning, I returned to camp.

Late that night I approached the tree cautiously as pre-arranged and, whistling, received his answering signal that the coast was clear. I found a mosquito-bitten, angry and disappointed companion, suffering, too, from an inability to express adequately his true feelings, being a clergyman! I now learnt that the tiger had arrived soon after my departure, coming up from behind the *machan* and making no effort to conceal its approach until directly beneath Langridge's perch. Just as he thought it was about to show, it came to a stop, its close presence soon being made the more evident by the sound of intensive ablutions and a pungent aroma, for an over-fed tiger would defeat any specific for halitosis contained in the pharmacopœia.

Our folly in thinking in terms of comfort when constructing the *machan* now became evident, for its out-size made it impossible for Langridge to look over its edge without the risk of making his presence known and so losing his chance. He had, therefore, to possess himself with what patience he could assume for over an hour—a period enlivened only by the sound of gastronomical disturbances and the cat-like sharpening of tiger claws upon the trunk of the tree. Then followed a long silence until,

fearful that all was not well, Langridge threw caution to the winds and peered over the edge of his *machan*, to find that the tiger had gone without making the slightest sound. Whether it had detected his presence or had noticed where we had cut the timber taken for the *machan*—or whatever the cause—he had lost a fine chance while we had learned a lesson that comfort and good hunting are seldom companions. It may be of interest to add, however, that one does not sit up a tree for reasons of safety only, but because the greater carnivora in their natural lives have nothing to fear from trees, while searching the ground about a "kill" with keen eyes which miss little.

Although the incident I have related proved of a negative quality, it is as well to add certain of one's blank days to those of success in big game hunting; else there might be a tendency to assume that those who participate in it have it all their own way; instead, as is actually the case, of a man having all he can do to pit his wits against those of tiger or panther. The old saying that familiarity breeds contempt is particularly applicable to big game hunting, as was shown on the following day, due to the ease with which I had so recently dealt with the three bears. For the success which had then attended the accidental encounter and undeserving effort had largely negatived the warnings I had received that sloth-bear especially can stand much punishment and still remain capable of grave harm.

The mahout and I were out alone and his elephant was passing through an open clearing in the heart of an otherwise deep jungle, when suddenly I saw a large sloth-bear standing between two trees and not ten yards away; one which had probably heard our approach and instead of making off, as most other wild animals would, had "frozen" in an effort at concealment.

Had I been afoot and unobservant this encounter might well have ended in catastrophe, considering twice as many Indian had been killed in these jungles that year by sloth-bear as by tiger! The knack of spontaneous detection forms an essential trait in the make-up of a big game hunter and—amateur as I was at that time—I still take pride in the fact that the keen-eyed and experienced mahout perceived nothing of this bear's presence until, at my shot, it fell over, apparently dead. This was no great surprise to me, after the incident of the three bears, but the mahout was more sceptical and would not allow me to dismount until he had convinced himself by hurling broken branches down upon it that it was not shamming death.

There was no movement so I got down, placed my rifle against a tree and walked up to within four yards of the bear in order to take its photograph. Engrossed with focusing, I saw through the view-finder of my Kodak—to my infinite amazement—the shaggy, inert mass resolve itself instantaneously into an alert manifestation of raging fury, rolling over and standing erect upon its hind legs in one incredible swift movement! In the same second I pressed the release of the camera, more through fright than artistic desire, while this most unwelcome return to vibrant life must have rooted me to the spot where I remained appreciably long enough to see it lumbering towards me. My interest in photography suffered complete eclipse; I dropped the camera and urged by a desire to quit the spot with

the utmost celerity I attempted the world's jungle running record to get my rifle.

By good luck I had reloaded before getting down from the elephant, otherwise this tale would probably not have been told. For as I grasped the rifle and turned about, there was the bear almost upon me: I see now the huge paws, bristling with formidable outstretched claws waving almost in my face—not a split second could be spared to get the rifle to my shoulder, so I poked the muzzle against its chest and pulled the trigger. Quick as thought I jumped back to avoid the bear falling upon me, and fortunately so, for, hard hit though it was, it was far from being *hors de combat* and now, like fury incarnate, came scrambling towards me, taking two further shots before the end.

Without wishing to excuse my shooting, for it has already been explained how difficult is aim in regard to sloth-bear, I would state that unless the first shot enters heart or brain of wild, powerful animals, especially the carnivora, their capacity for subsequent punishment can often be prodigious. This is due to the fact that the initial shock to the nervous system deadens feeling, while anger or fear creates an abnormal adrenalin stimulation.

The bear was dead, but more trouble dead than alive. By now it was growing late; we were in the heart of a deep jungle dangerous to elephant on account of deep *nalas* or watercourses and areas of swamp, while the mahout and I were alone, the bear weighed something approaching five hundred pounds and our elephant was still suffering from an allergic complex produced by its recent encounter with the three bears and now exhibited the strongest distaste for approaching the carcase of this one.

Altogether the problem was of some magnitude: it needed much tiresome coaxing and jack-in-the-box exhibitions to overcome this repugnance sufficiently to get it to squat beside the bear. The next stage of the problem arose from the fact that the mahout was old and feeble and the bear not only heavy but yielding and its long smooth coat rendered it slippery in character. These combined drawbacks were intensified when the mahout hauled from the elephant above and I pushed and lifted from below, for the highly-strung elephant persisted in rising at the crucial moment leaving a veritable cascade of bear to fall upon me!

Several times did this happen until, blood-besmeared and exhausted, we were compelled to realize that success could not lie in such methods.

Night was by now coming on apace and the mahout was much perturbed at the prospect at having to find his way out of such difficult jungle in darkness, knowing that he would be held responsible should accident befall his elephant. Vain, however, were his entreaties to leave the bear to be brought in next day, for I feared that this would be to find it eaten by hyena and jackal or that we should be unable to locate it in such a tangled wilderness. There was no other alternative than to skin the bear, a solution which the mahout, owing to his caste, found repugnant, but eventually consented to help with.

Never could mahout have put out greater effort or bear-skin have been removed with greater celerity, though as this grisly task was accomplished with blunt knives the less said, perhaps, about the result the better.

Even so we had to travel much of the way through darkness before we gained the nearest fire-line, following which came a ten-mile journey back to camp. What with the excitement and difficulties, it was only after we reached there that I realized that I had left my camera where it had fallen; both a sentimental loss—for I had carried it during the South African war—and an intrinsic one, for gone with it was the film of the three bears as well as of the attack made upon me that very day.

At any rate, this was to serve to show my wisdom in insisting upon removing the pelt, for despite the offer of a handsome reward and an exhaustive search lasting two days, the scene of the encounter could not be located.

Away in that distant Indian jungle still must rest the remains of a camera which over forty years ago once contained records of thrilling moments!

CHAPTER V

WHEN LUCK WAS IN

WHILE naturally a certain risk is attached to big game hunting, my experience has been that comparatively few wild animals are really aggressive to man without cause.

That a wounded beast will attempt to retaliate is only to be expected, but the vicious type of wild animal which lusts for human blood and always charges at sight with aggressive intent is largely a figment of the imagination, and although experienced hunters sometimes fall victim to wild animal attack this is usually because increasing experience is apt to make one take liberties.

It was so when I was one of a party of four engaged in a hot-weather shoot in the Nepal Terai, as guests of two sporting Taliqdar brothers, Bala and Mangal Khan, delightful old gentlemen who had shot with my grandfather half-a-century before. With that hospitable courtesy of the Indian gentleman, they had brought with them seventeen elephant with their mahouts and other attendants, in addition to the welcome news that when passing the ruins of an old fort some ten miles distant, they had seen a large panther sunning itself on its verge.

Dawn the next morning saw us half-way there, to find on arrival the carcase of a nilghai recently killed by the panther and just outside the boundary of the fort, which indicated that its assassin was in all probability sleeping off its heavy repast within.

To call it a fort is a misnomer; for its age-old walls had long since mouldered into dust, while its original outline could only be discerned by the dense jungle which had sprung up upon the debris. Forming a parallelogram of considerable size, it enclosed a grass-covered courtyard down which ran a strip of jungle for two-thirds of its length, representing its ancient keep, the rest being open with a solitary tree in its centre. For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to it henceforth as a fort, although nothing by this jungle-growth permitted that resemblance.

We decided to start operations by beating through one side of the fort from the direction of the kill with the elephant, while three of the guns, of which I was the centre, waited within the courtyard, two standing by the edge of the keep and the third—a novice at big game hunting—being posted in the branches of the lone tree. As there was little distance to be driven we had thought that the beat would prove of short duration, but soon it became clear that something was delaying progress, for we could hear the mahouts urging forward their elephant and calling to one another in some dismay.

This was puzzling, until at long last a ragged line of elephant hove into sight and one by one, stepped into the open without affording us a

sign of the panther. All had emerged except a huge tusker elephant who was ultimately left with only one small bush to negotiate. To the uninitiated it would have seemed impossible that such slight cover would conceal a panther and my friend in the tree unfortunately thought so, but knowing by past experience how wily this animal can be and what use it can make of even the slightest cover, I watched closely as the elephant proceeded to trample through it.

It was then that this small bush, as if participating in some conjuring trick, disgorged a magnificent panther, looking twice its size, which bounded across the courtyard almost directly beneath the gun waiting in the tree. I could have hit it with the greatest of ease, but it was so clearly his shot that I held my fire, until I saw it pass beneath him without being fired at and making for the jungle beyond.

The shot had now become difficult and all that I could do was to take a hurried snapshot, which but served to accelerate the panther's pace until it disappeared.

It then transpired that the novice in the tree, thinking that the beat had ended when most of the elephants had emerged from the jungle, had foolishly unloaded.

The cause of the delay was now explained by the mahouts, when it transpired that many years before a hunt for illusionary treasure had resulted in honeycombing this fort with deep pits which, now overhung by undergrowth and surrounded by crumbling masonry, had imperilled the elephant and made progress enormously difficult.

As a trained elephant stands in the nature of a family inheritance to its mahout, passing from father to son owing to its longevity, nothing would now induce them to essay the experiment again. This was serious, for it meant that were the panther still within the fort, which was questionable, there were no means available by which to drive it out. Finding cajolery of no avail and the mahouts adamant, a compromise was eventually arrived at by which it was agreed that the elephant should line the exterior and opposite side of the fort and at a given moment make all the din their mahouts were capable of creating, in the remote hope that this would cause the panther to break back.

While they were getting into position, with one gun in charge of the line, the three remaining guns spaced themselves along the keep on the opposite side of where we had been before and not feeling in the least optimistic of our plan meeting with success. Opposite to where I was standing the ground was practically bare for some fifteen yards, when followed a similar extent of high-grass which led into the jungle. The heat was stifling, for the temperature was almost a hundred and twenty degrees in the shade and it came as a welcome relief when presently the sound of whistles, shouts, and beating of brass *lota* or water jars intimated that the dummy beat had started.

For a while I remained on the *qui vive*; but as the din lengthened it became so obvious that those creating it were stationary that it seemed futile to suppose that it would deceive the craftiest of all carnivora. By this time, confident that the effort was doomed to failure and with the folly

of half-experience, I relaxed all precaution and sitting down with my back against a fallen tree, I waited in fed-up resignation for it to end.

Soon followed a state of somnolence and I was just dozing comfortably off when I saw through blinking eyes the vicious-looking head of a panther slide out of the grass directly in front of me and within fifteen yards; a vision of malevolence so unexpected as to seem uncanny and most certainly one which instantly dissipated all thought of slumber. By a stroke of great good fortune, the gun on my left who had wisely taken post in a tree and who had no idea of the panther's close proximity, chose that moment to make some movement, which attracted the panther's attention without its seeing me. This is not as surprising as it may sound, for low as may be the carnivora's opinion of the human, at least they do not expect to find them sitting on the ground half asleep! But it was also immediately obvious that the searching glance it was giving my companion on the left was but the preliminary to its galloping across, when it would find me in its path and there would probably result an unpleasant free-for-all; for, next to being wounded, nothing infuriates carnivora more than surprise, while none knows better than they that the best form of defence is attack.

Curiously enough, one invariably thinks very clearly, coolly, and rapidly under such circumstances and with no time to waste I aimed at the only vulnerable part I could see, namely the head: always a risky shot owing to the sloping character of a panther's skull. As I brought the rifle up it instantly saw the movement, and switching its gaze full upon me bared its fangs in a hideous grimace as I fired.

The result became immediately obscured in a dense cloud of smoke as it does with a black-powder cartridge, and quickly I rolled over in case it was coming my way. A moment later I noticed the grass behind where I had last seen the panther moving in such a way as to indicate a badly wounded animal; an impression strengthened by its welcome non-appearance.

Here entered the unpardonable type of carelessness or stupidity that accounts for so many fatal "accidents" in big game hunting, for although familiar with the tenacity of life and the ferocity of a wounded panther I now walked across to finish it off. It was, probably most fortunately, to find no panther but such a disturbance of grass and other signs including disgorged lumps of meat as to make clear the fact that it had been badly wounded. I was examining these proofs when a blood-thirsty roar and an approaching crash of jungle proclaimed the panther in mid-charge.

The grass where I stood was so high and the adjoining jungle so dense that I could see nothing and a mauling seemed inevitable, when the fearsome noise stopped abruptly, to be followed by a silence as deep as it was puzzling, considering the extreme vindictiveness of a wounded panther.

Having learnt my lesson, I waited for my companions to join me, when we held a council of war to determine what to do next. According to a universal rule of good sportsmanship a wounded animal is never left, but the jungle around was of such formidable character as to render practically suicidal any attempt on foot.

Meanwhile, the elephants had been brought round, so once again we tried to induce their mahouts to make a further effort; but, obdurate still,

they maintained that this piece of jungle was also riddled with pitfalls and that they dare not risk incurring the wrath of their masters should accident occur to their charges.

The problem seemed insoluble and honour would probably have rested satisfied but for the fact that one of the guns had an established reputation for facing up to dangerous animals and consequently it was clear that all the Indian present expected something desperate of him—the old story of the V.C. who is always expected to perform V.C. deeds!

The prestige of the white man was indeed at stake and as I had been responsible for wounding the panther and it was, therefore, unthinkable that I should allow him to make the attempt alone, we agreed to go in together while the other guns took post on both sides of the fort in case the panther showed. We wriggled our way through undergrowth largely consisting of wait-a-bit thorn and over lianas looped to the ground like gargantuan snakes; in addition, concealed pits combined to make progress unimaginably difficult in its gloomy depths. The deeper we penetrated the worse things became, until presently the only possible method of progress was for each in turn to squirm beneath fallen tree-trunks and other impediments, while the other stood on guard, what time we both endeavoured to portray that it was all the greatest fun. In such fashion we toiled through this thicket of misery, acutely conscious of the fact that we were probably close to an animal renowned for rapid frightfulness, while handicapped further by being able to see only a few feet.

This foolhardy attempt might have lasted indefinitely, seeing that we were both equally determined to test the endurance of the other, but the moment came when, flat on my back and rendered almost immovable by thorn, it seemed opportune to ask my companion if he could protect me in the event of a charge. As he was bringing up his rifle in demonstration, both arms were caught, and thus it was clear that we should be completely at the mercy of the panther should it appear. Until then we had both done our best to pretend—if with somewhat sickly smiles—that a good time was being had by all; but now we called a halt and agreed that to persist would be madness and to give this abominable jungle best.

When finally we emerged, scratched and all but seized by overheat, we fortunately found that the waiting Indian had feared that we had gone to our doom and they would be blamed for not accompanying us. They were, therefore, indeed glad to see us back. Honour was satisfied!

To cut a long story short, we sent off that evening for some hunting dogs, and the next morning these helped us both to reconstruct the story as well as solve the mystery of the panther's disappearance. Upon being wounded it had evidently first fallen over, then had pulled itself together and retired into the jungle for some thirty yards; on hearing me approach it had charged with such blind hate as to fall into a concealed pit which, by great good fortune, happened to intervene not ten yards away from where I had been standing. There, twenty feet below, lay the panther stone dead, offering adequate proof that my luck had twice been in. For, in the first instance, my bullet had glanced off its head, causing a superficial wound which in ordinary circumstances would merely have served to inflame its

passion. Further, unknown to me, its body, being concealed by grass at the moment of firing, had been at a higher angle than its head, owing to the presence of a bank of earth, so that the bullet had then ricochetted into its stomach, inflicting a mortal if not an immediately crippling wound.

I shall ever think that by these two strokes of fortune my life had been saved, for there would have been no time to use my rifle had it carried its charge home while far remote from medical aid and in that fierce heat a bad mauling would almost certainly have proved fatal; for the hollow claws of panther always contain decaying flesh with the deadly germs of tetanus.

If there is a moral to this story, it is of negative quality only, namely, what not to do in such circumstance. But at least it should satisfy those who consider it is more sporting to tackle carnivora on foot seeing that I, however unintentionally, had shot this panther when sitting!

CHAPTER VI

UNORTHODOX BIG GAME HUNTING

ONCE, two brother officers and I, having succeeded in obtaining a fourteen-day leave, found it impossible to obtain the loan of more than one elephant for beating purposes—that essential need in the dense jungles of the Nepal Terai. This was unfortunate, seeing that we had secured a good block of jungle remote from the railway, and as it was before the days of motor-cars, we decided to take our bicycles to save the eighty miles of walking that otherwise would be involved. However unorthodox a means of sporting travel, this certainly facilitated progress and by such mechanical aid we reached camp more quickly and began our hunting.

Our daily programme was for one to take the elephant and spend the day in the jungle, while the other two would leave camp before dawn and cycle along separate fire-lines in the hope of getting a shot, for carnivora especially make use of the unmetalled roads which run along these wide belts of protection to assist their hunting by more silent progress than the jungle will allow. We had, however, failed to take into account the noiselessness with which a bicycle travels and which, as I shall presently show, was to prove embarrassing on occasions.

The first of them was when information concerning a tiger arrived one morning after my companions had left camp, and I set off alone for its reported whereabouts on my bicycle. In order to save a long detour I followed a rough track for some seven miles through deep jungle—one little better than a game track, which human feet could have seldom trod. It proved no easy task to pedal along that narrow sinuous way, for it was not only considerably overgrown, but gnarled roots and fallen trees impeded progress, while deep nullahs, or dried up water-courses, often intersected it, over and across which I had perforce to carry my bicycle.

Eventually I reached its far end, and the jungle in which the tiger had been seen and, foolishly leaving my bicycle on its side on the ground, spent the rest of the day in a difficult and unfruitful quest. The sun was setting when I returned to my bicycle to find that the oil had, not unnaturally, drained from a lamp which I had relied upon to light my progress during the return travel. The prospect before me was now definitely grim, for most of this would have to be made in darkness, while an Indian jungle by night positively throbs with its wealth of game life—or rather did at the time of which I write. It promised, moreover, to be a moonless night, over a primitive track which had proved difficult enough by day.

As no alternative offered, except that of an equally dark ride along fire-lines of more than double the distance, I slung my rifle over my shoulder and made the going good while the short twilight lasted, until it became scarcely possible to see the track. That I was even then attempting a greater pace than was justified by circumstances was presently shown by a curious

rustling noise emanating from immediately ahead of my front wheel, and I leapt off just in time to avoid running into two porcupine which, with long and needle-pointed quills a-bristle, would have proved singularly unpleasant had I run upon either and taken a certain toss. I had been warned! so now pursued my way at a more sedate pace, riding when lighter jungle made it possible to distinguish the track, but walking where it was denser or where obstacles to progress made riding impossible: eerie travel through a dense jungle which by now had assumed a sinister character.

Worse was to follow, for I was riding slowly and silently along an almost indiscernible part when the silence was suddenly shattered by the menacing roar of a surprised and angry panther which I must almost have run into, a crash of bush by my front wheel making it plain that I was now close to the least good-tempered of all animals, one whose idea of fun and games is apt to be warped and hideous. To say that its presence was distinctly unwelcome would be no exaggeration, while probably the shock I had given it by the silence of my approach and the invasion of its territory combined so to upset the panther that it bounded along through the jungle by my side, giving vent to a flow of feline invective such as required no interpretation—that indrawing and out-pouring of hate characteristic of panther and leopard, and so reminiscent of a circular saw biting its way through hard wood.

There was, too, a humorous side to it, though I confess I failed to see it at the time, namely, that in spite of every desire to make all possible speed, darkness and difficult going demanded my pedalling soberly along as if out for gentle exercise in Hyde Park, what time the panther lolloped alongside, giving full vent to its spleen. It was so angry that had I been compelled to stop, I feel sure that it would have attacked; even now I cannot understand why it failed to do so, considering the mood it was in.

Providentially this incident had occurred where the track was not so overhung by jungle as the rest of it, and no impediments crossed my path, so it proved just possible to keep in the saddle until the panther left with a parting blast of hatred.

How long a distance we had travelled together it is difficult to estimate, for one is apt to exaggerate such experiences, but it could not have been less than three hundred yards, and most surely it was far greater than was agreeable. That Providence had favoured me was shown a few moments after the panther had left me, when I had to dismount and carry my bicycle across a dry nullah.

There being still over four miles to go and by now well conscious of the fact that my silent approach on my "Raleigh" had already almost led me into trouble twice that evening, I now rang my bell at intervals and whistled what purported to be popular melodies—their rendering being chiefly remarkable for quavering notes, which formed no part in their original composition, pseudo-joyous sounds emanating from one who by now was experiencing the sensations known maybe to the Babes in the Wood. But all was not yet over. The finale was to come! For when almost at the end of the nightmare travel and trudging wearily along, I heard the breaking of branches in a tree immediately above and looking up saw a

sloth bear magnified to a gigantic size against the sky and descending at such momentum as to seem almost falling.

No bear has a more unenviable reputation for attacking man than the Sloth and knowing that they see well in darkness and that before I could unsling my rifle it would be upon me, I threw caution to the winds, leapt upon my bicycle and pedalled for dear life, doubtless making the world's record for black-out jungle cycling. Luck must have been with me, or fear stimulated vision, for except for taking one imperial toss, I succeeded in keeping to the track until ultimately I shot into the open, fully resolved never again to emulate the example of the foolish virgins.

The following day, Montrésor left camp on his bicycle for a distant jungle, there to prepare a *machan* for the night; unfortunately leaving his rifle behind. On his return journey he silently swung round the bend of a fire-line to find a panther standing in his path and not ten yards away; one which greeted him with obvious signs of displeasure and causing him hurriedly to dismount. No book of etiquette exists from which to glean the correct procedure for such occasions and Montrésor had now to suffer a long and unpleasant stare, as he stood weaponless and perplexed as to what would follow, or what steps he should take, knowing that to attempt to retreat would be to invite attack. The problem was finally solved by the panther turning contemptuously round, as if disgusted at having its constitutional stroll interrupted in such fashion, and strolling slowly away.

As time was getting on Montrésor followed at a discreet distance and, anxious to occupy the *machan* he had erected before sundown, tried to make better progress by ringing his bell. Each time he did so the panther would stop, turn round and depict by ferocious grimace its detestation for both inharmonious noise and human beings. After proceeding for some distance in this ridiculous fashion, the panther turned into the jungle some two miles from camp, following which Montrésor brought us the glad tidings at his speediest. Neither of my companions had shot panther, and being anxious to give them their chance, I went with them to where the panther had disappeared, where they posted themselves in trees at the two most likely spots, with a tethered goat at the foot of each tree to act as a decoy. This done, and filled with the spirit of renunciation, I returned to camp to find on arrival that there was still an hour of daylight left. To fill in this time I decided to sit up in a tree within two hundred yards of camp and over a goat, although there seemed no prospect whatsoever of getting a shot.

Here I would add that I have never lost a goat I have sat up over in my hunting career, while to risk one animal in order to attract and account for another, which must kill an animal every few days of its life, makes this method tolerable, if always unpleasant. To act as a successful lure it is essential, however, for the tethered goat to bleat, but here the chatter of the Indian in camp created such a feeling of security that, after a few half-hearted attempts, my unsuspicious lure relapsed into silence and contented browsing. The chance of attracting a panther now seemed so remote that I decided to abandon the attempt, and, slinging my rifle, commenced a difficult descent, for the tree, although substantial, had but few branches. While on the way down I saw out of the corner of my eye

what seemed a patch of sunlight to my left and was lowering myself to the next bough when it suddenly struck me that the sun had set and that, therefore, this must be something else.

It was! For now my startled gaze revealed a large panther sitting up on its haunches and gazing expectantly at me, as if awaiting dinner, as no doubt it was! Although prompt action was indicated, I was so awkwardly placed that to unsling my rifle and to fire I had to grip a bough with my knees and lean well out from the tree, which was not conducive to good aim. The result of my shot was immediately obscured by the smoke of the black powder cartridge I was using, and I made all haste to the ground, to see the panther bounding into the jungle behind; the time-lag, brief as it was, suggesting that it had been hard hit, the more especially as it had not charged, as wounded panther usually do, for examination disclosed evident signs of its having been wounded.

It is a curious fact that experienced hunters can be guilty of incredible folly on occasions, and now followed an example of this kind. Although an accepted law of all correct hunting to put a wounded animal out of its agony as quickly as possible, in this particular instance to make the attempt was nothing short of suicidal, for the undergrowth was dense and it was, moreover, growing dark. Also, I was alone and quite conscious of the fact that there can be no other which possesses a greater capacity for sudden attack and the infliction of grave harm than a wounded panther. Yet without giving this a thought, and filled with the spirit of the chase, I now set out to trail the panther through this tortuous thicket, in that gloom which so rapidly follows sunset in the East.

This presently led to a small jungle-clad hillock and I was climbing this when came a blood-curdling roar and crash of bush above me, denoting an approaching charge which I was fortunate enough to stop by blindly firing in this direction, for the bush was too thick to allow me to see the panther. After essaying the ascent from two other directions, each time to meet with the same menacing reception, and it being by this time almost dark, I realized that I was guilty of reckless folly and that I must abandon the attempt.

Far from there being anything courageous about my action I do not hesitate to add that I withdrew with many a backward glance, for excitement gave place to caution, when at last I began to realize my extremely dangerous situation. Nor was this to be the last unpleasant happening of the day for, some hours later, my two companions returned to camp fed-up and mosquito-bitten, after having waited patiently in their trees without result. Their state of mind left no room for any expression of relief at my escape; on the contrary, it proved a cheerless reunion, for jealousies are apt to smack of the primitive in big game hunting, and my efforts to persuade them that I had placed them in the "best seats", my own participation being an afterthought, fell very flat.

The sequel does not take long to tell, for soon after day-break next morning I entered the jungle and approached the spot where I had left the panther—fortunately doing so from the opposite side of the hillock, for I almost ran into the panther broadside on, alert and ready for instant action.

Noises, however, can be deceptive in the jungle and although it had heard my approach it was looking away to my left, and thus gave me an easy shot; proving a panther in magnificent condition and the finest of all which have fallen to my lot.

All through the chase it had proved a puzzling panther, for now I found that my first shot had little more than torn the muscles of a shoulder. As a wounded panther usually retaliates, why this particular one had refrained from charging then, or, what was still more puzzling, why it had remained in the vicinity throughout the night although not seriously crippled, will ever remain a mystery. I can but add that I shall ever be grateful that it did so, for to be caught by an infuriated panther when one is precariously balanced on a tree would have proved highly unpleasant to say the least, while its magnificent skin was destined to form the Big Drummer's apron of my Battalion until my then unborn son joined it as a second-lieutenant thirty years later.

Camped as we were in a small clearing in heavy jungle it seemed an admirable opportunity for testing the reputed sight of the vulture and their capacity for the task for which Nature has endowed them. So when the panther had been skinned we had the carcase placed in the centre, after searching the area of sky about us with our field-glasses; investigation which failed to reveal a single one. Yet within a quarter of an hour the branches of trees about the kill were literally bending with their weight, while other vultures were soaring down with majestic sweeps from an immense height, suggesting that there is an element of truth in the assertion that these birds of prey possess a power of vision which extends to a hundred miles. There would appear to be a co-ordinated and disciplined code of behaviour in this species, gross and obscene-looking as they appear, for not one descended until—as if at a word of command—a perfect avalanche of vulture swept down upon the carcase, until it became buried beneath a pile of fighting birds standing upon one another and manœuvring for the best places for the disgusting orgy which was to follow. Tough as such a muscular animal as a panther is, the vulture is so well equipped for its scavenging duty that within half an hour little remained; some of the vultures being so gorged by then as to be capable only of flopping along the ground when we went forward to see the result.

CHAPTER VII

AN AMUSING HUNT

ELEPHANT are essential for hunting in the Nepal Terai, owing to the formidable quality of its jungle, but there were occasions when permission to shoot in that Mecca of Indian big game had been successfully achieved, yet without being able to obtain such invaluable help.

On one such occasion, two brother-officers and I elected to attempt to hunt on foot rather than forfeit the opportunity, and after long travel reached the block of jungle which had been allotted to us. Aliot, of the party, was renowned for a vocabulary of invective not only rich beyond compare, but in which aptness of choice of words was equally exceptional. It was, in point of fact, a masterpiece of artistic expression of its kind; ever forcible, never vulgar, it was brilliant if at times somewhat pungent in its wit.

Unfortunately he knew nothing whatever about the qualities of the rifle which he had borrowed and directly we reached the camp he insisted upon testing it—an act quite against the interests of the shoot in its disturbance of the jungle; my remonstrance, however, provoked a fine linguistic effort which definitely overruled the objection, for was I not his subaltern.

A biscuit tin was, therefore, placed on a fire-line and fired at from a hundred yards, the shots reverberating through the jungle and, as I thought, scaring every animal within miles. Six shots had been fired and Aliot was adjusting his sights while I examined the target through my field-glasses, when into the field of vision came the surprising sight of a panther—that animal usually notorious for craftiness—not forty yards away, strolling calmly across the improvised rifle range and into the jungle beyond before Aliot could reload. Not least of the charms of big game hunting are such unlikely surprises!

The following day Aliot and I went out together, having decided on a policy by which we were to take alternate shots. It was a pity we had not settled the claim to the first shot, for the first chance offering itself was a nilgai grazing in a clearing. The largest antelope in the East and styled the "Subaltern's Joy" on account of the ease with which one can approach it and the considerable target which it offers, the nilgai carries remarkably poor horns for its size and for these several reasons does not rank high as a trophy.

Meat was needed, however, for the larder, so we stalked it until within certain range. Then arose a whispered argument as to who should take the shot, for neither really wanted the nilgai considering that the next opportunity of a shot might be a tiger or panther. It was the reason why each of us tried to persuade the other to take this chance, pretending all the time to a self-sacrificing denial. The argument was brought to a close

by my companion coming all over the Senior Officer and ordering me to fire, as if on parade; accordingly I did, killing the unsuspicious nilgai instantly, later to find that however unwittingly and unwillingly, its head was of such record size as to warrant its inclusion in Roland Ward's *Records of Big Game*. Such is the road to fame!

Late the following day we happened upon a panther kill, that of a chital, and decided to await its possible return. The tree selected by Aliot for this purpose had a long, thin trunk without any branches for its first twenty feet: after erecting a *machan* where they began, I drove in some nails to assist the upward progress of my heavily-built companion. By then it was becoming dark and when I had seen him safely ensconced, there was but time for me to walk to the junction of two tracks a mile away, there to spend an uncomfortable and fruitless night sitting on the bough of a tree.

With the coming of the first streak of dawn, cramped and hungry, I descended from my hard look-out in order to rejoin my companion. Before long I became aware that all was not well, for mixing with the varied jungle sounds of early morn came the clarion sounds of a human voice, not engaged in welcoming the approach of another day, but giving vent to an unceasing flow of bad language. As I came in sight of his tree the reason was obvious, for suspended high up the tree from a nail caught in his nether garments was my worthy friend, bearing a remarkable resemblance to the insignia of the "Golden Fleece". After he had been rescued he explained that he had dropped his flask during the night and while attempting to retrieve it had found himself in this undignified and indeed dangerous predicament, which he was called upon to endure for several hours. Throughout the work of rescue his stream of appropriate words excelled even his best; it included, I remember, a pious expression of hope that the tree might shrivel up and burst into flame.

The next day I had been out alone and was returning to camp on a wide fire-line when I saw a herd of chital emerge from the jungle and start to browse on its grass verge; these beautiful spotted deer presenting such an attractive picture that I decided to attempt a close-up photograph. The intervening grass was only just sufficiently high to conceal me, but I succeeded in crawling through without discovery until within twenty yards of my subject when I took my pictures. I then watched these graceful animals until they finally grazed their way into the jungle beyond and disappeared from sight.

Scarcely had they done so—indeed, I was still prostrate, when a vicious-looking panther stalked out of the jungle on the opposite side and within ten yards, obviously on the trail of the chital, for he started to quarter the grass in such disturbing fashion that how he missed seeing me was amazing, although probably this was due to his whole attention being concentrated upon the chital. It was, however, an unenviable position and caution now decreed that it was highly advisable to stay put, regardless of the urge to "stand not upon the order of my going, but go at once", seeing that I had but one solid ·303 cartridge for my rifle, while thin-skinned carnivora require a bullet which "mushrooms" as a general rule.

It would have been a little comforting to be able to adopt the traditional

attitude of the ostrich in such circumstances, but at all costs it was necessary to keep the panther under observation ready to fire on the instant if it blundered into me. So with what patience I could muster, with pores considerably overworked and not alone by heat, I waited catching glimpses of the panther as it zigzagged before me twice less than five yards off! The ordeal had not become any more pleasant when out came another panther even more menacing in appearance and with fur a-bristle with excitement: both now perambulated about and, fortunately for me, with noses close to the ground, for to this fact I probably owe my life. I can but say that I have known happier times, for by now I was feeling worse than helpless, seeing that one bullet into two panther cannot go. It presented, indeed, an insoluble problem.

To and fro, to and fro they passed immediately before me until the moment when my endurance was all but failing me and they followed the chital into the jungle. My ordeal was ended.

The following morning seemed bright with promise, when it was ushered in by an hysterical Indian who came from a village some nine miles distant to report that a panther had killed one of his cows during the preceding night. A panther can usually be relied upon to return to its kill once again, unless suspicious or fortunate enough to kill some other animal meanwhile, so this seemed too good a chance to lose, although it would entail almost twenty miles of walking—and this in the Hot Weather season. Then Aliot and I set forth, but not far from our destination we found our way barred by a long stretch of immense tiger grass, perhaps half a mile in width. This meant a détour of some five miles, no slight matter in such appalling heat. We reached the village at length only to find that the panther had killed not the evening before but three days previously. It had returned to its kill once since then, and now there remained so little of the carcase that it was useless to wait. Not infrequently is the sportsman lured to the scene by such a false statement, in the hope of "Baksheesh" or financial reward.

After a weary and almost super-heated Aliot had fittingly expressed his opinion of our optimistic guide and the situation, we started on the return journey. Fatigue and disappointment had, however, made us less tolerant than we had been on the outward travel, so much so that when we reached the barrier of tiger grass separating us from camp, we decided to strike through it rather than do the extra five miles, although we knew well enough this would involve a formidable task. So, acting as advance spearhead and with Aliot and the shikari following in Indian file, I plunged into that stupendous reed, about sixteen feet in height and we began our tortuous progress. Strenuous effort we knew it would demand, but it soon proved more difficult than we had anticipated, until I was compelled to hand my rifle to the shikari—always a risky thing to do—in order to have both hands free. Our only other weapon was a 12-bore shot-gun carried by Aliot and which was loaded with No. 6 cartridge in the hope of putting up a partridge. Unfortunately his deep sense of economy resulted in his cartridges being of such ancient vintage as to guarantee, almost invariably, a mis-fire.

With grim determination we struggled on in furnace-like heat until nearly half-way through, when almost exhausted and drenched with perspiration, we regretted our foolhardy attempt. Our position was decidedly worsened a moment later by the sound of a sudden angry roar and crash of reed directly to my front: I had all but blundered upon a sleeping panther!

An attack sounded imminent, so in the hope of checking this intention we shouted loudly while I turned for my rifle to find that the shikari had bolted! The panther now began to circle about us as we stood in bewildered perplexity: his blood-curdling noises boded ill and at intervals he varied the proceedings by charging, stopping short only of showing himself. If his intention was to make our flesh creep he abundantly succeeded so far as I personally was concerned, for there can be more pleasant experiences than being enmeshed in the heart of a vast area of high reed and at the mercy of a panther.

To borrow the language of Hollywood, Aliot and I had now "gone into conference", and we agreed that to retrace our steps would but invite attack and that our best chance was to adopt the Zulu battle-cry: "If we go forward, we die; if we go back, we die. Therefore better go forward and die." I still continued to lead and though normally ambitious I can truthfully say that never have I felt less inclination to make progress than during this big game hunting in reverse!

On we went for the remaining four hundred yards, throughout which the panther never ceased its threats and remained so close that one dreaded to separate the reed ahead for fear of what it might well disclose. Not that we expressed our fears to one another—on the contrary: for we sustained a loud and chatty conversation when not bursting into song chiefly remarkable for quavering periods. These efforts to ward off attack were enlivened at intervals by bursts of apoplectic eloquence from Aliot, who transcended all efforts at description, even were I permitted to record them! Possibly even the panther was shocked, for it did not attack. So persistent were its attentions, however, that when at long last we emerged into the open it was to see the grass verge moving as if the panther meant still to follow. Fortunately it decided otherwise and after a final burst of hate, we heard it going away; one of the sweetest sounds I have ever heard!

Our luck had been greater than we knew, for when Aliot now tried his shot-gun, both cartridges mis-fired!

I have written of failure in order to show that big game hunting is not always a bed of roses although, curiously enough, its very disappointments and surprises add to its attraction.

Next day I went out alone and sat up in a tree on the edge of a clearing covered by grass of about four feet in height. In the hope of attracting a panther, a goat had been tethered on a jungle path some thirty yards away, and by its vigorous bleating it played its part well albeit unwittingly.

About an hour later, I saw it stiffen and gaze fixedly to my left where I saw a hyena, that ghoul of the jungle, standing in the centre of the path

and staring at the goat as if to mesmerize it. Confident that I could shoot it before the goat could be harmed and so preserve my record of never having lost one I had sat over, I watched what was to follow. After standing like a statue for fully ten minutes, the hyena turned round and walked leisurely away as if dismissing the goat from its mind, but all the while gradually edging in to the grass until lost to its view. Immediately I saw it from my high position break into a loping trot and starting to make a half-circle which would bring it upon the goat again, which all unconscious of the approaching fury, remained gazing where the hyena had disappeared.

Fearful for the goat I fired prematurely, but I missed and the hyena got away unscathed, but the incident had at least provided a side-light on that eternal warfare which persists in the world of wild animal life; a fact so often unrealized by the unduly sentimental.

Every experienced big game hunter will confirm the fact that the unexpected and, in most cases, instant death offered by a swift bullet is infinitely preferable to that which otherwise falls to the lot of the average wild animal, especially those unfortunate enough to survive to old age then to be driven toothless, lame, or blind from the society of their kind, when they must either die from thirst or starvation, or by the slow torture inflicted by carnivora or birds of prey.

The day after the experience with the hyena, I visited a distant jungle alone where I sat upon the bough of a tree about twelve feet from the ground, on the chance of seeing something. I had waited patiently for over two hours when I heard some heavy animal approaching on the far side of my tree. A period of silence followed, broken by the sound of powerful scratching on its trunk. Imagination is apt to run riot at such times and at first I thought this might be a panther climbing up to where I was precariously balanced until, as the noise continued, it became obvious that the animal in question was merely sharpening its claws.

I was not left in doubt for long; presently out waddled a huge sloth bear, which started to dig for roots so immediately beneath me that had I fallen off the bough I must have landed on its massive back; a thing (I need scarcely say) I had not the slightest inclination to do. Although greatly tempted I hesitated to fire, for I had already shot several sloth bear and knew that a shot now would effectually dispel any chance I had of a tiger known to operate in the vicinity.

Gradually the temptation proved so irresistible that twice did I bring my rifle to bear with the intention of killing, but each time I desisted when I realized the chance I might be throwing away: perhaps this was just as well seeing that my legs were hanging over the same side of a bare and somewhat slippery bough, while to aim would have necessitated my leaning forward.

When the bear had dug for quite twenty minutes it ceased and waddled away into the jungle. It was with mixed feelings at having missed a certain chance and of hope for something better to turn up that I watched him go, for this was the largest sloth bear I was destined ever to see.

It was not, however, to be the final happening, for during our home-

ward journey we rested at the junction of six jungle tracks. This boasted a well and soon the clanking of buckets and the chattering of our Indian servants created a veritable pandemonium.

During this noisy interlude I looked down a track made gloomy by the trees overhead and saw not fifty yards away what appeared to be a large dog coming towards me. Idly wondering what it could be doing so far from human habitation, I had just detected something peculiar about its gait when it turned into the jungle letting its long and curling tail give tantalizing proof that it was no dog, but a panther I had lost. So ended a most interesting shoot.

CHAPTER VIII

MY FIRST TIGER

My first real chance of tiger came as the result of an invitation to join a Commissioner's hot-weather shoot in the Nepal Terai, that of Sir Selwyn Fremantle, which meant not only the help of experienced shikaris but also that of over thirty elephants to beat its dense jungles.

We were returning to camp in late afternoon after a hot and strenuous day of profitless beating, when the jungle opened upon a wide and partially dried-up river bed clothed in the usual immensely high pampas-like-plumed "tiger" grass. Within thirty yards of the spot where we had emerged we happened upon the carcase of a chital and her calf, both so recently killed by a tiger that the blood was still flowing from the multiple wounds; indeed in all probability we had disturbed the tiger at his grisly task. Although we had been exposed to the full rays of an Indian hot-weather sun for most of the day and by this time had all had as much as we wanted, this offered a chance too good to be missed: the five guns, therefore, drew lots to determine who should await the tiger's return and the choice fell upon me.

Tiger may be expected to return to their kill any time after sunset; sometimes, indeed, even earlier, and as this was so near as to leave no time for the erection of a *machan*, I sat on the bough of a tree on the edge of the jungle at about nine feet above the ground; this height afforded a view of the kill after the intervening grass had been trampled down by the elephant. Unfortunately, as so often happens on such occasions, this entailed my sitting with both legs hanging from the same side of a bough with a very smooth bark and without any branches to help in case of difficulty, making me dependent entirely upon balance. It is necessary to add this in light of what was to follow.

This done I was left alone, the rest of the party going on to camp and the generous table which I knew awaited them. In these austerity days how the thought of such banquets makes one's mouth water!

I had not long to wait before the familiar sound of the shrill screaming of peacock heralded the setting sun, at the same time warning me that my chance was growing less, for darkness in the East follows swiftly and a new moon was not due to rise until midway through the ensuing night.

To my great joy, however, while still just able to discern the kill, I heard the tiger approaching, striding through grass and splashing through water with such disregard for caution as to show that it was obviously unsuspicious. Although it seemed almost a certainty that I was now to get my chance, animals designed by Nature to prey upon others possess highly-developed senses and have a disconcerting habit of anticipating danger. So it was now; for, just as it seemed that the tiger was about to show, all sound stopped abruptly, probably because it had noticed the disturbance made in the grass by our elephant.

Next followed a long and puzzling period of silence, made the more agonizing by the shroud of night descending until "kill" and grass merged into each other putting "finis" to my chance of an aimed shot.

At long last the silence was broken by a splintering of bone and the sound of mighty crunching. While it announced that the tiger was on his kill, it was tantalizing knowledge as I was unable to see him, and I was left to dwell upon this grievance to the accompaniment of this masticating orchestra. Finally I decided that there was but one course of action to take, and that was to risk almost certain failure by firing in the direction of the sound on the off-chance of hitting: so this I did. As the shot reverberated through the jungle I expected either to hear the sound of the tiger departing or else, wounded, that of his charge. Instead, however, followed a silence so prolonged as ultimately to permit optimism to mingle with doubt until it induced the thought that I had killed. With eyes and ears strained by this time to their uttermost, I snatched at this gleam of hope and had just decided that such an amazing fluke had happened, when I glanced beneath the tree and, with retina distended by this time to the full, saw a curiously-shaped shadow dimly outlined against the lighter grass which fringed the jungle.

Active Service is good training in regard to the tricks imagination can play in darkness and I had had many similar experiences during the South African War, which had then not long ended. Accordingly I dismissed this impression from my mind and looked elsewhere, only a few seconds later to feel compelled to look down again, to find this time the supposed shadow gliding slowly towards me, and to realize that it was the tiger! Without the slightest sound it had made his way through thirty yards of dry grass, while all the time I had been listening acutely! Precariously balanced as I was, I now became supremely conscious of the fact that my boots were dangling within a few feet of his head, and by no means relieved by the knowledge that tiger can spring fifteen feet up a tree.

Never, indeed, did my nether extremities feel so gigantic and vulnerable as then, while the natural desire to draw them up was only resisted, because I knew that the slightest movement would not only disclose my presence but might easily cause me to overbalance and precipitate myself into the very jaw of a surprised tiger—a case of leaving the frying-pan for the fire. Acute as are the senses of carnivora normally, there was—inexplicably enough—no shadow of doubt that this tiger was unaware of my close presence, although I shall ever incline to the opinion that it had come towards the flash of my shot. It is an accepted fact that bees certainly, and animals probably, dislike the scent of perspiration, and as by now my pores were—perhaps not unnaturally, actively employed, it was the more mysterious that it did not detect me; but I am telling the story as it actually happened and will leave theorizing to others.

In this complicated situation it was evident that something must be done without delay, and that before I was discovered, but my rifle was resting on the upper side of an overhanging branch directed on the "kill" and could not immediately be brought to bear. With infinite care and by slow degrees I set about overcoming this handicap, what time the tiger remained standing beneath me. If fear lends wings, it must also tend to

induce abnormal skill when the need is dire, for I succeeded in withdrawing the rifle and was bringing its muzzle down with the intention of firing between the tiger's shoulders, when it gave a coughing roar and sprang into the jungle behind. Its departure left me experiencing very mixed feelings of regret and relief, for anxious as I was to kill my first tiger, I might well have fallen from my insecure and slippery seat upon his back. But now my chance had gone and, realizing this, I made my way back to camp—four miles of melancholy travel in darkness.

Dawn found me again at the scene of the happening, to find that the tiger had returned and eaten much of the kill after I had left, so he was in all probability asleep close by. To try for him off my own bat was tempting, but correct *shikar*, or hunting in India, is played to definite rules and these involved carrying the information back to camp so that all could participate. Some hours later, in company with the other four guns and all the beating elephants, we again reached the scene, with my own chance of bagging the tiger now remote.

We commenced our beat through the high grass and away from the kill, with two guns flanking the line of elephants, while the other three (of which I was the centre) preceded it by some hundred yards. Presently we came to an area where the grass was sparse and only about four feet high and soon afterwards I saw the tiger trotting towards the line, in all probability having been disturbed from slumber by the forward gun on my left who was still forging ahead on his elephant, all unconscious of the prize he had just lost. The tiger must have then seen the advancing line of elephant, for next I saw him charging along our front making for the jungle.

Although at full stretch and the shot offered was one which normally I should have hesitated to take, for fear of hitting a mahout or elephant, all that I had endured compelled action, and fortunately I hit him so hard that his momentum turned him head over heels like some gargantuan rabbit. But although mortally hit a tiger's capacity for punishment can be prodigious and this one pulled himself together instantly and came at me in full charge, its massive paws working like flails as he leapt through the intervening grass with his cruel face distorted by a hideous rage.

It was a sight to test the nerve of any elephant, but mine stood steadfast, as with but one cartridge left in my ·500 Express I held my fire until the tiger was so close that to miss was impossible, when I fired between his shoulders and he fell over dead.

Many a life and prize have been lost by firing both barrels prematurely, with insufficient time to reload, while a tiger at close quarters is far too large a target to miss except by those who have no right to go shooting. After many vicissitudes I had shot my first tiger, always a glad milestone in a sportsman's life!

Since then it has been my good fortune to be in at the death of many, but no other has given me that same sense of satisfaction, for red letter days lose their savour with repetition. There is a thrill belonging only to youth; it passes with growing age and can never be wholly recaptured.

But it is well to have known such happy days, to possess such stirring memories, for in 1947 the only hunting possible, and that compulsory and ill afforded by the majority, is the wherewithal with which to pay our income-tax.

CHAPTER IX

THE ELEPHANT

THE elephant seldom obtains the recognition it deserves and as by its aid I have enjoyed much big game hunting, I feel that I owe it a great deal while ranking it high for both charm and intelligence.

It is perhaps only those brought into close contact with the tamed Indian elephant who can fully appreciate their quality. I can but say that I have gained such an affection for them during long years of experience that it is fortunate that these days of heavy taxation and austerity forbid my keeping a pet which requires vast quantities of fresh foliage plus fourteen pounds of flour-cake daily. By comparison what sorry stuff must that mouldy hay seem which often falls to their unhappy lot when in confinement in England.

The amount of green fodder which an elephant will consume has been found to be seven hundred pounds within twenty-four hours, but in captivity in India it seldom gets half that allowance. On the other hand what does it get in zoos or menageries in Europe?

Of one thing I am sure; namely that there is no animal in captivity which gains the sympathy of the big game hunter more than the elephant, not only on account of its generally inadequate and unsuitable feeding, but also because their hides are kept scrupulously clean in their wild state by daily bathing and rubbing against trees. This also applies to those captive elephants in India, whose mahouts know that the daily toilet is essential to elephant well-being, and who scrub their huge charges vigorously with a brick as they sprawl in the water with expressions registering blissful contentment.

One of the most pleasant observances in a shooting camp is that of watching the elephant at their morning ablutions, some with mouths submerged and breathing through trunks resting on their tusks.

Another pleasing sight is to see an elephant which has proved particularly staunch to dangerous game being rewarded by having *ghie*, or clarified butter, rubbed into its head: not only the last word in elephant adornment but one which is obviously pleasing owing to the soothing comfort which it brings to a part exposed to a blistering sun for long hours on end.

As the result of such understanding attention, a captive elephant in India generally has a supple and attractive looking skin in comparison to that gnarled, dry and unpleasant one too often shown by those in England; one more reminiscent of the bark of a cork tree than anything else. An elephant's hide in its natural state is so sensitive that even the attention of a too-persistent fly proves aggravating. Unquestionably those neglected in such fashion must suffer in consequence, besides appearing caricatures of

their kind and therefore the worst of examples for those educational purpose for which zoos are supposed to exist.

Ponderous and clumsy as the elephant may look in movement, it actually possesses a turn of speed in emergency which can prove surprising, while its cleverness in negotiating steep river banks or difficult jungle, climbing over fallen trees or in fording or swimming rivers has to be seen to be credited. They have been known to swim for six hours on end without touching bottom. But what has always intrigued me is how they thread their way through dense jungle or high tiger-grass with such amazing silence that I have often found an elephant at my side of whose approach I had heard nothing.

When on the move through heavy jungle, young trees which bar progress are pushed over and trodden to the ground; while trees of a considerable size generally succumb when the animal rears up upon its hind legs and, placing its forefeet high above, produces the necessary leverage. This seldom fails, for the elephant appears to be able to gauge to a nicety what can or cannot be done in this way, and rarely attempts the impossible.

At a word of command from its mahout, an elephant will tear down overhanging branches which bar progress, with a trunk so powerful that it can lift a man high in air without effort, and yet so delicate as to be able to pick up a pin. It is, however, a sensitive and vital member, serious damage to which in a wild elephant may easily result in slow starvation. No one knows this better than the elephant, and when attacked by tiger or panther, one will see them holding their trunks high in air or tightly coiled for protection.

So conscious are they of their immense weight that when crossing a primitive jungle bridge they will test it literally foot by foot as they venture across.

In fording an Indian river there is ever the danger of quicksand, into which the weight of an elephant causes it to sink so deeply that it stands a poor chance of rescue unless immediate and substantial help is forthcoming. Generally one's first intimation of such a serious mishap is to see those who are riding on the elephant concerned frantically scrambling down its tail and making for safety while it plunges madly about and screams with fright. Rapid action is necessary, and pads are swiftly removed from other elephant and brought within range of the bogged one, which, however frenzied, has the intelligence to grasp and place them beneath its sinking feet. Meanwhile branches of trees are cut to serve the same purpose until, if fortunate, the elephant eventually succeeds in establishing a solid foundation, when, assisted by ropes attached to other elephants, it is drawn to safety.

It need scarcely be added that during such a desperate bid for safety the stricken elephant does not discriminate in its choice of the life-saving material to hand, and many a man has paid the penalty of miscalculating his distance from that frantically searching trunk and met a sticky end!

A captured elephant in India which can live to one hundred and fifty years of age is often regarded as a hereditary possession, the son of its mahout literally growing up at the feet of the elephant to the charge of

which he will succeed. Consequently, such a mutual understanding sometimes results that I have heard of cases of mahouts entrusting their babies to their elephant's care when expecting to be absent for some hours, describing a circle on the ground beneath its trunk and placing the baby in its centre before departure. Those who have seen this relate that when the baby crawls beyond the circle the elephant will gently lift it back to the centre with its trunk and continue to do so until the trustful father returns.

With regard to an elephant's normal appetite, throughout the day when out in shikar, it eats almost without cessation, tearing off branches as it passes through the jungle or grass when in the open. Yet that this does not suffice their stupendous appetites is shown on return to camp at evening when, howdahs and pads removed, they go off to gather sustenance with which to while away the hours of night. Later, one will see what at first sight appears to be moving haystacks approaching, being their return with the ingredients for a substantial and prolonged supper, for elephant sleep little.

Next follows one of the most pleasant customs of the Indian hunting camp, when the elephants are lined up each behind a pile of huge chuppatties —flat cakes of meal which constitute the *hors d'œuvres* of their night's repast. Here there is an amusing exhibition of dignified repression as they are "made much of" by those using them for the shoot; petting suffered with obvious restraint as they look everywhere except at the waiting titbit, if some fourteen pounds of flour cake can be described by such name. These preliminaries ended and at a command by the *Jemadar* mahout, they salaam together by lifting up their trunks and shrilly trumpeting, after which the first chuppattie is given by hand, and then the remainder disappear rapidly. This ended, the elephant are taken back to their lines, where they are chained up for the night and start the really serious process of eating with a will. Wake at any hour of the ensuing night and one will always hear a steady munching coming from their direction.

When one compares all that quantity and variety of food with that which the average elephant gets in captivity one ceases to wonder why those unfortunates so often appear listless and emaciated, for they must be half-starved.

The noises elephant make are as varied as they are weird, from that of an ear-splitting blast when frightened or angry to a deep vibratory note of contentment which travels a surprising distance. It is of interest to note that twice the circumference of an elephant's foot gives its height almost exactly.

Although opinion upon this differs, my personal regard for it is such that I am not surprised to learn that tests carried out in the U.S.A. have revealed that the elephant is the most intelligent animal of any. What other, after a life of freedom of perhaps sixty years or more, could be captured and tamed and taught to obey commands inside a few weeks? To go in any direction, to start, stop, squat or rise; to pick something up and hand it to the mahout, or to deal with an obstructive branch as if accustomed to such commands from childhood? At the command, moreover, of a man which it could kill in a matter of seconds!

A tiger encircled within a 'Ring' of elephants in Nepal, showing tiger breaking cover on the left.

Cattle-killer no longer.

The happiest time in the life of an elephant.

Much needed refreshment in a shade temperature of over 115 degrees

It is the intelligence of the elephant which has enabled it for centuries to conceal the place of its death. A problem which has never been solved! It is rare, indeed, to happen on the carcase of an elephant which has died a natural death. Even when Africa contained far more wild elephant than it does to-day this was regarded as a phenomenon by both white and black. Can it be that there is a measure of truth in the tradition that on sensing its approaching end an elephant makes its weary way to some valley undiscovered by man, which must be, if it exists, by now a vast cemetery. Yet this is within the realms of possibility, and perhaps a pilot flying across Africa will one day see beneath him a valley curiously white and discover a monarch's ransom in the shape of ivory. But the fact remains that it is a baffling mystery as to what happens to those many wild elephants which in the ordinary course of events must die annually.

I have seen the whitened bones of men, camels and oxen in Africa many years after their life departed, and under the same conditions the skull of an elephant should remain apparent for a much greater length of time. Yet of the many big game hunters I have known one only had ever come across the bones of an elephant which has died a natural death. There must be some answer; but what is it?

Temple Perkins once heard of three elephants in a starving condition on a small island in the centre of a large lake in Uganda and, going there, found them so emaciated that he felt compelled to end their misery. That they had swum there means nothing, for elephant can swim for many hours on end with the greatest ease. But what had caused them originally to leave the mainland which offered far more in the way of sustenance plus the association with their kind, and to make this unnecessary journey to such an inhospitable destination? Alas! the answer may well be that these poor distracted brutes had been driven to such action by the cruelty of man. But why had they remained there? Is it possible that the elephant when nearing its end seeks oblivion in the cool embrace of that water which it loves?

Why has not the African elephant been put to the service of man as that of India? The answer will probably be that it is a totally different type and one possessing both less brain and greater ferocity, if that be the word to apply to the most enduring of all animals. Yet this would be a confession of weakness, for both the Belgian and the Portuguese in Africa have succeed in taming its elephant and putting them to useful purpose.

CHAPTER X

THE LEAPING TIGERS

OF all big game shooting offered in India, none could be better than that offered by a Commissioner's shoot, both from the standpoint of good sportsmanship, general *Bandobast*, or arrangements, opportunity, skilful help, and beating elephants. They are shoots, too, that come the way of few soldiers. I was, therefore, singularly fortunate when invited to join one during the ensuing Hot Weather, the more particularly as the venue was one of the best parts of the Nepal Terai. Our party consisted of five guns, while we had thirty-three elephant and many skilled shikaris to aid our efforts. It was a time, too, when with a shade temperature running up to one hundred and twenty degrees, jungle rivers dwindle to tiny streams and their dry beds become clothed with immense tiger-grass; cover favoured by tiger, offering as it does not only comparatively cool shade and water but ideal harbourages also, for the yellow reed and its perpendicular shadows blend with their protective mimesis to such remarkable degree that it is often impossible to detect a tiger standing still in such cover even if but a few yards away.

Our camp was pitched on the brink of the pleasant Sardar River and the first day of hunting found our line of elephant strung across and beating along such a river bed with a gun on each flank and the others between. Standing up in a howdah on such an occasion and moving through pampas-like reed over sixteen feet in height presents a scene of remarkable similitude to a flotilla moving through a foam-crested sea, an impression strengthened by the waddling gait of an elephant and the swaying motion this imparts to the howdahs and their occupants within sight.

Tiger and panther move in such mighty cover with such characteristic action that although far below and invisible, their presence is communicated to the tips of grass and made obvious to experienced eyes above, whatever other animal life may be there. Hot-blooded carnivora, too, not unnaturally dislike activity in extreme heat and it is a combination of these circumstances which enables this form of tiger hunting to be made possible. Of its necessity there can be no question, seeing that a steady flow of tiger and panther enters the Nepal Terai from the deep and uninhabited jungles of the lower slopes of the Himalayas.

On this occasion and as the beat progressed, it soon became clear that a panther was zig-zagging its way through the tall grass ahead and this was gradually overhauled until encircled by our elephant, a ring gradually tightened, until they were standing close together. Elephant are clever beasts and their demeanour now showed a consciousness that trouble was brewing, for some had coiled their trunks high in the air, that sensitive member so vital to an elephant, while the more courageous were tapping

the ground with the tip of their air-compressed trunks, producing a curious popping sound, an almost certain warning of the close proximity of dangerous carnivora.

Until now nothing had naturally been seen of a panther fully twelve feet below the top of the grass, but none knows better than that powerful and crafty animal that in such circumstances the best form of defence lies in attack. Neither were we to remain in suspense for long; for next followed a flash of yellow on my right and an elephant madly backed and plunged, screaming with fright, with the panther fastened like a limpet on its head and holding on grimly by tooth and claw.

Those who may suffer from the delusion that shooting from elephant back is safe should have witnessed the peril of its mahout and the "gun" in its howdah, as the terrified elephant knelt and butted its head violently on the ground in endeavour to dislodge its assailant. The none-too-stable platform offered by a howdah and with the target on the head of a frantic elephant made it a difficult and risky shot, with so many other elephant in the line of fire, but it had to be taken and fortunately I hit the panther sufficiently hard to make him release his hold and fall back in the high grass. With a momentary pause the panther next swept across the ring and appeared on the head of an elephant on the opposite side, only to meet with a similar result. But wounds matter little to a thoroughly enraged panther and once more came a similar attack when, upon being shot off for the third time it went berserk, bounding around the ring striking out at whatever came in its way, weaving through the grass at such speed that it was impossible to make sure of one's aim from the back of an elephant which was by now exhibiting his dislike for the whole procedure.

Eventually an opportunity presented itself and the panther fell to a fusilade, when it was found that it had been hard hit six times, which serves to show the tenacity of life of a panther and the importance of making sure with one's first shot whenever that be possible.

The injured elephant being left to have their hurts attended to, the line was now re-formed and had not beaten through the tiger grass far before another panther was encountered, one which succeeded in breaking through the line three times, only to be eventually encircled and killed owing to a reluctance to move far in such furnace-like heat.

The Indian elephant in its wild state shelters in the jungle during the heat of the day, and as ours had now been exposed to a hot sun and been beating through stifling grass for many hours, we now decided to call it a day and to return to camp with the satisfaction of knowing that the panther we had accounted for would no longer kill other animals every few days of their lives; a fact so often forgotten by those who dislike the idea of big game hunting.

On the morrow I blotted my copybook badly after we had met with a panther and driven it towards an open space and until only a few feet of moderately high grass remained to be beaten. The elephant were so close together that it seemed impossible that the panther could break back and I was thinking this when I saw its evil head poke out between the next elephant and my own, obviously in order to spy out the land before making

a bolt for freedom. It would have seemed impossible to miss such a "sitter" and that I did so was inexcusable.

My hasty and ill-aimed shot at least called into play the rapidity of thought and decision of a panther, for its reaction was immediate and took the form of a vicious attack upon the elephant next to mine, causing it to back violently and to create a gap through which the panther made its way to freedom, to harass other wild animal life for perhaps long years to come.

Although all this took but a few seconds, within that time the panther had mauled the elephant badly, its wicked claws making deep wounds in trunk and side. While I do not offer it as an excuse for having missed, there is a vast difference between firing at a harmless beast and firing at one capable of swift retaliation; for in the latter instance one is so anxious to make sure that there is always a tendency to look up to see the result before the bullet has left one's rifle. Our disappointment, however, was soon allayed, for news of a tiger kill had come and we set off on the long travel to the scene, to find on arrival the remains of a sambhur close to a dried-up river bed, in which we judged the tiger to be lying up and sleeping off the effects of a gargantuan meal. The tiger-grass by which it was covered was of such exceptionally gigantic character that when our beating line of elephant had been formed across it, little but the howdahs of the five shooting elephant and the "guns" they contained could be seen, except here and there, where the grass was lower, certain of the turbaned heads of mahouts and shikaris on the pad elephant; so high was this grass in parts that many of the elephant were completely lost to sight.

Being on the extreme left of the line, my elephant was close to the jungle, next one which had not been in the jungle since its capture some years before—an interval filled in by the peaceful occupation of carrying timber. Seated on the pad behind its mahout were two old and dignified *khansamas*, or butlers, both of patriarchal appearance with long white beards. They were separated by hampers containing the essentials for that *tiffin* so beloved of the novelist of "poona-like" strain, not least important of which were the liquid contents, for one generates an insatiable thirst when hunting during an Indian Hot Weather.

The tiger-grass between was so tall that nothing of either mahout or elephant was visible, with the result that, as the two aged retainers were carried through the feathery pampas some eleven feet above the ground, they looked as if out for a quiet evening stroll. The impression conveyed was not one of rapturous enjoyment, for their faces depicted pathetic resignation and extreme disgust at having left the comfort of cool bungalows for a sport which they obviously regarded as proof of mental weakness on the part of their masters. I was watching these fed-up patriarchs with some amusement when the scene changed with startling suddenness, for there came the characteristic "woof-woof" of a charging tiger and a crash of reed directly behind my elephant.

Although normally staunch, this abrupt and unexpected contact proved too much for the latter, so that as I turned to deal with the changed situation it was like standing in a dinghy in a choppy sea, with the result that I missed

a large tiger as it left the high grass and bounded up the river bank into the jungle beyond—not surprising, however mortifying a result, seeing that I had been compelled to hold on to the howdah with one hand and to fire my heavy rifle with the other.

With no time for regret or recrimination my shot was followed by a shrill scream of fright and I turned to see the elephant carrying the *khansamas* leaving the scene at speed, as indicated by two erstwhile dignified old men now—to all appearances—racing through the grass, as though indulging in a game of "touch last". Judging from their expression so shortly before, one knew it to be the very last frivolity they were capable of, but the similarity was so unutterably comic as to arouse playful badinage from all within sight; pleasantry abruptly curtailed by the realization that both our lunch and liquid refreshment were departing with them!

Anxiety for the safety of those upon its back grew as the panic-stricken elephant neared the distant jungle and it was with relief that we saw *khansamas* and mahout drop off just before it dashed into its shelter; a risky alternative, for a frightened elephant may turn and attack in such circumstance. Sufficient is it to add that although all escaped without injury, not only did this experience leave the *khansamas* more than ever convinced of the folly of hunting, but it provided us with a hungry and thirsty day. It was one, too, that was to prove the fallacy of the saying that an elephant never forgets, seeing that the run-away, after succeeding in regaining its freedom, was stupid enough to join the elephant of another hunting party four days later and some twenty miles distant, thus returning of its own will to captivity. Although long before the enlightened days of the Black Market it should be added that nothing was heard again of its precious load of food and alcoholic refreshment!

Some days later we were beating along through the high grass of a wide and dried-up river bed which had a narrow stream meandering down its centre, when movement in the tips of the grass disclosed the presence of a pair of tiger. These kept ahead of our elephant for such a distance, so successfully avoiding every attempt to encircle them that eventually "X" and I were sent through the jungle ahead with instructions to stop or shoot them as they were driven towards us. It being his first big game hunt, I was anxious that he should be given the best chance, and I selected the most likely stand in the dried-up river-bed ahead, where its ten-foot stream bent at right angles across its centre, and afforded a direct view to where the high grass ended abruptly on its far bank, giving also high grass for the concealment of his elephant.

This done, I placed my own elephant in an open space to a flank, which not only permitted a view down the re-entrant bend of the stream, but gave also a clear field of fire to where the high grass tapered to an end some fifteen yards distant. The brazen sky reflected in the water and the tall yellow grass, framed in a background of green jungle, proved an attractive setting, although full exposure to the rays of a tropical sun is not conducive to æsthetic enjoyment.

From my howdah I could see the line of elephant slowly approaching and the stealthy movement in the grass made by the tiger they were driving

before them. But these astute animals seldom blunder into avoidable trouble and presently—as if sensing mischief ahead—they came in a direct line towards where my elephant was standing like a rock and until I saw the fringe of the high grass moving immediately in front of my elephant. It was a tense moment while I awaited the dénouement with my ·500 Express in instant readiness, for I fully expected both tiger to appear. In fact, however, it proved one of those tantalizing moments in big game hunting which give it such zest, though little may one appreciate it at the time, for at this most crucial moment all sound and movement ceased as if the tiger had evaporated into thin air.

I could have fired at where I knew them to be with the almost certain chance of hitting, but merely to wound may convert an animal no longer able to kill the swifter game upon which it normally lives into a man-eater. Quite probably I was being watched during this interim by keen eyes while an alternative plan was being worked out by cunning brains. *How* these tiger succeeded in extricating themselves at such close quarters, without sound or detectable sign of movement was astounding, seeing that the grass they were in was of tinder-like quality and my senses keyed to their uttermost. But they did so, as was soon to become apparent. Presently, when the beating line of elephant had almost reached the bend in the stream, in perfect unison and with effortless ease, a magnificent pair of tiger soared high across it, a jump of full fifteen feet and an arresting sight as their supple bodies described a perfect arc in brilliant sunlight as well as a wonderful example of perfect timing, poise and incredible power.

From a sporting standpoint, too, it could not have been better, seeing that they landed immediately opposite "X". Being new to the game, he was, unfortunately, caught unprepared and fired so wildly that his bullet whizzed past my head as the untouched tiger found cover beyond.

On the assumption that the tiger would not travel far in such fierce heat, it was now decided to attempt to drive them back and with this intent the elephant were sent on through the jungle, while "X" and I remained where we were, only facing the other way. The beating elephant, having been taken round to the jungle and re-formed across the river-bed, now started to beat back, with the eventual result that once more the tiger were compelled to repeat their spectacular leap at almost the precise spot and with exactly the same result as before, "X's" bullets only aecelerating their motion. Handicapped as he was by short sight and unfamiliar with the use of a rifle, it became generally agreed before the end of the shoot, that his technique on such occasions consisted in pointing his rifle in the general direction of his target, but closing his eyes as he pulled both triggers! He was, alas, a classic example of one who should not go shooting and it is for this reason that I do not disclose his name, although, alas, he was to die but a few weeks later from the effects of fever.

The tiger now agreed to part company and one made a dash for the jungle and got safely away. The other proved of sterner stuff with the result that once again the beat was put into reverse and the tiger driven back. This time, however, we had recognized "X's" limitations and I had been told to shoot if a chance occurred, so thought it best to cross the stream

on my elephant and wait where the grass was but some ten feet in height. Fortunately so, for as the beat came closer, I could see by the motion of the grass that the tiger was coming directly towards me. On it came until within twenty yards when abruptly it stopped. Its position being signalled to the oncoming line, before long the spot was "ringed" by elephant, when followed an illustration of the difficulty of tiger-shooting in the Nepal Terai. Surrounded as the tiger was by some thirty elephant carrying double that number of experienced men, and though in comparatively low and not particularly dense grass, it proved impossible to locate it, for the tiger's protective covering blended so perfectly with the reed.

It was then that I ordered the mahout to take his elephant towards where I thought it to be, and he had scarcely left the ring when a terrific "woof-woof" heralded the tiger's ferocious charge springing high out of the grass; the cruel face distorted in a hideous rage and the massive fore-arms crashing through the reed like flails. It proved an easy shot and the tiger fell dead.

Although a fine tiger, and after receiving the congratulations of my friends, its killing proved a momentary triumph only, for when we came to measuring it another bullet-hole was found through its tail—a harmless if stimulating wound which had clearly been inflicted earlier in the day. As no one had expended more ammunition during its course than poor "X", it was decreed that he probably had drawn first blood and the tiger was his—a decision strengthened by a natural lack of desire on the part of anyone else to claim such a worthy trophy on such marksmanship.

We had been hunting now for seven hours on one of the hottest Indian days which I can remember, and for most of that time without shade, with the result that both elephant and men were so exhausted that we were compelled to call a long halt in the shelter of the jungle before returning to camp. Indeed, two elephant were suffering from incipient sunstroke, strange as this may seem.

While for tiger hunting in grass running up to over sixteen feet in height, howdahs are essential, allowing one (as they do) to stand until one's eyes are perhaps fourteen feet above ground level, they are uncomfortable to travel in for long distances and unsatisfactory for jungle, owing to overhanging boughs and giant lianas looped from tree to tree. Whenever possible, therefore, one rides to the scene of action or homewards to camp, on a "pad" elephant, or one without a howdah, sitting on the foot-thick mattress with legs astride the mahout in great comfort and admirably placed should one happen upon any animal worthy of attention.

For this reason and when this welcome rest ended, we exchanged to pad elephant and sending all the rest back to camp, the five guns separated in order to make a leisurely return through the jungle on the off-chance of getting some shooting *en route*. About half-an-hour later I heard the distant report of a rifle and had dismissed it from mind when fully two miles farther on a large sloth bear came lolloping past, which I missed with my first barrel but killed with my second, doing so with great pleasure seeing that these bear had killed many wood cutters in this district that year and we had been expressly asked to account for as many as possible.

After its carcase had been "padded" on the elephant, we started off again through very dense jungle until presently—half-asleep after such a gruelling day—I felt my foot seized by the mahout and, looking down to where he was pointing with his iron goad, I saw a panther slinking along directly in front of the elephant. Why such a cunning animal should have elected to ask for trouble in such fashion I cannot say, although it is probable that he was accustomed to wild elephant and had made this mistake—his last, needless to say! This exceptionally fine specimen—just under eight feet in length—allowed me to return to camp with a tiger, a panther, and a bear to my credit for the day's sport, even if a tail had lost me the tiger; the only occasion in my hunting career that such a plentiful measure of success attended my efforts.

But my tale of woe had not yet ended: we were later watching our trophies being skinned, when the *chumar*, or skinner, found a second bullet in the sloth bear which on examination proved of the calibre used by our host; when it became obvious that the shot which I had heard during the return journey had been responsible, and that in many square miles of dense jungle, the same bear had elected to show to two guns separated by well over a mile. Not that this coincidence impressed me nearly as much at the time as the knowledge that I had lost two valuable trophies in one day through the exasperating, if rigid law of first blood.

When after tiger, it is a general rule to refrain from firing at animals other than panther or bear, in order to enhance one's chance with the most prized carnivora of all. But the shoot was by now drawing to a close and we were so satisfied with our bag of three tiger, three panther, and two bear that we decided to visit a distant swamp famed for its barasingha or gond. This rare deer lives mostly in swamp the better to protect itself against carnivora, while its stag carry light-coloured antlers smoothed and polished by contact with the tall reed which forms their habitat.

After long travel we reached an extensive swamp, as represented by an area of immense tiger-grass, some two hundred yards in width where we had struck it and tapering to almost a point some half-mile distant.

No sign of animal life was discernible as we formed the line of elephant across the broader portion after sending on a gun ahead to act as stop at the far end; this splendid chance being given—for reasons of diplomacy to an irascible and somewhat pessimistic senior officer!

The beat had not proceeded far before any qualms we had of drawing blank became allayed, for the grass ahead soon showed signs of a wealth of unseen gond. Our luck was in! Not that we intended to take a heavy toll. In fact we had agreed to limit our heads to three, but we were now certain of front stalls for what must eventuate. Presently the congestion became such that some gond broke back, dashing madly between the elephant—however incredible it may seem—one actually taking an on-and-off from the back of a pad elephant, as evidenced later by the pattern of its hooves upon a box she was carrying. Although the elephant was small and making its way through deep mud, so too must the take-off have been bad, which bears testimony to the leaping power of these swamp-deer. One fine stag swept past so close that I could see the tips of his magnificent

antlers as they parted the reed in his mad career and he would have escaped had he not foolishly leapt high when well clear; a premature frolic which gave me a head within the record class.

Presently the swamp narrowed to such degree that the gond were compelled to break cover, when followed an amazing sight, as they shot out into the open in their dozens, the stags having plumes of tiger-grass streaming from their antlers, as if decorated for some festive occasion; a scene made the more attractive in that we had already secured the heads we wanted and could watch them to the full of our content.

It was not without its humour, too, for the gun ahead, having somewhat characteristically assumed that all the deer had now departed, unloaded his rifle and took no further interest in the proceedings. It was then that four magnificent stag dashed out of the grass and sped past his elephant, and we saw him frenziedly but unsuccessfully attempting to reload in time to get a shot!

So ended an enjoyable shoot and one which must have brought great benefit to the Indian who eke out a precarious existence on the verge of these jungles, and whose cattle and other livestock would now have a greater chance of survival; peasants often so poor that even the loss by tiger or panther of a few cattle spells utter ruin.

Throughout these pages this fact must be borne in mind, for although later in my hunting career I was to give up shooting entirely and to take to the more satisfactory and infinitely more fascinating sport of photographic big game hunting, I still cannot hold a brief for those who would prevent the killing of the great carnivora in the almost impenetrable jungles of the Nepal Terai.

I have tried to show the amount of arrangement, effort, and skill required to account for even the comparatively slight toll we had taken during this hunting expedition—probably not one-twentieth part of the tiger, panther, and sloth bear in the jungles in which we had been; jungle too, accessible to hunting for only a few weeks annually and in which the Mutineers of the 1857 campaign met their final doom from their malarious quality. Reduced to its lowest dimensions such hunting in the Nepal Terai becomes a question as to whether one's sympathy should be with its tiger and panther or those hundred or more other wild animals killed by each of them in every year of a life which may extend to twenty years? The only ridiculous alternative would be to attempt the task of persuading the greater carnivora to turn vegetarian; a task which I shall most willingly leave to the critics of such big game hunting!

CHAPTER XI

UNCOMFORTABLE MOMENTS

My next opportunity of big game hunting came when I had the privilege of accompanying a Forest Officer making his annual hot-weather tour of the jungles under his charge; a time when forest fires can be expected and supervision is essential

Close to our first camp was a crescent-shaped swamp stretching for many miles and covered with immense tiger-grass; an impenetrable swamp famous as a haunt of tiger.

My host was away the following day when news of a tiger-kill, that of a buffalo, was brought to camp. Going to the scene, it was found that, following a heavy repast, the tiger had dragged the remains to the edge of the swamp, which indicated that it was now lying up close by.

Away from the swamp and about the carcase, the grass was only some five feet in height, and there being no tree available, the only thing left for me to do was to sit on the ground about twenty yards away to await the tiger's return, which can generally be expected once, sometimes, but less often, twice, and on exceptional occasions, even on a third night.

As it was almost certain that the tiger would come from the direction of the swamp, it was unfortunately necessary to have the intervening grass beaten down to allow me to see the carcase; one of those purposeful mistakes which often have to be made in big game hunting. This done, my Indian helpers returned to camp and left me alone to an unpleasant vigil, for a pungent odour of defunct buffalo, a tropic sun like the blast of a furnace and persistent mosquito combined to aggravate the fact that to have any chance of success in such hunting, one dare not move.

Some two hours of this had been endured before I heard the *Ahooh* of a tiger and not long after the sound of it approaching from the swamp, coming so boldly through the high grass as to show that it was obviously unsuspicious. On it came with massive stride, until the tips of the high grass indicated that it was about to come into view. But not the least part of the fascination of tiger hunting is its disappointments—not perhaps surprising—seeing that one is dealing with animals which to live must kill others and whose senses, therefore, are acute. It was one of those occasions now, when all sound and movement ceased, to be followed by a disturbing period, during which one sensed being under the scrutiny of fierce eyes—a subconscious feeling which lasted for several minutes.

Worse was to follow! For presently, came the sound of a gentle rustling in the grass to my right, subtle, though detectable, movement, a "creepy" sound in fact, more especially as memory now chose that most inopportune moment to recall to mind that a man-eating tiger had so recently been at its dreadful occasions in this locality, and had not yet been accounted for.

Still clinging to the faint hope that I had not been seen, and with the

knowledge that I had not provoked the tiger, for it is exceptional for any animal other than a man-eater to attack without cause, I "froze", even if my eyeballs evidenced a desire to swivel farther than they had ever done before. The strain was such that for a moment I toyed with the idea of springing to my feet in the hope of being able from the higher level to see the tiger and shoot it, but, rejecting this as possibly the prelude to departing this world prematurely, I sat like a graven image, even though my knees exhibited a desire to click together like castanets. Things had not yet, however, reached the climax of endurance, for the stealthy movement continued until immediately behind me, when came the sound of low purring and audible sniffs.

Never have I felt more helpless, nor the hair I once possessed exhibit a greater tendency to stand to attention! Imagination at such times takes charge, and did now so effectively that every second I expected to feel the slavering jaws closing about my neck; that sensation one experienced during the last war when compelled to remain in close proximity to an LXB, or delayed action bomb. To turn one's back upon anyone is considered rude, but to remain in that position with a suspicious tiger behind one is awful!

Fully ten minutes of this mental agony had to be endured before I heard the tiger moving again, this time to my left, and presently I could see the grass waving towards the "kill", my eyes now imitating those of a chameleon. Alas, I tell a tale of failure, showing that the hunting of the tiger is not easy, for evidently this one had sensed the presence of danger, and now re-entered the swamp, passing out of my life for ever, for although I remained until dark, I had then to admit defeat and make my solitary way back to camp.

Dawn saw me again at the spot in the hope of finding the tiger on its kill, only to discover that in the interim it had returned and dragged the remains of the buffalo within the swamp. With it had gone my only chance, for our official itinerary required our moving camp fifteen miles away that day.

This was, however, destined to offer one of the strangest experiences of my hunting career, for a day or so later I was again the only gun in camp when a goat which we had taken with us in the capacity of a mobile dairy was reported missing. Fearing the worst, the shikari and I trailed its wandering hoof-marks along a dusty jungle track until they became overlaid by the pugs of a panther, which was synonymous with the ending of a life of usefulness. Soon after, we came upon where the killing had been effected—a scene of such disturbance as to show that the goat had put up a spirited resistance. Such, however, is the cunning of a panther that it was only after long search that her carcase was found beneath a dense bush and covered with dead leaves to keep it from the keen sight of vultures.

The jungle we were in consisted of light timber only and there being no trees of sufficient size in which to await the panther's return, I caused an elephant's "pad" or mattress to be placed upon a bush some twenty yards from the kill, and sat cross-legged upon this yielding platform, which pressed it down to within four feet from the ground. Afterwards, and unfortunately as it was to turn out, the shikari cut away the boughs

above the "kill" for fear that the panther might make its approach from the opposite side. This done, and after having festooned the front of my "pad" with branches, as partial concealment, I sent him back to camp, acting on the sound principle—one which I have maintained whenever possible—that the presence of two exactly doubles the risk of discovery by keen-sensed carnivora.

I now made a great error by placing my rifle between two of the concealing branches and directed upon the carcase: a blunder which might well have cost me my life.

Now followed a tedious wait as, cramped in my Buddha-like attitude upon that unstable mattress, and exposed to the full blast of a blistering sun, I seemingly formed the focus of attention for every mosquito within miles, which took full advantage of the fact that success depended upon my remaining completely motionless whatever the provocation offered.

Actually this care seemed superfluous, for the ground was so thickly carpeted with dead tinder-like leaves that it seemed that the panther must give warning of its approach when still some distance away; but I was taking no chances after my recent failure with the tiger. Soon a great commotion behind me confirmed this impression and this persisted until by infinitely slow degrees I turned my head and found it was caused by a perky little wild bantam cock about thirty yards away.

Small things often lead to success or failure, tragedy or grave accident, in big game hunting, and this was no exception to the rule, for, feeling now assured that I could relax precautions for a while, I began to wind my handkerchief about a tortured left hand which mosquitoes were treating like a Lord Mayor's banquet. Engrossed in my first-aid, I suddenly became aware of a strange gliding movement to my right; turning, and the movement of our heads coinciding, I found myself gazing into the wicked eyes of an enormous panther, scarcely five feet away and obviously as taken aback as I was, which is saying much!

There it was, without the slightest sound, like some dreadful apparition, and in no pleasant frame of mind either, as shown by a face distorted with a hideous snarl disclosing its every white fang and a pelt a-bristle like an immense and angry cat.

Experiences of this nature which have come to my notice or fallen to my lot have ever been characterized by the swift clarity of thought, as well as the almost fantastic coolness with which one weighs up the situation, however badly frightened one may be; probably a survival from prehistoric times, when hunters who lost their heads did so completely, or, rejected by the feminine of their species on account of their inability to supply the larder, left no descendants. So on this occasion, for though unprepared for such a sight, I instantly realized that my only chance in this extreme danger was to keep perfectly still or I should precipitate attack —a sequence of thought so instantaneous that I remain convinced that not a muscle did I move from that moment until the end of the ordeal. Neither was this slight, for it meant holding the panther's baleful stare without blinking, while gazing into eyes blazing with an opalescent light, and unutterably repellent.

Meanwhile, I found myself incredibly composed, thinking out the situation exactly as if it were happening to someone else, weighing the pros and cons as if it were a mathematical problem. The result of this analysis was not a happy one, making clear, as it did, that it needed no severe mauling from the poison-infected claws of the panther to inflict fatal injury in such fierce heat and so remote from all medical aid; also that before I could withdraw my rifle from the branches between which it was resting and swing it round to an almost impossible angle to fire, the panther would most certainly attack. Having thus concluded, I could do nothing else but continue the staring match, which grew in horror with its length, for the panther's eyes were having a somewhat mesmeric effect, while it was clear that I could not keep it up for any great length of time.

In such circumstances, one is, perhaps not unnaturally, prone to exaggerate the length of the experience, but fortunately I am able to give an approximate estimate, for I was at that time Signalling Officer to my Regiment, and accustomed to reading the bright lights of heliographs and lamps for periods of seven minutes without blinking, for to shut one's eyes when doing so, even for a fraction of a second, meant that letters would be lost. One cannot do this day after day and night after night without acquiring a more or less correct estimate of time and, applying this mental gauge, I am confident that this unpleasant staring match lasted for fully a quarter of an hour, for towards the end it proved an immense strain to keep my eyes open, while tears were coursing down my cheeks—an appropriate mien, though quite involuntary, for a solitary mourner of his own impending end.

No other plan had meanwhile occurred to me, and I was just about to make what I knew to be an almost suicidal attempt to extricate my rifle, and shoot, when, to my great relief, the panther turned his head away and from that moment apparently dismissed me from his mind, for never once did he look back!

I was now given a unique chance of seeing how panther negotiate such going with such silence, for, stretching out one powerful fore-paw, he delicately and noiselessly brushed aside the brittle leaves until he had cleared sufficient space for its insertion, repeating this process with such methodical and effortless ease and silence as to seem almost like a patch of broken sunlight slowly gliding along, natural protective mimicry for which its coat with its black rings on a yellow ground is so admirably designed. There is little question but that his anger had been engendered by his having noticed that the bush containing the dead goat had been tampered with, and his suspicion was shown by his periodically stopping and crouching low, making a close scrutiny of the ground on either side, precautions which showed the futility of waiting on ground level for this wily type of animal.

All this took time, during which I waited until he came into the line of fire of my rifle, for I was taking no more chances after all I had endured. Finally he reached there, when I shot him through the heart and he fell over dead.

Before getting down, I tried out the plan of despair that I had been

on the point of attempting, when I clearly saw what a forlorn hope it would have proved, for in trying to lift up the barrel of my rifle it became instantly caught up by a branch.

The affair was to have an amusing finale, for my shot had been heard in camp, and presently the mahout arrived with his elephant, and when I told him of the happening, I asked if he could explain the panther's extraordinary behaviour. The dear old man, with a long experience of big game hunting behind him, dwelt upon the matter for a moment, and then, speaking with all possible respect and sincerity, without the least degree intending to be satirical, gave his opinion. This was to the effect that probably it had been a "Jungli" panther, or one which had come from remote jungles and was unfamiliar with man, and that seeing me sitting upon a bush and thinking me to be a monkey, it had been undecided whether to go to the trouble of killing me in such great heat or to rest content with the dead goat! However humiliating in other circumstances such a simile might have been, I was, and still am, deeply grateful that on that particular occasion my appearance apparently proved so simian!

The following afternoon a panther killed a "puddah", or tied-up buffalo, close to camp and I sat up for its return in a *machan* which had been built about fifteen feet up a tree. Unfortunately it proved a moonless night, with the consequence that although the panther arrived soon after midnight I could not see it and held my fire in the hope that it would still be there at dawn. It set to work upon the kill and for something like half an hour I was witness to its masticatory efficiency, for the crunching of bone indicated the strength of its jaws. Then it started to growl in menacing fashion; a challenge answered by another close by which was clearly desirous of sharing in the banquet; noise which continued to grow in volume until it became merged in a conflict which I would have given much to see, for quite evidently locked together they tumbled and tore at each other over and about the kill; a fight during which I had the mortification of knowing that I was within a few yards of such a unique sight although unable to see anything of it.

Whatever else resulted in the way of first-aid requirements, this combat certainly caused a loss of appetite, for the fight finished and after causing the jungle to resound with their awesome roaring, the combatants withdrew, leaving me to get what little sleep was possible on my comfortless platform, before beginning a further strenuous day's hunting. For no other pursuit causes greater encroachment upon one's hours of rest than big game hunting, while I know of softer beds than that offered by a rough four-foot square platform in a tree. If again a further tale of futile effort, it is but right to add such recollections to one's reminiscences, for the proportion of success to failure in big game hunting is extremely small.

CHAPTER XII

THE TALE OF AN ELEPHANT

As every sportsman knows there are times when everything connected with the hunt seems to lead irresistibly to success, and other times when just the reverse is the case. In big game hunting particularly, the unusual—call it luck, chance, or what you will—sometimes savours of the uncanny.

It proved so on the occasion of which I write, when big game hunting in the Nepal Terai in company with three others. During the first week everything seemed to come my way, with such rich wealth that two tiger, a panther, and a bear fell to my lot, while my companions met with no luck at all. This was doubly unfortunate, for not only was one of my companions a senior officer new to big game hunting, whose temper was not unnaturally apt to be strained in extreme heat, but my future leave of absence depended upon my keeping in his good graces.

However diplomatic it would have been to live up to the maxim *Seniores priores*, we were hunting a jungle in which it was essential to account for as many tiger, panther, and sloth bear as possible, for it was only open to shooting a few weeks each year. To its sheltered depths tiger and panther travel down annually from their breeding haunts in the higher slopes of the Himalayas, there to take a heavy toll of the cattle of those Indian peasants who eke out a precarious livelihood on the fringe of the jungle. It was, therefore, not a case of "Your bird, Sir!" as in scatter-gun shooting—when a problematical gun can be given a chance—but a duty to mankind to kill any which came one's way, for it is from tiger or panther which turn cattle-killers and in consequence lose their fear of man that man-eaters are apt to be recruited.

My senior officer, however, did not see fit to accept this explanation, but appeared rather to regard my success in the light of a breach of discipline, as if "King's Regulations" decreed that the correct precedence for the shooting of carnivora was by seniority.

We had reached this somewhat unhappy pass when news of a tiger-kill arrived and we reached the scene with twenty beating elephant to find the remains of a sambhur stag lying close by a large area of high grass where we assumed the tiger would be lying; for after eating some seventy pounds of flesh, they usually make for the nearest water, slake their thirst, and then sleep until time for a "second and equally substantial helping". Three guns—of which I was one—were posted across this grass to act as stops, while the fourth took charge of the line of elephant to beat towards us.

My two companions had been posted a hundred yards on each side of me and there they should have remained throughout the drive. Meanwhile, my mahout, a most experienced man, selected for his elephant stand a small open space and with that curious native intuition of his kind expressed his confidence that the tiger would come our way. Gladdening as this

prospect should have been, I viewed it with mixed feelings, seeing that the gun to my right was my already petulant Senior, who had somewhat forcibly commented on my unmerited success during the travel out that hot morning.

About an hour later I was relieved to hear the beat approaching, for the atmosphere was like that of a Turkish bath, and presently my mahout excitedly indicated in dumb pantomime that the tiger was close by and that I must be ready for instant action. It was then that I heard movement on my right and, looking, saw with dismay my senior bearing down upon me on his elephant, looking as if on the verge of apoplexy and making gestures of manifest impatience and which indicated that it was my duty to give him place, as if we were engaged in driving some pheasant cover instead of outwitting the most astute and dangerous of animals. Faced with the choice of losing the chance of a tiger, or of increasing his displeasure, and discipline proving stronger than desire, I reluctantly ordered my mahout to withdraw. He, however, poor fellow, knew his job and vigorously remonstrated. With difficulty I got him to obey. Grudgingly he turned his elephant about and set it to climb a steep bank behind, what time I held on to the howdah as the ponderous brute heaved its way up. Then came a terrific roar from directly behind and, turning, I saw a huge tiger bounding across the open space before which we had stood a moment before. It was impossible to fire in my position and in a flash it had disappeared into the high grass.

Although later, when the error of his ways had been tactfully explained, my senior apologized and all was well between us, it was quite otherwise with my mahout, for it took long to live down the estrangement brought about by this unfortunate episode; and this is not without importance, for a good mahout can help one's success to no small extent.

It is of some interest to add that during the progress of the beat a panther had been seen to climb high up a tree and from this coign of vantage make a survey of the situation—evidently profitably, for it succeeded in evading both the oncoming line of elephant and the flanking "stops" we had placed in trees. Both young tiger and lion can also climb trees with consummate ease, and only cease to do so as they grow more weighty with age. Even then they climb higher than some think, as shown by instances in which wounded and full-grown tiger have ascended trees and attacked those in a *machan*. Until quite old they can spring fifteen feet up a tree without difficulty, a fact which should regulate the height of a *machan*, and many a sportsman has met his death through neglect of this precaution.

Not only can panther climb with the agility of cats, but they will carry and deposit high up in a fork of a tree carcases of animals they have killed, in order to preserve them from hyena or jackal.

Having lost the tiger we travelled on some distance to a dried-up river-bed across the high grass of which we placed a line of elephant. I was in charge of this line and the other guns went on ahead. A whistle presently told me that they were in position and I started the beat towards them.

Whoever is directing a line of beating elephant has the duty of doing

"Moti" (The Pearl) enjoying that daily bath which should be the lot of every elephant in captivity. The light, pinkish-shade of her face makes her an aristocrat of her species and considerably enhances her value.

The end of a desert journey.

The elephant of the "Three Bears" story.

his utmost to drive everything forward, and not—except in self-protection —himself to shoot. This was of particular importance on this occasion, seeing that such exceptional, if not embarrassing, fortune had already attended my efforts. Dame Fortune, however, was either in a capricious mood or determined to be over-generous, for we had not covered a hundred yards when my elephant happened upon a small open space in the centre of which—and not fifteen yards away—stood a magnificent tiger; one obviously disturbed in slumber, for hideous grimace spoke resentment at this interference with his privacy. While I could easily have killed, a selfish shot is rightly unpopular.

My elephant stopped and the tiger and I gazed at one another, while a lashing tail showed that it might easily charge. My mahout was no help in this puzzling predicament, for he had relapsed into a state of sulky, unforgiving gloom upon the loss of the other tiger and would offer no further ideas. In my perplexity the only solution I could think of was to "shoo" it as if it were some sheep, hoping that this undignified treatment would solve the problem one way or another. Astonishingly enough, this acted like a charm, causing the tiger to turn obediently and trot into the tall grass towards the waiting guns. Soon after, while we passed through lighter grass, came the sound of a shot and I next saw the tiger charging back. My duty now clearly was to fire, the effect of my shot being to turn the tiger towards my erstwhile disgruntled senior who killed it.

Honour was satisfied and friendship restored in a moment of time, although I need scarcely add that I made no attempt to ascertain whether or not the resultant skin possessed more than one bullet hole; neither did he!

The next time out—and when travelling through dense jungle on a timid pad elephant—a sambhur stag, carrying a good head, suddenly sprang up and fell to my shot; the unexpected noise proved too much for the nerves of the elephant, which bolted. Its mad career put the mahout and me in danger of being crushed against the trees or overhanging boughs as the massive beast crashed along its panicky way—the second time I have been run away with by elephant.

Although customary to sit with a leg on each side of the mahout when shooting from a pad elephant, I was then riding "side-saddle" fortunately, for this mad ride came to a stop by the elephant crashing the opposite side of the pad against a giant tree, with such force as to shatter a leg had it been there.

My leave finished, I had scarcely rejoined my regiment when came the disastrous Kangra earthquake and I woke to the sound of an underground train with the doors of my bungalow swinging wildly and its walls cracking.

Reaching the open with the minimum of clothing and less delay, I saw the wide *maidan*, or parade-ground, emulating a sea, undulating billows of earth with trees bending at different and fantastic angles: a weird sight and an awful moment during which over twenty-five thousand people lost their lives. The sensation was that the ground would open beneath one and swallow one up. Had I not overslept it would have found me on the church

tower with my regimental signallers. They were waiting patiently for my appearance at its foot, when part of it fell, while the root of their bungalow they had left collapsed—an unmerited reward for sloth!

My next shoot was with a friend who had borrowed a Government elephant, for many years solely employed in carrying timber far distant from the jungle. Like certain other Governmental appointments this lotus-eating life had accustomed it to regular hours, good food and comfortable shelter which had induced a distaste for the life of the jungle, even although in its wild state, it must have passed its earlier years in it, a lesson for those who think that zoos should not be countenanced. As a result, when called upon presently to face a savage tiger which sprang upon its head and had to be shot off it, it became—not unnaturally—more than ever convinced that big game hunting was not its *forte*, and, turning about, started to quit such an unpleasant spot at speed. The tiger—although mortally wounded—was unfortunately still capable of harm and sprang upon the elephant's hind-quarters and bit through a thick part of its tail before receiving its quietus, whereupon the victim did his best to make his speed comparable to that of a jet-propelled 'plane!

First-aid was applied directly on reaching the camp, when the injuries revealed that the tiger's fangs had actually met after biting through some six inches of hard muscle; which serves to show the terrific might of a tiger even when badly wounded.

Elephants make wonderful patients and painful as the treatment must have been and temperamental as our huge patient unquestionably was, he squatted quietly throughout what must have proved a painful ordeal, obviously appreciating that we were acting for the best.

Bull elephant go "Must" or mentally unbalanced at certain periods, and I once watched an elephant in this condition being treated for a festered fore-foot. While the elephant squatted to enable this treatment to be administered, its mahout sat astride the injured leg and hacked through a huge toe-nail with chisel and hammer until the accumulated pus had been released. Despite the agonies which the poor brute must have been enduring, and although in an abnormal state of sexual disturbance, it kept its trunk tightly curled throughout, as if fearful of harming its benefactor, although its deep groans showed what it was suffering.

Unfortunately, this tail injury had happened at the worst period of an Indian hot weather and our administrations as unskilled as they were generous—a Chief Commissioner of Ambulance service now, I shudder to think of the treatment given—the tail continued to inflame until it assumed such alarming proportions that we feared the injury might prove fatal. Apart from a natural desire to save the elephant, our inexpert efforts on its behalf were stimulated by the knowledge that its loss would cost us several thousand rupees until, urged by sorrow for its suffering and haunted by the spectre of heavy financial disbursement, I returned to my military station and obtained by proxy an expert diagnosis.

The medical officer concerned proved a stalwart reed, giving as his opinion that the wound was aggravated by the presence of a foreign body and he advised vigorous probing; advice which, when carried out, brought

away a portion of vertebræ, after which the elephant made a complete recovery.

Not only does this show the colossal strength and capacity for harm of a tiger, but also that shooting either tiger or panther from the back of an elephant can be unsafe. An example of this was offered when a friend, after waiting in a *machan* until it was almost dark, had shot, and, as he thought, killed a tiger. As it had fallen in high grass and rather than risk his elephant when it came up, for tiger can take a lot of punishment and still remain capable of harm, he decided to leave it for the night.

He had no sooner entered the grass the following morning when the tiger, badly wounded though it was, sprang up and, catching my friend by a leg, pulled him to the ground. However amazing the rest of the story may seem it is exactly as he related it to me not long after the happening.

The fall had knocked him out and when consciousness returned he felt no sense of pain but heard the sound of crunching, finding to his horror that this was being caused by the tiger gnawing his leg from the ankle upwards. His elephant had meanwhile bolted and he was alone in this awful predicament but fortunately kept both head and courage and looked round for his rifle, mercifully seeing it lying a few feet away. To find it was one thing, but to get hold of it another, for at every attempt the tiger ceased its horrid labours and, thrusting blood-stained jaws and fiendish head towards his face, would give out a blast of hate before resuming its ghastly task.

Incredible as it is, the repulsive breath which accompanied these demonstrations seemed later to have impressed the unfortunate sportsman more than anything else which he had been called upon to endure on that hazardous occasion. By slow degrees, reaching out a fraction of an inch at a time, he at last secured the rifle and brought it to bear on a tiger still engrossed in its grisly task, killing it instantly; when it was found that all this while it had been badly wounded.

The claws of the greater carnivora being hollow usually contain decaying animal matter such as forms the ideal breeding-ground for the germ of tetanus, while they possess almost a hypodermic syringe quality for carrying infective matter deep into a wound. Against these heavy odds, in such terrific heat and far remote from medical aid, one's chance after a severe mauling is slight, and my friend had later to lose his leg and almost his life.

I have since met others who have suffered serious mauling by carnivora; one by tiger and another from lion, and both have told that me they too felt no pain at the time, although acutely conscious of the appalling halitosis exuded by the animal. The case of the tiger was that of a gallant man who found himself being actually "walked away" with by a wounded tiger, which, holding his badly-mangled arm in its mouth, compelled him to walk alongside until it fell over dead. Desperate as was his plight until this fortunate finale, he said that he had experienced no sense of fear or of pain, although his arm was so badly injured that it had to be amputated.

The victim of the lion had a curious story to tell when I met him shortly after his recovery, and one worth repeating. He had wounded a lion which promptly charged, seizing him by a shoulder and

throwing him to the ground. Although, as was disclosed later, it then inflicted other grievous hurts with its powerful claws, not only had he felt no sense of pain, but none of fear. What was even more remarkable was his statement that, when lying beneath the lion in such pitiable predicament, he saw someone gallantly coming to his aid, a strange sense of irritability passed over him that the proceedings were going to be interrupted. However extraordinary this may seem I tell the story as he gave it me and can but assume that such loss of sensation and absence of fear is Nature's anodyne to compensate in some measure for one animal being compelled to live upon another.

Those who have been badly injured in battle will know the numbness produced by shock in the earlier stages; a comforting thought to those who have lost loved ones in war; and it is this which probably causes this curious effect when being mauled by carnivora.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TIGER AND OTHER CARNIVORA

FEW animals are so little understood as the tiger, lion, and panther; ignorance which has resulted in great cruelty on the part of those who erroneously think that these unfortunate beasts are always out for human blood. Yet it is not surprising that such misapprehensions exist when professional films have been shown which support this suggestion. One I can recall to mind was that in which a native baby was depicted squalling in apparent terror in the centre of a village street and, in the next shot, a vicious-looking tiger, with saliva pouring down its jaws at the enjoyable prospect before it, apparently hurrying towards such succulent, defenceless, and desirable prey. That the two actors concerned were in all probability separated by hundreds of miles and the tiger one which was actually in captivity and separated from the camera-man by iron bars was not disclosed. It is a lack of understanding, too, encouraged by the "Tourist-sport" (to coin a title), who in pre-war days of cheap and easy travel was prone to represent that all carnivora met with were bitter enemies of mankind and ferocious monsters; a grotesque exaggeration indulged in as a lurid background for their indomitable courage.

While there must always be a certain risk in hunting the greater carnivora, my experience has been that it is most exceptional to find any wild animal which is naturally aggressive, or which will attack without provocation or cause, while those exceptions which I have encountered have been mainly those which have either been previously wounded, or those others stirred into action by being hunted and which retaliate on the sound principle that the best method of defence is attack.

A large tiger can kill an animal of the size and strength of a bullock and take it through dense jungle for a considerable distance, sometimes carrying its victim upon its back, so that all one can see when following it, are the marks of trailing hooves. Nor does it, as so many suppose, make a gigantic spring upon its victim, but usually creeps, with infinite skill, close up to the unsuspecting animal concerned. Usually the tiger slinks up under cover and makes its rush from within ten yards, clutching the forequarters of its prey with its powerful paws, one being generally over the shoulder. Simultaneously it seizes the throat in its jaws from underneath and turns it upward and over, very often springing to the far side as these combined movements are effected, which throws the buffalo, or other animal over, and gives that almost scientific wrench which often dislocates the neck. Sometimes, but not so often, a tiger will vary this procedure by seizing its prey by the nape of the neck when dealing with powerful animals, while —as this killing takes place in darkness for the most part, instances not unnaturally occur when it fails to deliver this almost instantaneous "knock-out", when there is a "free for all" such as I have often seen signs of the

following morning; seldom, however, without finding that the tiger has been victor.

Of the many tiger "kills" I have seen some had met their end with such amazing swiftness that the ground about was little disturbed.

When a tiger turns man-eater, it is generally because wounds or old age have rendered it incapable of killing the swifter animals which it prefers, although in rare and exceptional cases an uninjured tiger—one in its prime—may take to man-killing. But this last is usually brought about by accident, such as when a gallant herdsman tries to stave off an attack upon his cattle, or when a tiger springs upon bullocks hauling a cart along a jungle road by night, and miscalculating his distance, unintentionally carries off the sleepy driver sitting on the shaft and between his pair of bullocks, as they do in India; which last is not an infrequent cause of an unharmed tiger turning man-killer. This is probably because such an accident overcomes a natural repugnance to the smell of man, and leads to the discovery that human beings are not only puny creatures and easy to kill, but more succulent than their aroma would indicate; for wild animals possess that same lazy streak as is found in man.

But wounds, or the handicapping penalties of old age, account for the great majority of man-eaters. Nor can one altogether blame the carnivora if they cling to life with the same persistence as *homo sapiens*, for both must kill in order to live.

Every big game hunter of experience can offer abundant proof that wild animals which possess a capacity for harm have often every reason to prove savage to man, especially in Africa, for members of the so-called brute world dislike being wounded as much as man himself.

It is, indeed, unfair to charge carnivora with being savage towards man, who is so largely himself responsible for creating their viciousness. Fortunately, a tiger generally operates in a definite area, so that, should it turn man-killer, the search for it is narrowed down, and an approximate check of its ghastly total can be kept.

My wife, for example, has a brooch made from the claws of two man-eating tigers, one of which, the Dowlatpore, was known to have killed fourteen victims, and the other, the Khorai Ghat man-eater, one hundred and twenty victims, before their destructive power was ended. Their cunning is proverbial; one particular monster specializing in those native postmen whose duty took them along a jungle road, carrying a wand adorned with bells, which they jingled as they jogged along. The intention of this musical warning was to drive away dangerous game, but in this particular instance the effect was reversed; indeed, the man-eater concerned appeared to regard it in the light of a dinner-gong, until so many postmen met an untimely end that ultimately, and not unnaturally, this postal service ceased through lack of applicants for the rapidly succeeding vacancies!

Several expert big game hunters tried for this interrupter of His Majesty's mails, but all failed, until a gallant Englishman dressed up as an Indian postman and equipped with both fatal bell-wand and rifle, essayed the same awesome postal round, jingling the bells, one may suppose, without any great difficulty. In a gloomy part of that fearsome jungle something prompted

him to look round, to find the man-killer within a few yards! Having nerves of steel and being a quick and accurate shot, he put paid to its account. There should be civil V.C.'s for such deeds of cold-blooded and solitary valour.

Fearful as man-eating tiger or lion can be, the panther can often give them best should they turn man-killer, for not only are they more cruel, cunning, and ferocious by nature, but they can climb trees with the greatest of ease. One panther during my time in India killed sixteen Indian in one night through sheer lust of blood, mostly women, contenting itself in each case by biting its victim in the throat. In this case the carnivorous assassin distributed its ghastly deeds over a wide area, for the average man-killing tiger usually contents itself by killing for food only and seldom more often than every three or four days. But being nocturnal in their habits and favouring as they do deep jungle, the tiger is infinitely more difficult to see, or to photograph, than the lion, which is all to the good, seeing that it will survive in the almost impenetrable jungles of India long after the lion and other wild animals still to be found on the motorable plains of Africa have become only a memory; when Grandfathers-to-be will recount with pride to their probably equally repellant grandchildren how they "blotted-out" the last elephant and lion, other than those in its admirable national parks and game reserves, have suffered that extermination which is inevitable. This is fortunate in the sense that the instinct of man to hunt is natural, and usually given full play, whether it finds its outlet in hunting wild animals, wholesome recreations or less reputable things. Tiger and lion, too, levy a discriminating toll upon other wild life such as man can never do. Too often have man's attempts to balance the distribution of wild animal life ended in utter and harmful failure. Because of the far greater difficulty in killing it, the tiger is unquestionably the most treasured trophy —the "Blue Riband" of all big game hunting—for a sportsman to obtain by fair methods—fairness being a necessary qualification as I shall show.

Over forty years ago I was out tiger hunting as the guest of a Taliquadar, or Baron, of Oudh, Bala Khan, a charming old Indian gentleman, who had shot with my grandfather over forty years before. He came to my tent one evening and sat for a long time recounting reminiscences of the past and, talking "off the record" concerning the methods by which a good bag of tiger was sometimes ensured for "important personages" visiting India who were tied to an official itinerary.

One system which he described was for two young buffaloes to be tied up nightly, some little distance apart in likely jungle for some months before the distinguished guest is expected, until one is killed by a tiger, which is allowed to consume it without molestation. Then another buffalo fills the vacancy, also perhaps to fall victim, and so on until presently the tiger discovers and kills the second buffalo tied up elsewhere. So this preliminary process of "softening" continues until presently the tiger finds, doubtless to its considerable astonishment and satisfaction, that it has chanced upon an earthly paradise in which a succulent beast is always in the larder; then, being, like man, constitutionally lazy, it ceases its hunting.

Ultimately this attractive programme of "eats without effort" plus the

need for a little gentle exercise, causes the tiger concerned to develop such a fixed programme that a regular track is formed between the two buffaloes; midway between which a comfortable *machan* or platform is now built in a convenient tree. The rest is comparatively simple, for by the time the honoured guest arrives, the tiger is known to be lying-up at either one point or the other, sleeping the sleep of the gorged. Nothing now remains to be done to ensure success except for the Important Personage to take his seat in the *machan*, following which the tiger is driven up its now familiar path, sluggish with sleep, and affords an easy shot.

He explained that while this method had the advantage of offering a wild tiger, even if it was one which had been unconsciously trained to fall in with man's wishes, nothing was left to chance, and that in the event of the I.P. missing the animal, all concerned would inform him that it had been mortally hit, and that later a dead tiger, though perhaps not the one in question, would be produced. From what I could gather it was not unknown for this unfortunate carnivorous "understudy" to be shot in its cage; or for opium to be injected into the buffalo carcase in order to ensure the tiger ambling past in a semi-somnolent condition, and so to compensate for any lack of skill with a rifle.

I can but add that my informant explained all this most ingenuously, and in reply to my question as to how it was possible to synchronize a substantial bag of tiger with the few days allowed in the programme of a distinguished visitor—a mystery which had puzzled me much since I had experienced the difficulty of meeting with any during several hunts.

Indeed his stories were to be borne out some years after this conversation when I was on shikar in a jungle not far distant from that in which a most illustrious visitor was to shoot a few months later, and when his prospective Indian host paid me a visit. Remembering what I had been previously told, I asked him what he hoped to place on the hunting menu on that great occasion, to be told that he proposed to show a hundred tiger: this appeared so incredible that I ventured, with the tactlessness of a subaltern, to express doubt as to its possibility. It was then that I received the astonishing reply, "I have seventy-four already!" meaning that that number of tiger had already been caught and would be liberated at the psychological moment.

Then there are those immense tiger shoots only possible to a very few, in which hundreds of elephant and thousands of men drive vast areas of jungle by day towards a common centre, keeping the animals enclosed by night by a chain of fires; a circle diminished until ultimately the wild animal life normally contained within many square miles is compressed within a comparatively small compass by the time the auspicious day arrives. By such means the favoured guests get rights and lefts at tiger, and even the chance of a shot at the rare Indian rhino, and at least have the satisfaction of knowing that such sport is moderately genuine.

Although from a sporting point of view this may seem all wrong and monstrously unfair to the animals concerned, in no other way could "good sport" be offered those who are unable to devote more than a few hours to big game hunting. Whether, however, they can take pride in their trophies

is questionable, for they must realize that something other than the dignity of their status or the glamour of their appearance contributed to such outstanding success. In fairness it should be added that without these widespread artificial preparations it would be impossible to include a tiger in any pre-arranged programme, and this knowledge must to some degree ease the conscience of those who, at heart, are sportsmen.

The Indian hosts, too, must be exonerated, seeing that they very naturally desire to show what their jungles contain, and indeed, often go to very considerable pains to exhibit that generous courtesy so traditional in the aristocracy of Hindustan. Besides all this, and by this last method, the toll taken as compared to the quantity of wild life encompassed is slight, while the surviving animals go free, so that the artificial side is reduced to a minimum, even if it savours of a bagged fox loosed in a strange country where all earths have been stopped.

Fortunately for the wild animal life upon which the tiger lives—and while Nature has endowed it with phenomenal sight and hearing—its power of scent is relatively poor; a wise provision, seeing that else there would be little other game life left.

The tiger is peculiar in one respect; namely, that it takes possession of a tract of jungle and follows a definite "beat" as well-defined as that of a policeman's, although differing in that it may in total length cover up to well over a hundred miles. Its nightly progress often requires the crossing of one or more rivers and the covering of up to twenty miles, lying-up by day at one of its many established lairs, until—perhaps a fortnight later—it completes the circle and returns to the starting point, when the progress is repeated.

That a tiger is permitted to remain in undisturbed possession of such an area for its hunting, except during the mating season, is sufficiently intriguing, but another mysterious thing is that, while it dominates over its defined territory and permits no other to trespass within it, yet, if it is killed, another tiger will generally be found to have taken over its "beat" within a few days. This is the more remarkable in that I cannot think that there can be any interchange of views in regard to locations when tiger assemble in the mating period, for on the occasion when I was camped nearby at such a happening the nights were made hideous by several love-sick tiger indulging in a "Free for all", until the successful, but doubtless battered, victor led away his striped bride.

Many labour under a misconception regarding the size of a tiger, for the largest officially measured was but eleven feet, and that this was abnormal is shown by the next in size in Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game* (Sixth Edition), being five inches less. While a good taxidermist does his best to retain the correct proportions, on the other hand, I have seen those cured by the cheaper class of Indian taxidermists whose well-meaning efforts to give greater credit to their patrons have resulted in the skin bearing a semblance to a gigantic dachshund. Few appreciate the height and bulk of a tiger in its natural state, which may be anything up to three feet six inches at the shoulder and which comes as a surprise when charged by one's first tiger; especially if one's impression until then has been gained in a menagerie

or zoo, where most, poor brutes, get insufficiently fed and are in consequence but caricatures of their species. To show what they are in a wild state, the average weight of five record tigers killed was five hundred and eleven pounds, while a tiger will often eat up to seventy pounds of flesh at its first meal.

Two true stories regarding tiger come to mind; the first when a dispute arose concerning the length of one which had apparently been killed and when no tape measure was available. To settle the argument, one of the guns, who was exactly six feet in height, lay down with his back against that of the tiger in order that his companions should better estimate its length. They were engaged in this task when the tiger surprisingly came to life with startling suddenness and, springing to its feet, charged into the jungle, fortunately for the astonished human gauge. What had actually happened was that the bullet had glanced off its head and merely stunned it. This was told me by a gun who had been present on that occasion, and who was of unimpeachable veracity.

Then comes the tale of a celebrated big game hunter (I think it was General Sir Bindon Blood), who fired at a tiger as it was charging through the jungle, which responded to the shot by swerving into a tree and falling over apparently dead. The shooting party had gathered about the carcase and were congratulating him, when an A.D.C., anxious to say that he had fired at a tiger, asked permission to put another bullet into it in order to make sure. Although convinced that it was dead, the General, appreciating the reason, gave consent. The result was astonishing; for when hit, the tiger rose to its feet and then fell over, dead: the first shot having missed, and the tiger been stunned by contact with the tree. This meant that the animal therefore became the A.D.C's, and the General, being a thorough sportsman, accepted this blow of fate with a good grace and the A.D.C., we must hope, with becoming modesty—although scarcely a characteristic feature of the species.

CHAPTER XIV

HUNTING BY CAMEL

My battalion now left Bengal and its wonderful jungles for Ambala in the Punjab, where good black buck and chinkara shooting could be had in the Sind and Jind deserts, the chief difficulty being that of distance. The duty of a soldier, however, is to overcome obstacles, and the solution found was based upon the fact that in India at that time Thursday was a holiday for the army, owing, it was said, to the Mutiny having ended on that day; furthermore a C.O. could grant up to two days' leave. Having obtained this for the Friday and Saturday as well as the Adjutant's permission to be excused church parade on the Sunday, I would leave by a train at midnight on the Wednesday, which brought me to the desert by dawn. Here I would find shikari and camels ready waiting for three days of hunting; Monday morning finding me back at Cantonments in time for a most necessary bath before donning uniform for the 7 o'clock parade: a satisfactory "week-end" which I often obtained, even if it cut one's sleep to the minimum.

I will not pretend that I undertook these excursions for that reason, but subsequently they proved of military value, not only by hardening one physically and familiarizing one with desert conditions and camels, but also by compelling a knowledge of Hindustani, for but few of the natives, I employed had any English. It was, too, knowledge difficult of attainment in that I could not afford pedigree camels with their smooth action, but only those which gave the roughest of rides. Moreover, as if to ensure the acme of discomfort, their wooden saddles were triangular in shape with the sharp end uppermost, while their stirrups were too narrow for European feet.

As a consequence, when jogging for long hours across a rough desert, the impression was forced upon one—in both senses of the word—that it was but a matter of time before one would find oneself divided into two halves, akin to those seen in pre-war days hanging in a butcher's shop. In addition, financial circumstances compelled camping kit and commissariat to be so restricted that these little expeditions would have dismayed all but the keenest; indeed comfort and sport seldom mixed in pre-motor days, and this was all to the good for wild animal life.

But the true zest of hunting always lies in the chase and, in a desert almost bare of cover and with animals so keenly alert, this proved no easy matter, for it entailed not only long rides on camel back but tortuous stalking on hands and knees over a surface liberally bestrewn with a three-pointed seed which with Nature's diabolical ingenuity was so constructed as ever to have one needle-like spike uppermost. Hunting thus proved a penance hard enough to satisfy the most self-immolating penitent: small wonder then that those to whom it made no appeal failed to understand

why others so willingly exchanged the comforts and flesh pots of civilization for its sake.

Nevertheless much charm and interest could be extracted from those deserts, both as regards the unfolding of their mysteries and, in a lesser degree, by the compulsory and closer study of the camel—too close sometimes to be altogether comfortable. For that enduring animal, with its beautiful yearning eyes scarcely noticed because of its supercilious expression, reveals itself on test as imbued with not only a horrid mind but a supreme contempt for mankind; a contempt attributable—so the pious Moslem believes, to the fact that the camel alone knows the hundredth name of Allah.

Long marches have I made with my regiment through the Himalayas with camel transport, days of dusty toil which remain vividly in memory; that sinuous chain of baggage camel, winding through mountain passes; of fellow-comrades, the most of whom were, alas, destined to be killed in the Great War. Bivouacs by night squeezed upon a narrow ledge, flanked by sheer precipice, to awaken in frigid cold long before daybreak to the sound of squealing camels and rich profanity. Then would follow the difficult adjustment in darkness of the balanced loads amid a veritable rodeo of bucking, biting, and kicking camels, punctuated at intervals by one ridding itself of its load, so that the whole tiresome effort had to be repeated; a complete and disquieting initiation into the character of the so-called "ship of the desert".

Yet daylight always found everything in its place and the Battalion ready to move off, for such is the wonderful efficiency and patience of the British soldier and his Indian assistants.

Thus experienced I welcomed an opportunity which came my way to make an official reconnaissance across the Jind desert, for it was rumoured that in its centre would be found antelope and gazelle of record size. Its military purpose, interesting to look back upon over forty years on, was to ascertain the number of camels available in the event of war with a Russia then unquestionably casting covetous eyes upon India. That I was selected to undertake this reconnaissance was because of my familiarity with desert conditions, which shows that hunting—from a soldier's point of view—can at times pay a good dividend. I took as companion a brother officer, one Cormac, whose knowledge of Hindustani was almost nil and who was further handicapped by a glass eye. Although a grand rider to hounds and the best of sportsmen withal, he knew nothing of such hunting, a lack of knowledge which has a bearing on what followed.

On reaching the desert at Sangrur we were the guests of the Rajah of Jind while making the necessary preparations for guides and camels; no easy task, for strong objection was raised to the route and the criss-cross job allotted me. The day before leaving, Cormac and I agreed to go off hunting in different directions, and knowing his ignorance of the language I directed his camel driver to return when my companion indicated that desire by saying "Sangrur".

At the same time I impressed upon him the importance of his remembering the word, which he said he would do by a process of alliteration,

although I was somewhat sceptical when I heard him on departure memorizing the name by repeating "Sandgrouse, Sandgrouse." It is not difficult to become lost in any desert, and when by midnight he had not returned I informed the Rajah, who most kindly sent out his camel corps to help in the search, although without avail. By the following evening I was more anxious still, when, to my great joy, he returned upon a donkey.

It then transpired that when the time had come to return to Sangrur he found that he had forgotten the name, alliteration aiding him only by "partridge", while to make matters worse his camel driver had proved half-witted. The result had been that without map or compass they had gone on until the camel had dropped from exhaustion. In the night a sandstorm had sprung up, during which Cormac had removed his glass eye for greater comfort. Fortunately he knew the necessity for keeping in a straight line next day, with the result that he struck a railway line and eventually reached a desert Halt, the Babu of which had supplied a guide and donkey to bring him safely back.

There was an amusing side to our reunion, for mine was the responsibility and, relieved as I was to see him again, it was difficult to keep a straight face during the recital of his experiences, for, without a mirror, he had unwittingly re-inserted his false eye upside down, so that while one eye was fixed upon me, the other gazed upwards with that startled expression that was to become so familiar during the days of V1 attacks upon England.

The mishap, too, proved embarrassing from a shooting point of view, for henceforward nothing would persuade him to separate, with the result that we were to perform the fortnight of desert travel which was to follow, almost like Siamese twins, which exactly halved our chances of success.

Notwithstanding this handicap, I succeeded in shooting two black buck above the average and a fourteen and three-quarter-inch Chinkara, which was later to be honoured by a place in Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game*. Meanwhile we met with some snags, for one camel had knelt upon and injured its driver, and another had severely bitten its owner, and the lateral grind of a camel bite is no slight injury, with part of the animal's digestive process taking place in the mouth. Also I had found, when too far into the desert to correct the mischief, that my bearer had purchased only half the food required for the camel drivers, pocketing the rest of the money, with the result that soon they were all but starving, while the inhabitants we met proved semi-hostile and refused to sell us any grain.

The removal of British rule from India will not ease the lot of the illiterate, if the history of India before British occupation forms any guide!

The deeper into the desert we got the more approachable the antelope and gazelle became, until there would have been no merit in our shooting, so we put our rifles away and resisted every temptation to improve upon what we had already obtained in the way of trophies.

Christmas Eve was ushered in by the bolting of the camel carrying our personal supplies, smashing every bottle and spoiling all the food—a catastrophic incident in view of our already short rations. With this unpromising gastronomic circumstance it looked like Christmastide being more in the nature of a Lenten fast: our breakfast consisted of an unpleasant draught

of brackish water and a minute portion of tasteless *chappati* or flour-cake, after which we tightened our belts and started off with the full expectation of a hungry day. Santa Claus must have been on our side, however, for by a miraculous chance we came to a small grove of palm trees, to find it containing—of all things, a solitary peacock. How this unfortunate bird got there, or by what misguided flight of fancy it had travelled to this bleak and inhospitable waste, none can tell, but I do know that no more careful stalk has ever been made than that which followed, resulting in a Christmas dinner *à la* Lucullus, or so to us it seemed. It fell from grace, however, during the following four days when, our sole sustenance, it was served up at every meal until its insipid sand-bespecked flesh made the stomach cry "Enough, no more! 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before!"

At the completion of the desert crossing I was met by a very old Indian: one who had heard of my coming and had travelled far in order to ascertain if I were a relation of the *Bara E-Sleeman Sahib*, for the illiterate Indian always puts an E before an S (or the "Great Sleeman", meaning my grandfather, Major-General, Sir William Sleeman, K.C.B., the discoverer and suppressor of Thuggee) under whom he had served in war almost sixty years before. When he was told of the relationship, the dear old man knelt in silent homage and kissed my unworthy boots in proof of his affection for my grandfather's memory.

This incident shows the veneration and love of an Indian for his English master—not the least of the many benefits which British rule brought to India, strange as this may seem at the "parting of the ways" in 1947, when there are those who prefer to create the reverse impression and others who have been wilfully misinformed. During the earlier years of my soldiering in India at the beginning of this century, I often met old Indians of every degree of status, who entertained real and deep affection for one who had saved the lives of countless thousands of Hindu and Moslem by ridding India of that three-century-old curse of Thuggee. Even in 1937 an Indian judge in Lahore told me that—such was Sir William's knowledge of India —his books of almost a hundred years before were still referred to on questions of law.

Although this desert journey had been far from comfortable, it had offered interesting sidelights, a good example being afforded by an old retainer—well over seventy—who had throughout done some thirty miles a day, trudging through soft sand and displaying such vitality that upon my commiserating with him he would spring high like some young gazelle to show his surplus energy. This affords a lesson to those who consider that the present post-war rationing is harmful, for this old man ate less than a third of what is generally thought essential to health; moreover, his vitality had been built up on bad water and poor flour and without the aid of either meat or Vitamin "A", "B", or "C".

CHAPTER XV

A STRANGE EXPERIENCE

WHEN the Maori reached New Zealand from Raratonga somewhere about the year 1350 it contained no animal life of any kind, while its rivers were without fish. Owing to this remarkable fact much of its bird life was wingless, seeing that for æons of time they had nothing to fear from either animals or man, until the arrival of an inferior race called Morioris of an earlier immigration.

The first animal life in New Zealand are said to be dogs and "stowaway" rats which accompanied the Maori in those seven famous canoes, from the names of which their famous tribes were later to be called. It was this fact, too, which compelled the Maori, that magnificent race of warriors, to resort to cannibalism. Captain Cook later tried to abolish this by liberating the pig, descendants of which, even now known as "Captain Cookers" and of gigantic size, are still to be found in the Dominion.

In passing it should be added that certain other later acclimatizing efforts proved less agreeable, particularly the introduction of the rabbit, which multiplied so exceedingly as to ruin many a sheep farmer and lay waste countless thousands of acres of good grazing country. To deal with this menace the early British settlers introduced its natural enemies, the ferret, stoat, and mongoose, which, while helping in some degree to solve this problem unfortunately resulted in the killing of most of the wingless birds.

Of these, the Moa—an ostrich-like type of bird growing up to seventeen feet in height—had ceased to exist before the arrival of the white man, although according to Maori legend it long survived their coming and was killed for food. Ample proof in the shape of Moa remains and piles of their gullet stones have shown that the Moa was once abundantly spread over both main islands of New Zealand; indeed its complete extermination remains a puzzling mystery, seeing that a part of the mountainous region of the extreme south was still unexplored at the time of which I write, and some of it is so still; country of a character seemingly ideal for Moa, which had a penchant for the giant fern root.

Fortunately, no ardent early settler introduced snakes, with the result that, added to its many other charms, New Zealand is without poisonous reptiles or even insects capable of harm, with the exception of a rare red spider confined to one small part of its long and beautiful coastline.

British settlement is synonymous with sport and in 1897 three Red Deer stag and five hinds were sent from the Stoke Park Herd in England and liberated in the Rakia Valley of the South Island, a mountainous district fortunately separated from settlement by the dangerous glacier-fed Rakia and Wilberforce Rivers, which formed a natural barrier against that curse of all game preservation to-day, what I must content myself by describing

as the "petrol sport". Thanks, largely, to this, the deer multiplied rapidly, until its stags became renowned for their magnificent heads.

Four times in all was I privileged to hunt this country, to ford the Rakia River on horseback and to realize its danger, for it has an icy quality and a swiftness such as to roll great boulders along its stony bed, massive enough to throw a horse's legs from under it—hazards of no mean order.

On the first occasion a pack-horse was swept away, fortunately swimming ashore farther down, while the water surged over my saddle so irresistibly that my powerful horse only kept its feet by leaning at a steep angle against the current. The Rakia is no ordinary river, its extremely wide bed normally consisting of many deep channels along which the water runs with torrential force. No wonder the early settlers named drowning the "New Zealand death"; those valiant men of days with bridges few and dangerous rivers plenty! It was a progress not made the more cheerful by the man who was "packing me in", who either took a poor view of things or wished to make my flesh creep, by shouting above the gurgling of the swirling water gloomy details of the many drowning accidents which had come the way of others attempting this crossing, to such degree that I was glad to reach the far side and eventually camp, whence he departed with the pack-horses on their return journey.

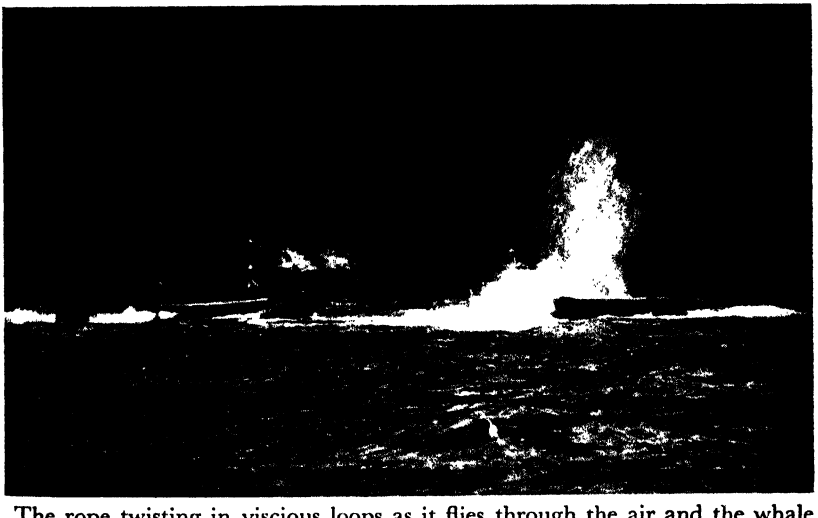
I had now as my sole factotum a callow city youth, whose knowledge of the culinary art was only equalled by his abhorrence for the wild, together with an infinite capacity for sleep. In consequence, the fortnight which followed was unpleasantly hermit-like; early rising formed no part of his scheme of things, so it meant cooking my own breakfast long before dawn, with incredibly revolting results; something of a change after the cheap and efficient servants of an Indian big game shoot.

For the most part they proved days of fruitless effort, for the stag showed a partiality for the heights of the mountain range beneath which we were camped, while I was suffering from a war disability which prevented much climbing. And although the Rakia Valley with majestic Mount Arrowsmith at its head offered compensation, scenic beauty does not afford the joy it should to a hunter out to secure a good head. I could, however, and did, wander along the lower slopes, and have often wondered since what would have happened on these solitary excursions if, miles from camp and in some isolated part of the mountainside, I had met with accident, for the Rakia had risen in full flood two days following our crossing, while imagination rebels at the suggestion that my somnolent factotum would have been capable of any prolonged search.

I was sitting in my tent one day when a bird about the size of a domestic hen walked perkily in and, unperturbed by my presence, started to sample the contents of the larder. Calling my man, who for once happened to be awake, I learned that it was a *weka*—a wingless bird whose curiosity overcomes all fear of man—one which haunted the camp throughout our stay, and afforded adequate proof of what easy victims the wingless birds of New Zealand must have been to both man and vermin.

The hunt, however, was not an utter failure because I chanced upon an unfortunate stag soon after dawn one morning, when it was returning

The harpoon strikes home



The rope twisting in viscious loops as it flies through the air and the whale spouting.

The reward of eight hours climbing on a fog-bound mountain and a New Zealand 'Royal'.

Rakia Valley, New Zealand, with Mount Arrowsmith.

belatedly to its haunts above. Although not outstandingly so for the Rakia, its head would be considered exceptional, at least in Scotland, as I had good reason to appreciate when compelled to carry it back to camp.

After much experience of the far denser Indian jungle and African forests, I had been sceptical of the tales I had heard of the danger of becoming lost in the New Zealand bush, which to all appearance seemed safe by comparison, although warned by those who had suffered this happening, all but losing their lives in consequence. One party had only saved themselves by following the course of a stream (far harder than it sounds by reason of tangled vegetation) for five tortuous days before reaching safety, their sole food the while being a *weka* which they had met with when almost all in.

The day came when I was to learn my lesson; having climbed as high as my condition allowed, I was walking along a steep mountainside when I came to a stretch of bush which meant either descending or else making my way through. As it seemed less than a mile in width, I chose the second alternative, but was soon to find that I had failed to take into account the fallen trees, gullies, and deep re-entrants, dense undergrowth and high fern which intervened and made it impossible to maintain direction until I realized that I had more than covered the distance required and had lost my way. This did not perturb me, for I now determined to follow the next gully down until it led me to the river flat below, when it would be easy to find my way back to camp. It was one thing, however, to come to such a decision and quite another to carry it into effect, for this watercourse proved a labyrinth of undergrowth of such formidable character that often I was tempted to abandon the effort and to try my luck again along the mountainside.

Had I succumbed to this urge, the result might easily have been fatal, particularly as I was still far from fit and should not have climbed at all. I knew, of course, that the tendency, when lost, is to move in circles, yet it required every ounce of will to force my way down until, at long last, I staggered into the open below, both chastened in mind and exhausted in body, but with a far deeper respect for the New Zealand bush than I had possessed before.

I next stalked in the Wairarapa of the North Island, where I camped in a picturesque valley in company with two good sportsmen, Leonard Tripp and Sheila Weston, and the best ghillie I have ever been out with, Peter Macdonald, a taxidermist, too, of rare quality.

Being still handicapped, I had to content myself with the easier country near camp, while my companions, more vigorous, could scour the country for miles on the look-out for good heads.

As it turned out, such enforced restraint demonstrated yet again my conviction, formed from long experience, that it is illusory to think the best chances demand long travel as the tyro is so often prone to assume.

One morning my companions left camp long before dawn with the intention of walking to the far end of the "White Rock" country allotted to us by our genial host, Willie Barton. The sun had well risen when, following breakfast, Macdonald and I took a leisurely stroll up the valley

and, within a mile of camp, saw a magnificent "Royal" standing on a ridge midway up a hill and surrounded by his hinds. Unfortunately, the wind was wrong which meant retracing our steps for some distance and then climbing until we were above him. All went well and we eventually commenced to stalk him from above while he remained unconscious of our presence. But although he was quite at ease, certain of his scattered hinds were much the reverse, their large ears cocked in our direction, making it clear that it was going to be difficult to get close enough to make certain of my shot on a hillside almost bare of cover. It indeed seemed impossible when presently we came to a completely bare shale slope in full view of the herd, but it was now or never and taking it in turn, we slid down this on our backs. I can but assume that feminine curiosity proved greater than fear—fortunately so, for I now killed the most perfectly shaped "Royal", with the most symmetrical points, which has ever come my way.

Within two hours of leaving it, we were back in camp with this splendid trophy, but it was late that night before my jaded companions returned, having walked some twenty miles without sight of a shootable stag. A maxim for those who engage in all hunting is that there is as much chance of happening upon success close to camp as thirty miles away; to resist the almost irresistible urge to go far in one's quest.

A day or so later Macdonald and I were climbing up a hill in a mist, when we suddenly came upon two enormous wild boar, not ten yards off, so concentrated upon their task of digging for roots that they remained unconscious of our presence. Anxious to add a "Captain Cooker" to my collection, I aimed at the nearest and was about to pull the trigger when Macdonald caught my arm and whispered that he would climb above until he could see which carried the best tushes. Meanwhile the boars, all unconscious of their hazard, continued their engrossing task without once looking up, until Macdonald pointed to the one which was nearest and which, when killed, proved to have four-inch tushes.

My next stalk was again in the Rakia, and my wife and I crossed the Wilberforce River on a huge wool waggon with a team of six horses and became the guests of a hospitable sheep farmer and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Urquhart. We were fortunate in getting over when we did, for next day the river ran a "banker", and remained in heavy flood for over a week, during which time sorry would have been the plight of anyone on our side of that mighty torrent who required urgent medical attention. Fortunately, and by some curious coincidence, one is more likely to lose one's appendix when resident close to Harley Street than when in the back of beyond!

Unfortunately, my war-time injury still prevented my undertaking much climbing, and equally so that the deer kept to the high mountains, which meant that although I started out long before dawn, and traversed four miles of my block of country daily, it was all to no purpose.

Then came a time when the farmer's dogs bailed up a boar a little way up a steep mountainside above his station, and when accompanying him to their assistance through its light bush, I suddenly saw a stag carrying a magnificent head crossing immediately above and some thirty feet up. There being no time for reflection, I let drive at it with the result that,

although shot through the heart, it sprang straight out from the mountain-side and came soaring down upon us, head first, presenting us with the startling view of sharp-pointed antlers, looking like a bunch of spears and backed by some sixteen stone of stag. Only fortunate chance prevented serious accident, for there was no time to do more than take a step aside, but fortunately it fell between us, one sharp tine piercing my companion's coat. Although a trophy won by inglorious means and at a stupid risk, it proved a fourteen-pointed, with exceptionally fine brow tines.

Finally the last day of our stay arrived, when our previous plans to take us the seventy-odd miles back to Christchurch necessitated our being across the river by noon. In view of the paucity of success which had until then attended my efforts, there seemed small purpose in making a further effort before departure. But hope springs eternal in the hunter's make-up, with the result that I reached the boundary of my block just as it grew light, when, to my glad surprise, I saw a stag coming towards me on the flat and some six hundred yards away. Taking cover behind a bank, I glassed it to see that it carried a typical Rakia head, with many long points and a wide spread, and as the wind was blowing towards me it seemed a gift for which I had but to wait. Undue optimism in all big game hunting is to be deprecated, but a stealthy peep a few minutes later so confirmed this opinion that I failed to notice that the wind had changed, with the result that when I looked up next, it was to see the stag galloping away. My last chance so wantonly thrown away, and greatly upset in consequence, I was on the point of returning when I happened to glance towards the river and to my considerable amazement saw a stag standing upon a long ridge and about a mile distant. Silhouetted against the rising sun, it lookep positively gigantic and glassing it disclosed a magnificent head, both wide and bristling with tines, which filled me with both desire and perplexity, seeing that it was obvious that the stalk would be long and difficult, while I was due to ford the river before noon.

As the ground between was almost bare of cover, I decided to make use of the river-bed itself, which in test proved difficult owing to its winding character and ice-cold water, through long stretches of which I had to wade; a chilling process which took time. But to my great delight, occasional peeps showed that the stag retained its Landseer-like pose until I presently reached the ridge upon the summit of which it was majestically standing and succeeded in stalking to what I judged to be three hundred yards, the limit of distance from which anyone should fire at an animal, forgetting in my excitement that it is easy to under-estimate distances in New Zealand, owing to its exceptionally clear air.

All this while the stag had remained as I had first seen him and now showed that it was not only a fourteen-pointer but carrying the best head I have ever seen. With such a prize within my grasp I was taking no chances, and as it seemed risky to attempt to get closer I took long and careful aim and fired. Nothing happened! Instead, the stag remained as if some magnificent statue, which was puzzling, for while that I had missed was understandable, neither the report of my rifle nor the strike of the bullet

had disturbed its equanimity in the slightest degree—it just stayed put, as if some bronze statue!

Amazed at my good fortune in being given a second chance, I fired again, only to meet with the same result; indeed it might have been a ghost, for all the effect my shot produced, while I carried no silver bullet. By this time the proceedings savoured of the uncanny, although this did not worry me nearly as much as the fact that, following almost a fortnight of blank days, I had foolishly come out with only three cartridges, which meant that I had now but one left. In an effort to get closer, I now took advantage of a patch of marsh and wriggled a disagreeable way through this for a further fifty yards (by when I was a most disgusting sight) until it seemed impossible that I could miss. But I did so, only to find the stag still frozen in its weird and statuesque nobility.

Bitter disappointment is a pathetic understatement with which to describe my feelings at having lost such an irretrievable chance, and in dismay I searched my every pocket and even the butt-trap of my Mannlicher rifle for another cartridge, a forlorn and resultless attempt born of despair.

There is a condition of self-torture known as masochism, and it was probably this which now prompted me to see how close I could get before the stag made off, and rising with my now useless rifle I walked towards it.

If I was puzzled and distressed before, it was nothing compared to my feelings when the stag allowed me to come within twenty yards while remaining at stand as if chiselled out of marble.

At this close distance I could now see that its coat was staring, eyes bloodshot and foam about its mouth, making it obvious that there was something amiss with it, to account for such strange behaviour.

On I went, cursing my luck, until I had closed the distance to five yards, when the stag languidly turned and strolled away. As it was going my way we, as it were, joined company and walked side-by-side together as if out for a morning's constitutional. But there was felonious intent in my heart and I racked my brains as to whether to attempt some pretty work with my hunting knife or to swallow my defeat.

In this ridiculous fashion we proceeded, like the Walrus and the Carpenter, for almost a mile, during which time the stag periodically stopped and allowed a tantalizing survey of the finest head I have ever seen—which was to be lost to me for ever. But the time presently came for us to separate, and I left him making his way towards the bush and returned to the sheep station, a bitterly disappointed and perplexed man.

It was then that the mystery was solved, for it appeared that the stag had been "tooted", or poisoned, through eating some poisonous herb or root, and that in such condition they can be dangerous, so that it was perhaps fortunate that I had resisted the temptation to rush upon it with a knife *à la* Apache; when the rôle of hunter might have been reversed. But even now, twenty-seven years on, I cannot look at my trophies of the chase without seeing in my mind's eye what would have proved the finest stag of all, walking slowly away!

CHAPTER XVI

WHALING IN NEW ZEALAND WATERS

I WAS next to enter a realm of sport which can come the way of few, namely, that of whaling.

The two main islands of New Zealand are separated by Cook's Strait, from which northwards the sea becomes increasingly warm, while south, towards Antarctica, it is correspondingly cold; the reverse climatic conditions to the British Isles.

During the first half of last century the Dominion was the centre of the southern whaling industry, when the new rare "Sperm" and "Right" whale were plentiful and coveted for their oil and whalebone: the latter being then in great demand by the members of the fair sex, who in their devotion to the decrees of Dame Fashion would boast of a fourteen-inch waist!

Throughout this halcyon period its most important whaling station was at Teawaiti on the island of Arapaoa, an anchorage then favoured by many large whaling vessels and one which must have presented a scene of animation contrasting vividly with its comparative desolation at the time of which I write, for their reckless slaughter of whale was to bring ruin, as in the Arctic, to the industry.

But while the "Sperm" and "Right" whale suffered something approaching annihilation, the less coveted "Humpback" remained comparatively plentiful; a specie which annually leaves the Antarctic for warmer water and arrives off New Zealand in March, the females arriving first, soon to be followed by the males. After long residence in deep waters they make their landfall encrusted with barnacles and their first duty is to rid themselves of these by scraping their vast bodies against rocks in shallow water.

When they have completed this mighty toilet, the whale make for the Tasman Sea, where their young are born and have a greater chance of survival than that offered by the freezing waters of Antarctica. Then after a brief sojourn in this attractive sea-nursery, the return travel is begun, this time both sexes being together, the better to protect their young from the rapacious "killer" whale.

Although the palmy days of whaling had long drawn its curtain over New Zealand a quarter of a century ago, it was not long before I heard of some men who with great enterprise, skill, and risk, were whaling by means of speedy motor-boats, and eventually I obtained their consent to my participation, with the proviso that I would be prepared to be taken off from and re-embarked on a ship in motion. I am inclined to think this condition was a final effort to kill my desire, for they by no means encouraged visitors.

Professional soldiers did not as a general rule know much about ships, at any rate before the Second World War, so this idea might have achieved

its purpose but for one fact. This was that I had been attached to the Imperial Japanese Navy during the Great War, so that while acquiring a permanent distaste for chop-sticks I had not only gained my sea-legs, but I had had much practice in boarding ships in every kind of weather; experience which was now to prove of great value by allowing me to give the necessary assurance.

Therefore, not long after I found myself on a ship steaming past the entrance to the fjord and saw a whale-boat approaching; it soon surged alongside when, approximating her speed to that of our rolling ship, next came the signal for me to descend. With a rough sea running, to make one's way down a swinging Jacob's ladder, one moment being yards off the ship's side, and the next violently dashed against it, can never constitute a pleasant form of amusement. In addition, duty had necessitated my wearing uniform, including top-boots and spurs, so that I was conscious of being watched by most of the crew, obviously hoping to see a "Brass Hat" fall into the "drink".

Good cause had I to be grateful for my maritime experience as I reached the lowest possible rung and swung suspended over a foaming cataract, what time the ladder evinced every desire to twist round; with the whale-boat a dozen feet below at one moment, the next almost sweeping me into the sea. Eventually I felt my foot clutched, a voice said "Let go", and I found myself in the whale-boat meeting those for whom I was later to obtain a high regard.

The dexterity with which they handled their fragile craft while my baggage was being lowered was amazing, maintaining her position within a few feet of a moving and rolling ship, when timing was a matter of split seconds and contact would have crushed her like an egg, for all else had had to be sacrificed to speed in the construction of these fragile whale-boats.

Each of their three high-powered motor-boats carried a harpoon-gun mounted on a swivel in the bow, the harpoon being attached to many fathoms of stout rope coiled in a hatchway in the stern. Two men only comprised the crew of each, the one to deal with the whale and the other to attend to the engine and the boat's manœuvring.

The boats also carried explosive lances of a primitive description consisting of iron piping pointed at one end and enclosing an iron bar at the other. The hollow portion contained gelignite, while a detonator attached to a length of insulated wire formed an "Heath Robinson" type of weapon, almost as dangerous to the wielder as to the whale in the circumstances in which it was used.

Although nothing could have exceeded the hospitality of the whalers, the experience which was to follow will ever live in memory for its frigidity. It was the winter season and our quest necessitated rising daily at 3.30 a.m. and crossing the fjord in an open boat, after which followed an icy wait on a high, shelterless cliff on the look-out for whale until dark. This entailed some thirteen hours of benumbed misery in persistent winds which seemed to blow straight off the ice of Antarctica.

The whale, being a mammal, must rise periodically to the surface in order to breathe, when the heated air and watery vapour which it then

exhales condenses into a column known as "blowing" or "spouting", which discloses its whereabouts. It is this essential need which makes it comparatively easy prey to a modern whaler, for even under attack the unfortunate whale must still continue to rise at intervals.

Eventually, patience was rewarded and to the old-time cry of "There she blows!" came a wild dash down the steep slope to the boats below: we were soon racing for the entrance as it is a point of honour to harpoon a whale first. The open sea gained, we searched for the whale, aided by signals from the look-out on the cliff above, just as in Cornwall a school of pilchards is denoted.

Presently, away in the distance, three huge, greyish-black, shining objects came slowly above the surface, from which columns of spray rose high and dense in the cold air. It is the start of a contest between gigantic brute force and man in fragile craft which could be dashed to atoms by one blow of a mighty flipper.

Before the distance could be closed, the whale had sounded, making it difficult to credit that the sea ahead concealed the largest animal life in existence. But the alert figure of the harpooner, silhouetted against a steel-grey sky, the harpoon-gun to his shoulder and legs braced gave the assurance of imminent happenings.

The three boats had now separated, each after a different whale, and suddenly a strange patch of smooth water appeared ahead which formed the prelude to the surfacing of a whale which spouted with a curious soughing.

All unconscious of the whalers' proximity, the leviathan of the deep was lazily wallowing along when the gun went off, the rope to which the harpoon was attached twisting in vicious loops as it flew through the air. The harpooner's aim had been true and it struck deep behind its pectoral fin, the whale sounding with such rapidity as to tear the rope through the logger-head until it smoked, a tense period during which, had it fouled, the boat would have been pulled under, and for this eventuality an axe was kept in instant readiness. Then followed a long tow, ended by the whale surfacing, although too much rope was out to allow further action before it sounded again, this time towing the boat at fast speed, although her powerful engines were in full reverse. So the battle continued until eventually the whale was overhauled, when the harpooner plunged an explosive lance deep behind the harpoon.

Now came the critical moment, for before the bomb could be exploded in safety the whale had to be allowed to submerge sufficiently to put a cushion of water between it and the boat, a matter of cool judgment on the part of the whaler at the controls, waiting to make contact and so detonate the charge.

It is no slight risk, for cases have occurred when the iron bar has been driven through the boat side. This time, however, all was well, and a moment later the whale, now mortally wounded, plunged to the surface, its powerful fins threshing the air like stupendous flails and its vast tail lashing the sea round about into foam. The climax had now been reached during which the boat had to maintain close contact, while fourteen-feet

fins swept through the air about it, with such massive power that on one occasion they had cut through the side of a boat for several feet and shorn off sparking plugs from her engine in the process. During this flurry the boat is manœuvred with consummate skill and in readiness to press home the final attack.

It is at such a time that the resource and courage of the whalers become apparent and that the answer is supplied as to why more do not engage in such profitable hunting, for it required two more explosive lances before the "spout" assumed that reddish tint which signified the beginning of the end.

The stricken whale now lifted much of its vast bulk almost perpendicularly above the surface, tail uppermost and remained poised for an appreciable moment; a supreme effort to regain the depths which it would never see again and a somewhat pitiful spectacle of giant strength overcome by the ingenuity and courage of Man.

Then the threshing tail and sweeping flukes gradually ceased their movement, there followed a perceptible shiver and the dead whale slowly sank until little more than awash: the battle was over!

A hole was now cut through the tail and the carcase inflated with air as if some gargantuan tyre, in order to allow of its being towed backwards, as well as to prevent its sinking. Until this method was adopted this was not an infrequent happening and many a whale had these enterprising whalers lost after hours of valiant effort.

Now was to follow the most tiresome business of all, when the whale, now high out of water and with its "accordion-pleated" tummy uppermost, making it look like some striped barrage balloon, had to be towed back; five hours of monotonous and petrifying misery.

The pungent aroma of a flensing factory is not one to wax lyrical about and even now its penetrative and nauseating bouquet comes vividly to mind. But arrived there at long last all is found in readiness to cut the blubber off in "blankets" or two-feet wide strips wrenched away by winch and chain, in order the better to render into oil. While we watched this smelly process a monster shark put in an appearance and, using its fearsome teeth like some gouge and with a rotating movement of its body, wrenched away a considerable portion with such force as to move a carcase over forty tons in weight; one which would produce some fifty barrels of oil. Dependent from the whale's palate were over two hundred plates of "baleen" or whale-bone running up to five feet in length, their innermost edges fringed with rough hair, which serves a useful purpose. For when a whale meets with the minute animalcula upon which it lives, it opens its cavernous mouth and sweeps them in by the million. It then squeezes the water out through this sieve of whale-bone with its immense tongue and swallows the essential residue.

My experience was that this form of whaling, though full of interest, required the long-suffering endurance of an early martyr combined with the circulation of a polar bear. Not that there was anything particularly spiritual about our small party, but because during my stay, whales were almost conspicuous by their absence, and the waiting in such arctic weather would test the patience and fortitude of an earthly saint.

There were, however, compensations for those bitter waits, such as the opportunity for hearing the experiences of venturesome men, some of whom had done unusual things and visited strange places; such for instance of a boat which "ran aground" on a whale when in hot pursuit and one of the party gallantly jumping upon its back and pushing her off as if from a shelving beach!

On the other hand there was the pitiable story of some men—fortunately not British—who visited an uninhabited island in order to kill penguins for their oil. Sufficiently tragic was it that such quaint and trusting birds should be destroyed for this purpose, but worse still was the revolting method by which this was accomplished. For the penguins being plentiful and the ordinary process of killing slow, these human fiends drove them by thousands into vats of boiling water. Is there no depth to which man will not stoop for financial gain?

My whaling experience over, I was put back in the ship in the reverse manner to that of my arrival and even now I recall the pleasure of "thawing-out" in a hot bath.

Despite its hardships there was an attraction in this form of whaling, as is proved by my repeating the experience later; that time, however, to strike an unlucky period and practically as cold as the first occasion. This left me with the conviction that whaling is a form of hunting which above all others requires the stamina of a prize-fighter.

CHAPTER XVII

TROUT FISHING IN NEW ZEALAND

THE trout fishing in New Zealand is rightly famous, even although the trout no longer have the abnormal weight which they gained following their introduction into its æon-old fishless rivers.

Although at one time trout of thirty pounds in weight were not unknown, these wonderful days were past when I reached the Dominion, although trout of exceptional size were, and still are, to be had.

One day I heard from a friend, John Mackenzie, a member of a highly-respected family of Station-owners on Lake Wakatipu, that a musterer when visiting a distant part of their large sheep-station, had discovered some monster trout in a desolate lake named Mavora. This had resulted in two of the brothers visiting it, with the consequence that I was presently told that they had accounted for some seventy trout averaging over twenty pounds.

Although I knew my informant was above suspicion, one is always somewhat chary in accepting any fishing story above the average, I therefore wrote to a brother staff-officer, and a keen fisherman, Major H. A. Cooper, then Staff Officer of the Otago district and expressed my doubts. Quite the last man to support any exaggeration, his reply was to the effect that by a fortunate chance he happened to be travelling down Lake Wakatipu when these fishermen returned, and was therefore in a position to corroborate the story, for he had both seen and weighed some of the fish, and found that some ran up to thirty-three pounds!

Unfortunately, military duty prevented acceptance of their invitation to try this lake; and it was not until some months later that this became possible when, accompanied by Captain Percy Elworthy, a fine fisherman, we reached this sheep-station after long travel. Next day, accompanied by John Mackenzie, we rode almost fifty miles through rugged mountain scenery and reached Mavora towards evening. Major Peter Mackenzie had meanwhile and most sportingly—for it must have proved a tough job, especially as he had been badly "gassed" in the Great War—driven a sledge pulled by a team of horses and carrying a boat; in no other part of the world will one find greater hospitality and kindness than that shown by New Zealanders.

The first sight of the lake was largely to destroy the hopes which we had by this time built up, for the edge of its lapping water was dotted with the decapitated heads of enormous trout, while the ground about was strewn with the wrappings of dynamite cartridges, showing that our visit had been forestalled by those who, whatever else they were (and I could supply a suitable term, even if it would require asbestos paper for its printing), were certainly not sportsmen! Dry fern formed our mattress and the four of us adopted the sensible New Zealand practice of sharing the

blankets as well as a tent, so that in spite of having to travel light with but one apiece, we got the benefit of four blankets each, for the nights were cold.

During the ensuing two days and although we fished our hardest and tried our every lure, it was all to no purpose, until it seemed that the poaching had been on such an extended scale that it was useless to remain. The second night, and with a view to clearing up this puzzling situation, we fixed an acetylene lamp in the bow of our boat; this illuminated a circular patch of water to a considerable depth and equipped with this piscatorial aid we rowed about the lake, the first disclosure being huge eels of conger-like appearance, upon which the dynamite appeared to have had no effect. Not until then had I realized the easy task of a night poacher, as when into this circle of light slid these monstrous eels and an occasional trout; none of the latter, however, approached the size of those whose severed heads we had seen, probably accounted for by the swimming bladder of the larger fish being more easily ruptured.

Apparently the dark water outside the radius of light resembled a wall, for once within it both fish and eel revolved as if in a glass bowl and afforded in consequence the easiest of spearing. It was a task which proved so congenial to our bowman that we others standing in the darkness were compelled to suffer a succession of squirming and slippery horrors, as they were impaled and thrown over his shoulder at our feet. Here the eels, some as thick as a man's arm and fully four feet in length, slithered and snapped, in most unpleasant fashion.

Although spearing can make no appeal to a sportsman, this test revealed the existence of trout even if the larger specimens had succumbed to the sorry treatment meted out to them, and so we decided to remain. Yet, for all that we caught the following day, the lake might have been empty.

During the somewhat glum evening's repast which followed, we had decided to swallow our disappointment and start our return travel on the morrow, when something prompted me to try the water in darkness and, without mentioning my intention, I rowed across to where the river junctioned with the lower lake, and tying up the boat, started to fish from its bank. No sooner had my spoon touched its swirling surface than it was taken, when came a run like that of a fresh Spring salmon. The stout fight which followed was made difficult by the darkness and realizing that the problem would be how to bring it to the bank within gaffing distance, I played it hard until an enormous troat was floating on the surface and coming within reach—a fish fully twenty pounds in weight. Unfortunately the bank was high and the gloom of the night made it impossible to see the point of my gaff, with the result that I tore the spoon out of its mouth, and had the mortification of seeing the largest trout I was ever destined to get into, floating slowly away on the current and out of reach.

The exasperation which followed was considerably strengthened by the knowledge that—fishermen's tales being proverbial—were I to return without proof of success, my companions would have difficulty in accepting my story, to put it mildly—more particularly as I had left them in no merry mood. So putting on a silver minnow and after wrapping some paper round

the point of my gaff—which was to prove a useful tip in both senses of the word—I started to fish again, getting into a fish at the third cast which, after a spirited fight, came safely to bank and which subsequently weighed in at twelve and a half pounds.

Nor was this to be the only reward of totally undeserved piscatorial prowess, for it had been merely a matter of hurling one's minnow in! Success now pursued my efforts so well that my catch was presently joined by two others averaging nine and a half pounds, after which the trout went off their feed with instant suddenness. And right glad was I to be in possession of such substantial proof when, on returning to our tent and leaving the trout outside, I recounted my experience to depressed companions, who accepted it in the light of ill-timed humour. However, when I produced the confirmatory evidence, gloom gave way to optimistic hope so fully that it was decided to remain for a further day, the limit allowed by both military leave and rations.

High mountain sheep-farmers spend much of their lives in the wilds or temporarily marooned in shepherds' huts high above, with the result that they are often inimitable as raconteurs, possessing that gift for remembrance of details which loneliness and contact with but few engenders.

Thus our dreary waits had been made tolerable by stories worth the telling.

Of how old "Chief" Mackenzie and one of his sons, caught in a blizzard on a mountain by night, had taken shelter under the lee of a mighty boulder. With the rain pelting down and in pitch darkness, the son felt his way round in a search for better cover and happened upon a hole choked with undergrowth which he removed. This done he lowered himself through and displaying a greater nerve than most of us possess, let go! Fortunately the drop was not great and striking a match he had the astounding experience of finding himself confronted by three Moa skeletons; wingless birds which once stood up to seventeen feet in height and long since extinct. Later investigations showed that they had, centuries before, become entombed in their cave by a fall of rock from the cliff above. I visited the cave later.

I like to tell this story of a true experience, not only because of its interest but also because, if considered by some a somewhat rash system of conducting exploration in darkness, it was an act typical of the New Zealander and Australian, to whom fear appears as a rule unknown, so that the spirit of "give-it-a-go" overrules undue caution; that same splendid spirit which, in both the Great and Second World Wars contributed incalculably towards victory on many a battlefield.

There was the story, too, of an old veteran said to have participated in the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, named "Archie", a quaint and thirsty character, whose desire for alcohol, limited only by an attenuated purse, was equalled by his ingenuity in obtaining it without payment. Well-known to every publican in the neighbourhood, on one occasion he arrived at an inn carrying a large earthenware jar, which he ordered the barman to fill with whisky. Knowing his man, the latter asked him to produce the necessary withal to pay for it, but "Archie" had come prepared for this

and from his pocket brought a five pound note. Faced with proof of such financial stability, the barman filled the jar, but, keeping a tight hold upon it, asked for three pounds ten shillings as the cost of its contents. This was apparently "Archie's" cue to do his stuff and, waxing lyrical, he consigned the barkeeper to a hotter climate than New Zealand offers, before he would consent to part with that sum. "Very well then," said the latter, "I shall pour it back into the cask," which he proceeded to do, whereupon an apparently discomfited "Archie" left the inn with his jar. Once outside, however, he broke the jar with a stone, disclosing a large sponge, the contents of which he squeezed into an empty bottle and then proceeded on his way rejoicing with the best part of it full.

There was another story, too, of a motor-car breaking down in a remote part of Otago when its lady passengers were compelled to seek shelter in an inn, which happened to be overcrowded by an assembly of musterers. The landlord, however, rose to the occasion with true Sir Walter Raleigh grace, assuring them that, despite appearances to the contrary, each should have a separate bedroom for the night. True to his word this knightly man placed a kettle containing neat whisky on his stove and, when hot, invited the musterers down to "Have one on the House", an invitation which, needless to say, was most cordially received. Giving each a substantial tot of whisky this kindly host added "water" from the kettle, until presently the musterers "passed out", when they were neatly stacked together in a downstairs room, leaving this Galahad to conduct the ladies to the vacant bedrooms above.

Then there was the story told me by the sheep-farmer himself, who was visited by seven convivial friends, of whom he tired when their power of consumption threatened to reduce the contents of his cellar unduly. To solve this problem, he went into another room and there filled a large water jug with gin and, bringing this back together with two bottles of this liquor itself, said, "Drink it up, boys, for it's all I have left." Nothing loth, although already well primed, they fell to with alcoholic zeal, taking good measures from the bottle but, finding it too strong for their liking, "diluting" it with the supposed "water" from the jug; not unnaturally all were soon dead to the world, and the alcoholic situation had been solved.

Not the least part of the joy of hunting are the contacts which it brings and the opportunities which it affords to hear such true stories of quaint happenings, and I only wish that I could remember a quarter of those I have been told.

To revert to my story, the following day saw our hopes again dashed to the ground until—certain by now that we were dealing with nocturnal feeders, and unwilling to face again the strained atmosphere of that tent, I suggested that we should try the river after sunset, a proposal accepted rather in the spirit of searching for a needle in a haystack. My companions, too, insisted upon starting operations long before sundown, and I watched them try their every lure, reclined at my ease, smoking my pipe with that lazy rapture which is the reward of those who watch others work.

Their manifold efforts met with no success, until they, too, saw the

hopelessness of the situation and sat on the opposite bank, looking like early Christian martyrs awaiting their turn to be fed to ravenous lion.

Directly the sun dipped below the horizon, I made my first cast and was instantly fast into a fish which, after putting up a spirited fight, was brought safely to bank and proved to be an eleven and a half pound trout. This jolted my companions into action, with similar success, and for the next twenty minutes the fun waxed fast and furious. Then, as suddenly as they had started to feed, came an end, and once again Lake Mavora might not have held a fish in all its scenic beauty, but not before we had accounted for fourteen trout averaging over eight pounds, the largest being fourteen and a half pounds. We had discovered the secret too late, alas! for we had to leave early the next morning, doing almost fifty miles on horseback during an exceptionally hot day, to be followed by the crossing of majestic Lake Wakatipu and a motor journey of over three hundred miles.

But this was not to be the last of our experiences, for during our homeward travel Elworthy and I came across a grass fire which was being blown towards a wood and we did our best to extinguish the flames with branches. It had been an abnormally hot season, however, in this lower country, with the result that both grass and timber were in such tinder-like condition that sparks were blown over our heads until we presently found ourselves within a wood, the trees of which burst into flame with amazing and indescribable rapidity until we found ourselves in an inferno of heat, smoke, and noise. Actually our position was rather precarious, for by this time we were within a ring of flames and it had become next to impossible to determine the direction, and it was only by covering our heads with our coats and taking a chance that we reached safety. Nor had we done so any too soon for the fire had gained such a hold, owing to the drifting sparks setting alight trees far beyond, that the whole wood became involved in a matter of minutes.

Since then it has been my lot to participate in bush-fires in Australia, on a scale involving thousands of acres and lasting for many days on end, but never until my New Zealand experience had I realized how quickly such small beginnings can develop into serious disaster, or the rapidity with which they spread and travel in a wind, a lesson which those who visit "Down Under" will do well to bear in mind.

It was not until our return from Lake Mavora that we heard the full story of what had happened following the discovery of its monster trout. It then came out that, unfortunately, an account of this had appeared in a newspaper; one which had captured, if not the sporting instinct, at least the business imagination of enterprising men. With praiseworthy effort worthy of a better cause they had surmounted immense difficulties in clearing a track through mountainous country and cutting their way through bush for over forty miles, until they had completed a track just sufficiently wide to take a motor-car. That done, they had systematically dynamited the lake, smoking the resultant great trout as if they were haddock for commercial profit; not only an unsporting and selfish proceeding, but a course of conduct which was detrimental to the best fishing interests of the Dominion,

at a time when the enormous trout for which it had once been famous had practically gone.

But for this act of vandalism for the sake of filthy lucre, and if strict control had been used, the reputation throughout the fishing world of Lake Mavora might have held good for long years to come; New Zealand's record for monster trout might never have been challenged.

The greater one's experience, the more one learns to appreciate the value of preservation; a policy of free sport for all ends very rapidly in there being no sport at all owing to the extinction of the game concerned.

At least we had been afforded one consolation for our failure to find the big trout, namely that there would have always been the risk of our veracity being later questioned, for thirty-three pound trout must take a deal of swallowing!

There is no mystery in the enormous size attained by trout when first introduced into New Zealand's fishless rivers, for it is explained by the abnormal supply of natural feed therein; as the trout multiplied, this gradually became reduced, with the result that the trout, too, dwindled in size. What was surprising, however, was how these trout had found their way up to Lake Mavora, through a hundred miles or more of mountainous country, with its many waterfalls and rapids until they reached this isolated lake, which, until our visit, had been seen by few.

CHAPTER XVIII

UNEXPLORED NEW ZEALAND AND A FINE "ROYAL"

DURING the fishing expedition to Lake Mavora, I had heard of Red Deer having been seen in the mountainous country which heads Lake Wakatipu and later I accepted an invitation from the Mackenzies to visit that picturesque part of New Zealand and to try my luck there; unfortunately, being tied to time as my military appointment had ended and I was due to return to England.

When I did arrive, it was to find that my kindly hosts had anticipated this and made elaborate plans to facilitate my progress, including relays of horses and the use of a motor-boat so that much could be compressed into a comparatively short visit.

First came travel by boat, followed by a long ride over mountain country of a character that even our sure-footed horses were sometimes in such difficulty that one somersaulted down a steep slope and was only saved by a projecting tree. Next, and when on what was little better than a goat track across the face of a steep shingle slide it broke away and my horse just saved itself by a mighty leap, which while taking us into safety, brought my head into contact with an overhanging branch all but knocking me out. I retained just sufficient consciousness to embrace its neck and to cling on, else I must have fallen some hundreds of feet. As it was, to use a New Zealand colloquialism, I felt "crook" for some time afterwards.

Having camped for the night, the travel next day proved equally severe, including the crossing of many mountain streams whose water was of icy coldness and amazingly deceptive owing to their crystal-clearness.

Late that night we attained our goal, which was close to unexplored country, the latter consisting of mountains, lakes, dense bush and formidable rivers, of such a nature and with so abnormal a rainfall that much of it will for ever remain unknown.

Is it stretching imagination too far to think that possibly within that *terra incognita*, protected by the mighty barriers of Nature, still remain New Zealand wingless birds which have long been extinct elsewhere; that even the Moa may still be found in its gloomy depths, seeing that the giant fern root which according to Maori legend once formed its staple diet is to be found there in plenty? However fantastic such a possibility may seem, one has to remember that the existence of the Okapi was regarded as mythical for over a century after the white man first settled in Africa, and yet was not only found to exist, but one was captured for the London Zoo.

From a stalking point of view, our journey proved disappointing, for the valley we were in disclosed but one stag; a "solitary" which was so decrepit that I killed it through sheer pity. Although its head had gone

A proud moment! The author's first tiger, 1907.

A unique moment; the last tiger thirty years later, 1937.

The Author on 'Suraj' (The Sun) from whose back he killed tiger at each end of thirty years.

back with extreme age, it was still exceptionally massive and carried sixteen points.

New Zealand, that great and compassionate Doctor, with the lowest death rate in the world, had treated me well, for I had reached there from France so shattered in health that my life had been despaired of, and was now, after five years' stay, fit enough to undertake high mountain climbing. Being so close to unexplored country, this very absence of sport offered a wonderful chance to explore a part of it and John Mackenzie and I rode to the head of the valley and, leaving our horses to fend for themselves, for there was ample feed and water, we humped our "swag", which means carried essentials, and plunged into the unknown.

It proved a long hard climb which offered at intervals vistas of rugged grandeur of snow-topped mountains and beautiful valleys filled with majestic tree-fern of wild country never trodden by the foot of man. As we gained height came magnificent trees festooned with lichen and other parasitic growth, while the ground was carpeted with a sponge-like moss, which afforded proof of a prodigious rainfall. Here we camped and went through what almost amounts to a ritual in New Zealand; namely, the "Boiling of the Billy", or the preparation of that tea which is regarded by those "Down-under" with the feelings which must have been those of the Israelites at the sight of Manna in the Wilderness.

When next we continued I was climbing behind my companion, when I caught a glimpse of a pleasant valley through the bush to my right and, expressing my intention of photographing its virgin beauty, turned aside to do so, failing to notice until after I had obtained my pictures that Mackenzie, upon whose guidance I was dependent, was not with me and had probably gone on. This came as more than a surprise, seeing that only shortly before, three experienced New Zealand hunters had become lost in Bush of a similar character, two never to be found again, and the third to die from the effects of his privations following his rescue. An equally distressing case had been that of a girl who had separated from a party on its way to Milford Sound and had become lost for ever. This knowledge was made the more perturbing in that investigation revealed that the spongy moss had left no trace of either the direction from which we had come, nor that taken by my missing companion. As always in such circumstances, the realization that I was lost was immediately followed by an almost irresistible urge to go somewhere, anywhere, on the off-chance of finding safety, and I remain confident that, had I succumbed to such mischievous prompting, I should have become irretrievably lost.

There can, indeed, be little doubt but that those who have lost their lives in the New Zealand Bush, and alas! they are many, have responded to such false urging. Neither is this strange, seeing that even although similar experience in the past had taught me that one should stay put, it yet required every ounce of determination to do so. To lose oneself is bad enough; to lose one's head in such circumstances fatal.

Even in the most anxious moments of life, a touch of Nature brings solace, and so it was now to be, for by some miracle of chance, seeing that I had scarcely ever done such a thing before, I was carrying a whistle, and

after cooee-ing until almost sick without result, this I blew at intervals. The response was astonishing for within a few minutes, its shrill sound had attracted myriads of tiny native birds, so tame and inquisitive, owing to their ignorance of man, that they swarmed in the bush about me and within inches—some actually perching upon my stick—not only displaying no fear but twittering with excitement each time that I blew.

Some hours passed in this fashion before I heard the welcome sound of an answering "coo-ee" from the far distance and was eventually rejoined by Mackenzie, whose bump of locality, developed by the long years of high-climbing experience was wonderful.

It then transpired that, not having heard me express my intention of taking a photograph he had continued on, thinking that I was still behind him, for steep climbing curbs all desire for chatty conversation, with the result that when he discovered my absence, the deep and springy moss had so concealed his footsteps, that it was impossible to trace even the way he had come; indeed, but for my whistle, we might well never have joined company again.

By this time we had had enough of unexplored country, so leaving behind the weird beauty of its heights we made our lone way down and rode back to the camp.

As no sign of deer had been seen during our absence, we now decided to shift camp and left next day on another long and difficult ride, which eventually brought us to a snow-topped mountain in whose glacial basin deer had been seen. Unfortunately, by now only one clear day remained for hunting before I had to begin the return journey to Wellington in order to catch my ship for England. Judge my disappointment, therefore, when dawn next morning found the entire mountain blanketed by dense cloud to ground level, forming an impenetrable curtain on a windless day.

Under ordinary circumstances, this would have entailed an enforced stay in camp and much-needed "shut-eye" or "stretch off the land", but as it was my only chance, I determined to make an attempt on the mountain, although my companions tried to dissuade me from what they considered to be a hopeless, if not hazardous, quest. My faithful friend, however, proved willing to accompany me, and together we plunged into the dense mist and began a climb which first took us through immensely high and wet fern which soaked us to the skin—ill-preparation for the icy heights which awaited us above.

From then on it proved weird climbing, seeing that we were unable to see more than a few feet ahead, but we persevered in the hope that a wind would presently rise and disperse the mist. There was still no sign of such a happening by the time we had left the bush line far behind and were toiling up a steep and rocky mountainside in bitter, clammy cold. Presently we were brought to a stop by a sheer cliff face, which proved unclimbable in the several parts we tried, and in trying to find a way round, came to what appeared at first a precipice.

Just as it seemed that we must abandon the attempt, we found a narrow ledge, less than a foot in width, which, although our field of vision was exceedingly limited, somehow gave the impression of continuing across

the cliff face. Although offering a precarious foothold and a venture such as at ordinary times we would not have attempted, and probably a decision due to our processes of thought being benumbed with cold, we now cast all caution aside, and with rifle slung across my shoulder, and on hands and knees, we launched ourselves upon it. It proved an even more difficult progress than we had anticipated, for not only did the ledge consist of friable rock, but it narrowed in places and was at times coated with ice.

Although the right to change our minds was denied us owing to its being too narrow to turn round upon, a certain compensation was offered by our being unable to see into the yawning abyss we knew must be below, for rocks we dislodged took an unconscionable time before the sound of their arrival boomed up—one which afforded a far from cheering stimulus to effort. Calamity must indeed have been our portion had the ledge come to an end, which might well have proved the case for once it narrowed to some five inches, but fortunately it continued until, soaked and panting with our exertions, we reached the far side and, presently, gained what was obviously the glacial basin.

Here we rested for a while, during which we could hear the sound of deer close by, and until a freezing temperature, combined with an inability to see even a few yards ahead, made it seem foolish to continue such a hopeless effort. We were about to commence the descent when—as if Dame Fortune had waited for this exact moment—a puff of wind lifted the mist like some theatre curtain and disclosed several hinds within fifty yards, and a stag carrying a magnificent head, standing on a crest just beyond. Before I could fire, the wind dropped and the mist descended again, but taking advantage of its cover we went forward and fortunately so; for we had scarcely gained the crest upon which we had seen the stag standing when the wind lifted the cloud again and showed that in the interim he had crossed a glacial slide and was now majestically facing us upon its opposite bank. There was just time to fire and see him fall dead and go somersaulting down that icy channel strewn with great boulders, when the mist came down again and put a closure to a scene which conveyed the impression that we should find his splendid antlers smashed to splinters.

To cross the glacial slide proved no mean feat, although we were spurred on to a greater effort by rocks which, released from the glacier above, kept whizzing past like unexploded A.A. shell. This accomplished, we began to climb down, our worst fears being confirmed by first finding a large broken brow tine. When some two hundred feet farther down, yet once again the wind came to our aid—curiously enough, for the last time that day—and as the mist lifted, I heard my companion exclaim in tones of deep awe: "It's got a head like the roots of a tree", and I saw the stag lying dead with its magnificent head intact, with the exception of the point we had found.

Fortune had, indeed, favoured me, for I would estimate the chances of success under such conditions as being less than one in a thousand, for not only had I been lucky to shoot a stag in all such conditions but it proved a magnificent "royal"; an immensely heavy head with points both long and

symmetrical. The measurement of its antlers were: Length on outside curve, 38 inches; circumference between bez and trez, 7½ inches; tip to tip, 25 inches; widest inside, 34 inches; spread, 37 inches; points, 6 by 6. The reaction after all our exertions now set in which, combined with bitter cold, made the task of removing the head so unpleasant that we were thankful when the time came to descend, the fog continuing until we reached camp.

Altogether it had proved an amazing stalk, for although we had by this time spent some eight hours on the mountain, we had seen practically nothing of it.

By next morning the mist had gone, and we climbed a neighbouring hill in order to examine through our field-glasses our climb of the day before; to realize the fortune which had attended our crossing the precipitous cliff face; for we now saw it to be one which we should never have attempted under ordinary circumstances.

We were making our way back to camp when a fine stag galloped across the narrow valley we were in—which I missed badly.

There was an amusing sequel, for the echo of my shot had scarce died away when there came a shrill cry of "Kee-a, Kee-a", and a flight of darkish-green birds, perhaps twenty in all, came circling about us, repeating their discordant cry as they proceeded to settle on the rocks close by, some within six feet. Curiously enough, although I had served for five years in New Zealand and was now on the point of departure, this was my first experience of the Kea, a native bird which has established such an unpleasant reputation for killing sheep that a Government reward was offered for their destruction. Settling upon a sheep's back they peck through to and expose the kidney, the fat of which is then eaten, leaving its wretched victim to an agonizing death; neither does it confine its efforts to one, for sometimes a Kea will perform this horrid operation upon several sheep during a night.

As this bird is indigenous to a New Zealand which has known sheep for less than a hundred years, it is probably a correct assumption that this awful habit owed its origin to the practice of hanging sheep skins to dry upon fences, the Kea discovering that the fat near the kidney was most to its taste. However right this theory may be, they proved amusing birds to watch as they stood about us and chattered to one another, as if in criticism, while their parrot-like heads twisted this way and that as if to miss nothing of the novelty.

They were, indeed, so devoid of fear that when my companion threw a stone, which just missed, the Kea concerned disregarded this inhospitable reception as if accepting it as a mistake, until knocked over by the next, following which it resumed its position upon the rock, wearing an amusing expression of indignant surprise. Like most New Zealand native birds, which had for centuries nothing to fear from man, the Kea, too, has inherited greater curiosity than caution.

As time was getting on, and they refused to take no other hint, I fired a shot over their heads, which sent them off, although they followed us for some distance, loudly expressing their delight at our meeting.

On returning to Wellington, I showed the stag's head to Admiral-of-the-Fleet Viscount Jellicoe, then Governor-General of New Zealand, whom I had had the honour to serve as Officer in charge of its General Staff and D.M.T., and who was so impressed by its size, that later he visited the same part and shot two better heads than mine.

It should be added that the Red Deer in New Zealand ultimately developed in numbers to such degree as to threaten the welfare of sheep and other farmers, until it became necessary for its Government to employ teams of professional hunters for their wholesale destruction. This not only shows that the toll which had been levied by ordinary stalking had been insufficient, but that wild animal life in general stands to suffer more in the long run than it ever does by controlled hunting, if permitted to exceed the bounds of reasonable increase.

CHAPTER XIX

BIG GAME FISHING IN NEW ZEALAND

FIFTEEN eventful years were to elapse before I was destined to visit New Zealand again; years during which I had been in many other parts of the world—Australia, Canada, the U.S.A., India, Burma, Africa, Malaya, China, Manchuria, Korea, and Japan—received great kindness and seen many beautiful places, but had never found a more delightful country or hospitable a people. I was to return to it this time in my capacity as Chief Commissioner of the St. John Ambulance Brigade Overseas.

For some extraordinary reason, having ever been a keen sea fisherman, the one sport which I had neglected during my previous five years' residence there had been its big game fishing, to which my attention was now drawn by meeting an old friend, Major E. Temple Perkins, a famous African big game hunter and a Provincial Commissioner in Uganda, of whom more anon.

His tales of sword-fishing proved so intriguing that I arranged to break my travel and to join him at Tauranga in order to engage with him in this thrilling sport. Before, however, I could join company, an arduous programme of official duty had to be fulfilled, one which was to take me over much of the Dominion, and was so over-strenuous that when I reached Tauranga I went down with a high temperature which sent me into hospital. Ignorant of the severity of my condition and with an extensive Australian tour before me, I cabled each of its six States to lift my itinerary by a fortnight; which meant that great trouble and further cancellation of arrangements and passages would result, were I not to reach there at the time indicated by the alteration.

Judge, therefore, my dismay when later I was told I had pneumonia, with the consequence that I found myself still abed on the tenth day. This meant that four days only remained before I would be expected to complete the remaining part of my New Zealand official programme before final departure.

Being a Cornishman, however, the natural zest for the sea and its healing qualities convinced me that however drastic such a premature convalescent treatment might seem, I must attempt the sword-fishing expedition, however greatly against the doctor's advice.

Meanwhile, T. P. had engaged a motor-boat and a crew of two and with but forty-eight hours in hand, I tottered from my hospital bed and embarked, so weak that I kept falling over at the motion of the boat! We made for Mayor Island—which stands some thirty miles off Tauranga—and *en route* trolled for *kahawai*, for use as bait. Our boat had its engine amidship and a tiny cabin aft, abaft of which was an open hatch with a swivel chair for the fisherman. From either side of the stern a pole projected, carrying a short length of line to which were attached floats or so-called "teasers", the

purpose of which was to attract sword-fish to the bait being trolled between. I remain uncertain whether these served any useful purpose.

Eventually we reached likely sword-fishing ground, when we reduced to quarter speed and with a dead *kahawai* hooked on and using a stout rod carrying a reel of three hundred yards of powerful line I commenced operations.

The first impression was that I had never engaged in any sport which offered such luxurious comfort, for not only was I comfortably seated in the pivoted chair, but the weight of the heavy rod and drag of the bait were largely taken by a leather guy attached to the chair.

Moving through a smooth sea on a perfect New Zealand day—and where could one find better?—helped the belief that at last I had discovered the perfect recreation for men of riper years, as I gazed at the bait scudding along in the wake of the boat some thirty yards astern. It proved a short-lived impression, for soon I heard a warning shout and saw long, curving, shark-like fins projecting from the surface and rapidly overhauling the bait. Then followed a tense moment as they spiralled round it, after which there came a swirl of water as they disappeared. The temptation was to strike at once, but I had been warned to allow the sword-fish ample time to swallow the bait before striking. I therefore let the line run free and waited, with what patience I could summon. It was fortunate that I had been so well instructed, for a sword-fish is apt to seize the bait lengthways, leaving the hook outside its mouth until it turns the bait before swallowing it.

Meanwhile, directly the bait had been taken the engine had been stopped and the way on the boat was diminishing quickly while there was no tangible evidence that I had anything on my line.

I need have had no qualms; a few seconds later and the time came to strike, when it was instantly followed by a pluck which not only made the rod bend almost double but which, in my weak, convalescing condition, would have certainly dragged me overboard but for being virtually strapped in.

Next followed a run of truly astounding length, during the course of which the sword-fish leapt and twisted high out of the water. At the onset the scream of the reel and the thought of what I was into proved thrilling, but when some two hundred yards of line had run off the immense reel and the pace still continued, although trying my hardest in my debilitated strength to check it with both metal brake and a leather check, I realized the danger and tried to hold it. I might just as well have tried to stop an elephant, until, with horrified eyes, I had the mortification of seeing the last of the line run out taking overboard with it the expensive gear it was carrying.

It now became Temple Perkins' turn, to result in a hard fight with a sword-fish of some three hundred and forty pounds, and a magnificent display of strength and skill on both sides, the first six runs each taking out almost all the line and the situation only being saved by a tug-of-war in which my friend's physical endurance proved far greater than mine.

At the end of each run the sword-fish had to be "pumped" in—no slight effort when over two hundred yards of line is out—until brought to

the boat so close that one could see its gleaming body beneath the surface, and it seemed that the end was in sight. But on each occasion, and still beyond gaffing distance, it would recover and again display an astounding vitality, when would follow another long run, with a line running fiercely enough to cut through a finger should it be incautiously placed upon it.

As proved to be the case with all the sword-fish we got into, it gave periodically an astounding performance, one so almost unbelievable that I would not venture to record it were it not familiar to all big game fishermen and a characteristic of its kind. For suddenly one would see most of the sword-fish's length rise vertically above the surface and vigorously shake its head in an attempt to rid itself of the hook while pirouetting along in this amazing attitude for several seconds, an arresting sight of monstrous strength even if somewhat uncanny to see such a heavy body poised upon so little, for it could only have been possible by enormously powerful tail action. It was a performance made the more puzzling in that while the line could be seen running out in one direction, the fish usually showed in quite another, a fact accounted for by the action of strong current acting upon a long line.

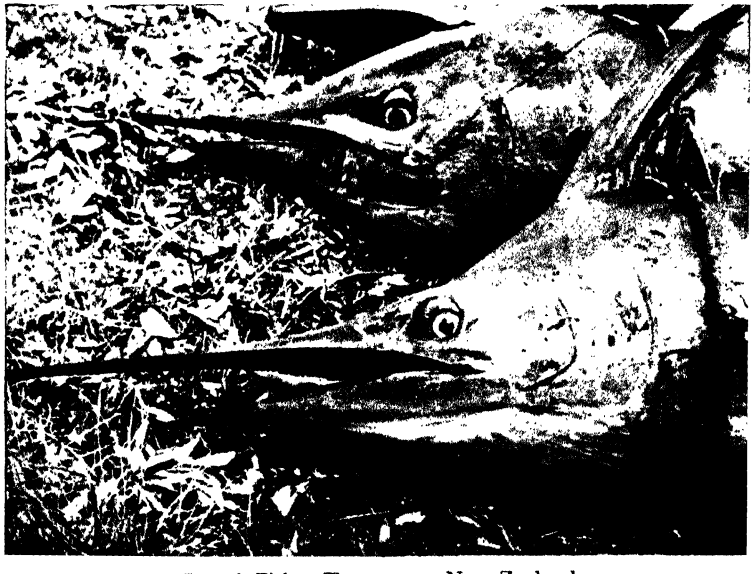
Again it had become my turn, and once more I watched the approach of those shark-like fins and found myself into a sword-fish which sought to emulate the determination of the first to dissolve partnership with all possible despatch. This time, however, I had learned a lesson and hung on as if I had lassoed a bull.

Eight separate runs in all followed without the sword-fish showing sign of tiring, while twice it passed beneath the boat during which we frenziedly did our best to prevent the line fouling. Although cases have been known in which they have driven their swords through a boat these have probably been accidental.

By this time I was so exhausted that T. P. became impatient and reinforced my efforts with such vigour that presently the stout rod snapped in half when there was a long length of line already out and the sword-fish striving to take out the rest. From then on the proceedings were more in the nature of a music-hall farce than fishing; I holding grimly on to the butt and reeling in while T. P. and the crew man-handled the strong but thin line with painful effort, a combination which while saving the situation did not give me the satisfaction of catching a sword-fish unaided.

By this time I had had as much as I could endure so we anchored in an open bay of Mayor's Island and after dinner we turned in for the night in our small cabin. The sea had been calm and pleasant until now, but the awakening was vastly different, for about two in the morning I woke to find the boat pitching violently and the wind shrieking through her shrouds, with our Maori skipper excitedly announcing the approach of a "Southerly" and that we must be landed without delay, in order that he could then seek shelter in the lee of the island. This because a gale from this quarter can last for several days and our food supplies were all but exhausted.

Bemused with my exertions and still much of a convalescent, what followed was so hectic that all I can remember is finding Temple Perkins and myself cramped into a tiny dory and violently tossed about until



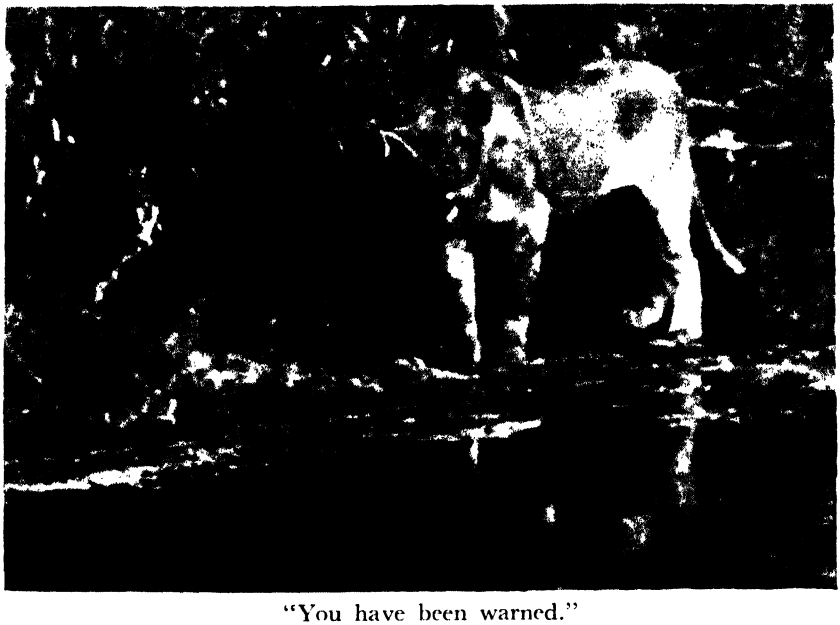
Sword Fish. Tauranga. New Zealand.

The author photographing at close quarters.

What he was taking.

"She placed her trunk about it and pressed it firmly to her."

The lion family at dinner, or a pleasant family party.



"You have been warned."

Framed in a background of mighty Ngorongoro; as if trained by a Guards' Sergeant-Major and taught deportment by a Court Chaperone.

deposited on a steep pebble beach of what we thought to be an uninhabited island. This done the dory was frantically rowed back to the motor-boat by her skipper, when followed the sound of its anchor being hoisted and its motor started and we watched its masthead light disappear round the headland. With something of the sensations which must have been those of Robinson Crusoe it was then that a kindly providence took a hand, for it was not very dark and as I stood shivering and coughing on the beach we saw dimly outlined against the sky on the high ground above and surrounded by trees, the semblance of a hut, at first impression a vision of wishful thought. Climbing up, however, it was to find that it was a hut! Repeated knocking brought out a man who, in the fitful moonlight and lightly clad, I thought to be a Maori. I was explaining the situation when to my astonishment he sprang smartly to attention and gave a perfect salute. "Who on earth are you?" I asked, to which came the astounding reply: "I was your sergeant-major in the Great War, sir"; and so it proved to be!

This was the strangest coincidence of my life, if not unique, but it meant more to me than that, for I was by this time almost all in, and a cold night without shelter or adequate clothing might well have brought about a relapse. For the solicitude of my former comrade proved so great that I was in his well-warmed bed in a matter of minutes and fortified with a pannikin of tea, laced with a generous measure of whisky, woke next morning feeling almost myself again.

It then transpired that this good samaritan—when seriously wounded through the lungs—had been ordered an open-air life in a warm climate. In order to obtain this and also make two ends meet, he had wisely adopted this mode of living and was by now a bronzed and healthy man.

Our luck was to hold still further, for the "Southerly" had proved abortive, with the result that our boat returned and we had experience with three more sword-fish next day before returning to Tauranga.

There I was to find my "bear leaders" had arrived from Auckland and I was again "on the chain" of an official tour which was to last two further months in New Zealand and Australia, and although its earlier stages proved an uphill struggle, my premonition that the sea alone could make a continuance possible proved correct, for I completed it without further mishap. But oh! the agony of addressing a Mayoral assembly soon after my return to Tauranga, with a frail physique and a mind still full of wondrous and exciting sport, tempered as it was by the memory of God's mercy in what might well have proved evil circumstance.

CHAPTER XX

THE DAWN OF PITY

LATER followed a visit to a part of Africa which, for reasons which will be clear, I would prefer not to mention. Being but of short duration and feeling no longer an urge to kill, my companion and I decided to dispense with the rifle and to try our hands at big game photography instead. While successful with kudu, sable antelope, eland, roan, hartebeest, water buck, giraffe, and zebra, we failed to come across the most desired of all subjects, lion and elephant. In the case of the latter, this was surprising, for we had met with ample evidence of their presence, including a favourite haunt containing deep pits dug by their tusks in search of water, from the bottom of which narrow tunnels led down, showing how their adaptable trunks acted as living hosepipes.

Here I found part of a tusk splintered off in a fight, showing that quarrels are not confined to the human specie and that everything is not always lovely in the wild garden of Nature, as some seem to suppose. The eye of an agriculturist would have glistened, too, at the wealth of natural fertilizer littered over a large area, and which evidenced that it had formed the camping ground of a considerable herd. Yet, search as we did, all that we saw of elephant was a brief vision of a huge and gaunt tusker as he strode across an open glade, as if intent upon keeping a date, although far from romantic in appearance.

Giraffe, however, always a big game photographer's standby, did their best to compensate, while filled with insatiable curiosity, they proved easy subjects. They can be somewhat stupid, as was shown by one which we met within twenty yards and which, instead of running away thrust its head into the branches of a tree in a ludicrous attempt at concealment with its body completely exposed. After some minutes of this ridiculous attitude and singularly reminiscent of a pre-war pacifist, it must have dawned upon it that all was not well, when it ambled into the open and, inquisitiveness overcoming fear, watched me as I got closer, while four others beyond proved equally as intent, all of which I succeeded in filming before they see-sawed away.

On another occasion we met with some ostrich, including a mother with chicks of about a fortnight old, and which afforded an illustration of their comic habit of hiding: one, until then, which I had not credited. For when we ran after them on foot the mother left her offspring far behind until, finding that we were catching up, two little chicks plunged their heads into the sand and remained in this absurd attitude until picked up. Then they lay passively inert, as if resigned to their fate, while a close-up photo was taken, when they were set free to rejoin a distracted parent which had by now returned and was fussing about in the background like some gargantuan hen.

It was towards the end of our stay that our luck changed, when we reached an extensive and desert-like plain towards evening and saw a large herd of elephant trickling out of the bush over a mile away, their enormous grey shapes at that distance and their method of formation reminding one of a fleet of battleships. For some obscure purpose of Nature, elephant suffer from extremely poor sight, and knowing this and the wind being favourable, we walked across the open towards them. We had covered almost half the distance when, from a depression not thirty yards ahead, suddenly emerged a female elephant followed by a diminutive calf. Fortunately her back was towards us and she was intent upon joining the herd, else the situation might have been serious, for there was no cover and, as lion will attack young elephant, and being handicapped by their limited myopic vision, elephant mothers are in consequence apt to attack anything which appears suspicious.

All proved well, however, and we followed at a discreet distance, much as infantry in the late war followed the tanks, except that we were unarmed. One of the chief charms of big game hunting are the unanticipated and compulsory alterations which occur between the planning and completion of a stalk; changes which can be surprising and sometimes as alarming as they are kaleidoscopic. It was so in this instance when, just as it seemed that all was set for success, and we were being personally conducted to the herd we wished to photograph, "Mother" for some unknown reason swung abruptly about and started to go towards our left. Hoping for an early resumption of the advance we followed suit walking parallel with her; an enforced and comic promenade made disturbing by the knowledge that we were wasting precious time, seeing that by now sunset was rapidly approaching.

We were, however, to be afforded an opportunity of photographing something beyond the ordinary, for the wee calf, following behind its parent, would persist in attempting in amusing fashion to copy her stately stride, the result being that, less than a quarter of her height, it kept falling behind. Then would follow a pitiful bleat, when "Mother" would wait until it came up to be fondled; a delightful sight and one of very human character. Indeed, the more you see of elephant, the greater becomes the realization of their intelligence and similarity.

In order to get a close-up when the next display of maternal affection occurred, I went forward alone and could not have chosen a better moment, for I got to close photographic distance to find "Mother" standing with her dimunitive offspring close beside and as I got into action she placed her trunk about it and pressed it fondly to her, what time the calf's tiny trunk caressed her ear, so obviously proud of its mighty parent.

Not only was it a delightful scene, but one which would surely have searched the conscience of those who, if they had their way, would willingly shoot every elephant in Africa; that type of person which seems to regard them as profitable living targets.

Alas, all these delays had made it too late for our original purpose, for by this time it was growing dark and we would see the herd returning into the bush.

Meanwhile, my companion behind had been filming all this and it was only when I saw the resultant film later that I realized the risk which I had

unconsciously run, for not until then did I realize I was wearing trousers of so light a colour that at close distance they might well have invited attack, had the elephant looked my way; a thing which, fortunately, she did not do!

It was no mere chance which had caused me to confine my hunting to that of a photographic nature during this short safari, for the germ of the idea had been implanted by that great pioneer of big game photography and lover of wild animal life, Major A. Radclyffe Dugmore, one whom I am proud to number among my friends and who has done me the honour of writing the introduction to this book; that "lighthouse" which has guided so many towards a greater sympathy and understanding of wild animal life. Although in this instance but a short experience, it was one which had intrigued me greatly, not only by its far more pleasing character as compared with killing, but also by its greater difficulty, for one must get much closer to photograph wild animals than is required to shoot them. To kill with a modern rifle at distances up to three hundred yards is comparatively easy, whereas to gain success with a camera, on the other hand, means getting within fifty yards or less, which adds very considerably to the difficulty and interest. As the chase, or stalk, is the real essence of all hunting, this experience had shown such infinitely greater attraction that I commenced for the first time to think seriously of permanently transferring my allegiance from the rifle to the camera.

It was a feeling which was to be considerable strengthened when later we heard of a small herd of elephant not far distant which had been so persistently hunted by mechanized aid that eight of its nine bulls had already been accounted for and the remaining one had been wounded.

Writing as one who has visited much of Africa, north, south, east, and west, during almost fifty years, I am in a position to say that there are far too many in that vast continent who suffer from the erroneous impression that the elephant is increasing in numbers and who use this as an excuse to "blot-out", as it is termed, all that they can. To such a degree had this been done, that I was told of two professional hunters who were said to have accounted for over a thousand elephant apiece, and one who claimed to have killed thrice that number. Although unable to vouch for the truth of this there are certainly many who have shot dozens of elephant. Instead of increasing, what is actually happening is that the progress of civilization is driving the elephant from their erstwhile haunts, including parts in which they have lived undisturbed by man for centuries, and protected by a waterless belt, with the result that they still appear numerous, although actually a rapidly-dwindling specie.

It is the old tale of other rare wild animal life in many parts of the world, once so plentiful and now all but extinct. So with the elephant, the day is not far distant when it, too, must become extinct in most of Africa—as has already happened in several parts of it—unless a greater understanding and sympathy is shown, and it becomes more generally recognized that it is neither sporting nor meritorious to locate elephant by aeroplane and to pursue them by motor-car and to kill them for their poor ivory in places where they are not harming settlement. This last qualification is necessary, seeing that the farmer cannot be expected to suffer the loss of stock by

lion, or the destruction of his crops by elephant, without taking measures to protect his property. This is where the unduly sentimental critics of hunting are so apt to go wrong, although they themselves would probably be the first to ring up the police should burglars enter their homes or cattle their gardens!

If I feel strongly on this matter, it is because I once was well familiar with a part of Africa which was then stiff with wild animal life and which, when I visited it thirty-three years later, had been so shot out as to be completely desolate; a tragic sight made the more melancholy by the fact that much of the country concerned had later proved valueless for either domestic stock or agriculture.

Much of this had been caused during the Great War, when native auxiliaries had often to be fed by such means, and later by what may best be described as "motor-car sports", those who have not hesitated to run wretched animals down and butcher them from their cars. Now that the Second World War is ended, the remaining wild animal life in Africa unquestionably stands to suffer even more greatly from those demobilized African who, in place of their customary *posho* or diet of grain, have become accustomed to subsist largely on meat and who have, moreover, been trained to arms and motor vehicles. For admirable as the Game Preservation Societies and Game Wardens, both permanent and honorary, in Africa are —and all honour to them—they cannot be in a hundred places at the same time and secure animal protection everywhere. Already I have heard of a party going off to hunt elephant in an armoured car with an anti-tank gun, while, as my last Chapter will show, this is written at a time when there is a deliberate policy of complete wild-animal annihilation in a British colony of Africa.

To revert to my story, and hearing that the wounded bull elephant was even then being relentlessly pursued, and feeling a pity for these wretched beasts being steadily exterminated by mechanical aid, we decided to fly there. How the three of us managed to squeeze into a small single-propellor 'plane designed for two, together with our five cameras and, in this sardine-like condition, to fly over hundreds of miles of bush country which offered no chance of making a safe landing, was a stroke of fortune which was scarcely deserved.

Eventually, we flew over the elephant hunters' camp, mischieviously enjoying the spectacle as they made angry gestures at our interference and waved for us to go elsewhere. Although the exact location they suggested was drowned by the noise of our engine, in all probability it was to an even warmer spot than that in which we were then confined, but with the knowledge that they were bent upon killing the last bull elephant in the herd they were following, we did not feel the slightest qualms.

Our search lasted for some little while before we passed above the little desolated herd of elephant making its pitiful way through open forest below, our pilot spiralling about them so low in order that we might get our photographs that the wing-tips all but brushed the tree-tops. Neither was it a pleasant sight, for we could see by the wounded bull's sagging legs that he was far spent and, although of this I cannot be sure, for our glimpses were of fleeting character, it seemed as if he was at times being helped along by an elephant on either side.

Like all who go big game hunting I have not always found it possible to kill with the first shot, or even with the second, but never had I realized the full cruelty of bad markmanship, as when I saw those poor distracted elephant endeavouring to save their last remaining bull, knowing as we did that the morrow would find the mechanized hunters following to inflict the *coup de grâce*. Indeed, our compassion went to such length that we indulged in aerobatics for a greater length of time, and at a lower altitude, than was really safe, in an attempt to drive the elephant into bush of a character which would prove impossible for the pursuing lorries to penetrate. It was an endeavour which was destined to fail, for not long after our return I was shown the resultant tusks; trophies of such poor size as to be scarcely worth ten pounds in value, a pitiful price for inflicting such suffering and for destroying the life of an animal which could otherwise have lived for perhaps a further hundred years.

This is one reason why I refuse to reveal the part of Africa concerned, knowing as I do that every decent sportsman within it would share my opinion. The other story does not require evidence, seeing that it was told me by the man concerned, curiously enough in every other way a decent fellow.

In course of conversation he mentioned that a pride of lion had recently appeared in the bush on his property, and that he had killed the whole lot. Asked how he had effected such wholesale slaughter I will give the reply in his own words: "I set a large iron trap and caught the old lion leader by a hind leg. Knowing that the others would not desert him, I left him to drag the trap and the weight attached to it along for several days and until I had succeeded in killing the lot." Surely the most elementary code of humanity should have demanded a greater degree of sympathy for the King of Beasts; suffering excruciating torture until the sole survivor, he met an inglorious end or that the very loyalty of lion to one another should not be taken advantage of?

It is as well to record such facts, if only to show that such things happen, and which would never come to light unless some engage in hunting, whether photographic or otherwise.

I left Africa on this occasion convinced that the introduction of the motor-car to facilitate the killing of wild animal life had diminished its charm to an enormous degree while bringing to it many of a type who would never in the past have attempted it. It had taught me, too, that some wild animals have not yet learned to associate the motor-car with man, which meant animals, which formerly were difficult to approach on foot, could now be driven almost right up to; that those which formerly relied upon their inherited speed to make their escape could be overtaken by cads in cars. For although the Game Regulations are strict about such matters the fact remains that Africa is large and Game Wardens, in proportion, few, while the absence of those many porters who were formerly required for a safari, means that there are often no witnesses should game laws be broken.

It had been an experience, too, which had shown how infinitely more attractive wild animal photographic hunting is compared with its shooting, how poor by comparison are moth-eaten trophies of the chase with photographs of virile and unharmed wild animal life.

CHAPTER XXI

THE LAST TIGER SHOOT

It may seem somewhat illogical after what I have written that I should again participate in an ordinary big game hunt, but it is not actually so. For while wild animal life can be approached by the aid of the motor-car in many parts of Africa, this, fortunately, is not the case with regard to tiger shooting in the deep jungles of India.

When, the following year, I went there for the fifth time, I therefore gladly availed myself of an opportunity to re-visit the scenes which I had once known so well, being invited to shoot in the Nepal Terai, that Mecca of tiger hunting, as a guest of the British Resident to the Court of the Maharája of Nepal, Colonel E. M. Bailey, C.I.E., an old friend and a good sportsman.

Following a long train journey, I was met towards evening on the edge of the jungle by a motor-lorry, but had travelled only a third of the way to the distant jungle camp, when it broke down and I had to wait in darkness for some hours before an elephant came to my rescue.

There was more to it than that, for during the subsequent travel I ascertained from the mahout that, by an extraordinary coincidence, the elephant was one upon which I had shot my first tiger thirty years before, while he was the son of the one who had served me so well on that occasion. This was to have a bearing upon what was to follow, for when my host was told this, this notoriously staunch elephant was allotted to me for the shoot. It was a coincidence made the more remarkable in that this elephant was on its way to join the shoot after long travel.

The camp was pitched by the beautiful Sardar River, affording a view of snow-crested Himalayan mountains in the far distance. At that season of the year much of it was dry, while many jungle-clad islands, temporarily approachable, formed ideal shelter for wild animal life.

Our six guns included Baron Von Mannerheim, once Regent of Finland, who proved a pleasant companion.

With some twenty elephant and skilled shikaris and a block of jungle known to contain several tiger, it might appear to those unfamiliar with such hunting that it was merely a matter of days before success attended our efforts, especially as we had the enthusiastic help of those poor Indians resident on its outskirts to whom the loss of a few cattle spelt bankruptcy. For that reason, they were only too glad to provide the "puddahs" or young buffalo, without which essential lure few tiger could be accounted for in Indian jungles. If their use must ever cause a pang, a salve is afforded by the knowledge that most of them survive their nights of peril, while those few which fall victim thereby save the lives of hundreds of other animals if the tiger concerned is killed by means of their sacrifice. If the buffalo

could reason, it would be different, but most "puddahs" spend their nights between sleep and abnormally generous feeding, blissfully unconscious of the part allotted to them. In this connection it should be known that tiger, unlike lion, cannot be attracted by carrion, but eat what they kill, as a general rule. Given that a tiger kills on the average at least another animal per week of an adult life of perhaps fifteen years, and that those Indians who live near the jungles cannot be armed (for then far greater animal suffering would result), and yet must be protected against an excessive increase of carnivora, what alternative offers?

Perhaps the day will dawn when a synthetic "puddah" will be invented, or the atomic bomb solve the problem, for there will always be found those prepared to use the latter for such purpose, of a type who would willingly shoot their own grandmothers for the gold fillings of their teeth, were it not a capital offence.

To revert to my story—although we searched the deep jungle by day and placed our "puddahs" out by night, for all we saw of a tiger during the first week, there might not have been one in all India; in contrast to having once seen over thirty lion in one day in Africa.

There are few sights which modernity has changed so little throughout the centuries as a tiger hunt in Nepal, which is full of intriguing interest. Were it possible, for example, for my grandfather, who had shot these jungles over a century ago, to have revisited the scene, he would have found little change.

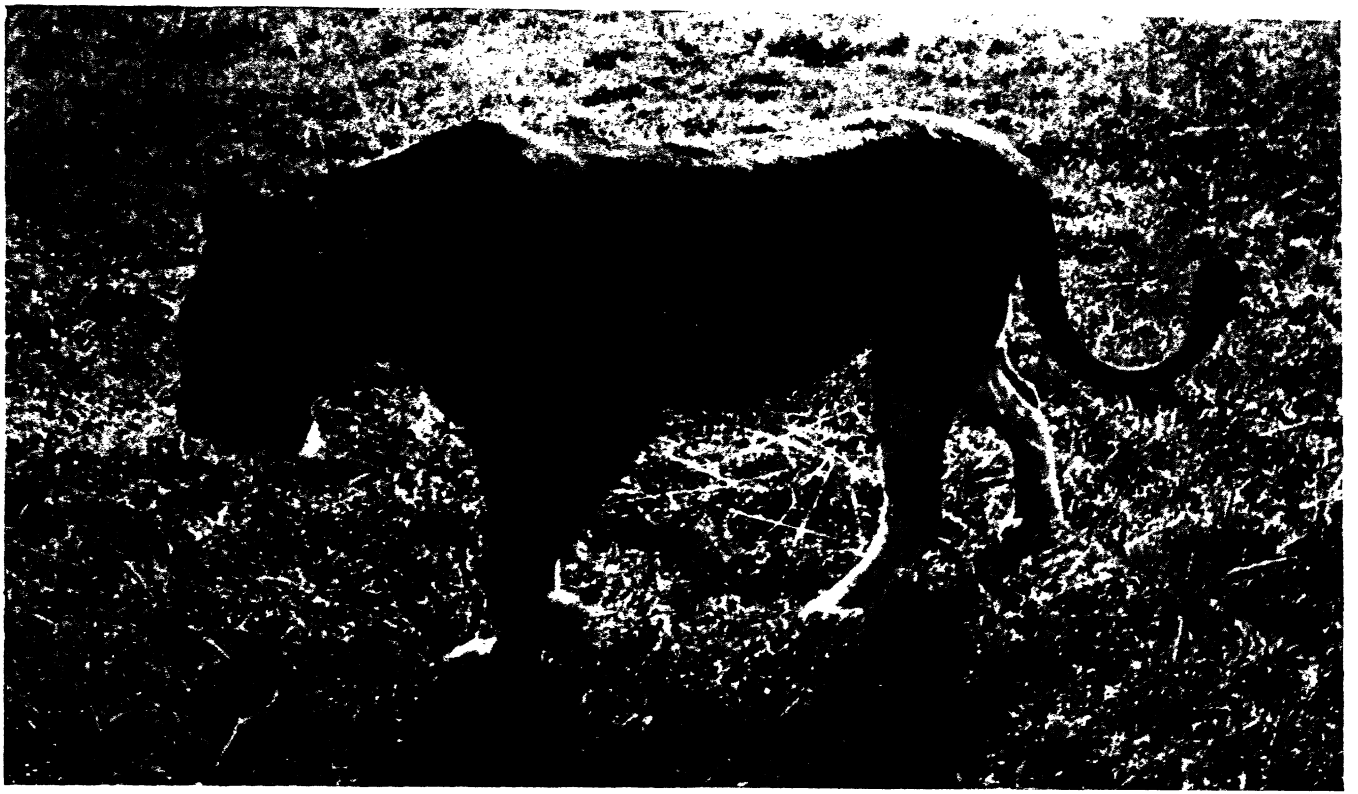
Our party, too, ran true to type, including a charming hostess, a "Heaven-born" (as senior Indian Civil Servants were once enviously called), and two eager young subalterns. All, with the exception of the Baron and these latter, had previously shot tiger and were in consequence anxious to see success come their way, for it was the shoot of a good sportsman. This meant much, seeing that there are some conducted shoots elsewhere in India in which the tiger concerned are so astonishingly accommodating as to appear at the exact spot and moment laid down in the itinerary of distinguished visitors, and are invariably shot by those of the highest status, apparently being impervious to the bullets of all others. Those are shoots-de-luxe which offer the minimum of risk and discomfort while catering for those who pretend to an unconsciousness of how such amazing results are obtained, and who rest content with securing more tiger within a few days than fall to the lot of a skilled hunter in a working lifetime.

Yet this system of "Tiger on Tap" has to be used if tiger are to be shot to a time-table. As proof of the difficulty of ensuring success when the shoot is genuine, the result of eight days of patient endeavour was nil, the subalterns having to depart disappointed.

Both shikaris and mahouts were by now depressed by failure and asked permission to propitiate the spirit who rules over such matters; a weird ceremony was held that night in the firelit jungle which, however seemingly futile, was destined to uphold the faith of the superstitious. For at crack of dawn came *khubbar*, or information, of a tiger-kill—that of a buffalo: information received with great exultation for its pugs revealed that it was a large cattle-killing tiger, much feared in the neighbourhood both for his

A Masai of Tanganyika.

Masai members of a once-feared warrior race, with clay-stiffened pigtails.



"How I hate publicity!" or a lioness at twelve feet.

boldness and aggressive quality—a type which too often turns to man-killing.

The kill had taken place close to a long and narrow jungle-clad island in a temporarily dry part of the river bed and soon our elephant had forded the deep channel which separated this from camp and were making towards it. Not long after my mahout drew my attention to an immense tiger "pug" or footprint, in the soft sand and obvious fact though it was, "Bara-wallah" or "very large one" came hissing up at intervals as we followed in the wake of his nocturnal progress, as if to stimulate me to the height of my "Three Bear" capability.

We found that the tiger had dragged his kill into the jungle, and to the uninitiated it might seem that the rest would be a foregone conclusion, seeing that we were so well provided with skilled shikaris and beating elephant. But such an impression would fail to take into account the high intelligence and resourcefulness of a tiger, its power of concealment and the character of the cover which it favours.

Now followed a long beat, during which the island was combed from end to end; a search so thorough as to make it incredible that the tiger could still be there, an opinion made all the stronger by the elephant having given no sign of danger, such as they usually do by compressing air in their trunks and releasing it by hitting the tip against the ground, which produces a curious popping sound, not unlike the bursting of a series of paper bags.

But as, meanwhile, no sign had been found of the tiger's departure in the soft sand by which the island was surrounded, a second effort was determined upon—following a much-needed lunch—one which proved equally fruitless until we reached the last remaining expanse of tiger grass. By now the day was drawing on and it seemed that our search was doomed to failure. A ring of elephants was now thrown round this area of several acres in extent: to watch them separating alternately, one going to the right and the other to the left, and disappearing into a vast tangle of high grass or jungle, makes it seem impossible that they will ever join up again. How, indeed, the mahouts accomplish this remains as great a mystery to me as that by which they maintain such silent contact with one another, although widely separated, when beating through dense jungle for hours on end, that at any given time they are able to re-establish union. The height of the grass was such that all that I could see when the ring was completed were the two elephant on either side which, like my own, were now engaged in trampling down the grass and levelling the light timber about them, in order to afford a better chance of a shot in the event of the tiger being found. They did this with their customary cleverness, and when they had prepared the way, a "beating-up" elephant entered the "ring" opposite my elephant, carrying in addition to her mahout and head shikari, a semi-naked youth standing astride her rump and holding on by a rope, ready to stimulate progress in emergency with a nail-studded club. In such stupendous cover, a tiger will often sit as tight as a crafty old cock pheasant, and had this happened in this instance, we should have been none the wiser and thought it yet another case of drawing blank. More than a dozen times that day, this same elephant had been called upon to perform this uncon-

genial task without unpleasant results, with the consequence that she now proceeded on her way with an air verging between the blasé and the jaunty. Scarcely had she disappeared, however, when there came a terrific "woof-woof", that characteristic challenge of a charging tiger, mingled with the shrill trumpeting of a badly frightened elephant, and the approaching sounds of her rapid retirement. There was a humorous side to the picture as she shot into the open, for the totally unnecessary human accelerator balanced on her agitated stern emerged like some grotesque May-queen bedecked with pampas-like plumes.

Although so aggressive as to have attacked without provocation, the tiger was prudent enough to stay his progress just before he must otherwise have showed, and soon I could see by the movements of the grass that he was returning towards the centre.

Female elephants are usually entrusted with the more dangerous tasks, being generally more reliable than the males, but this one had suffered such a shock that it was with difficulty that she could be persuaded to try again. Eventually, coaxing, plus the less pleasant attentions of the underclad "whipper-in", persuaded her reluctantly to re-enter the arena, and to pass once more from sight.

Within a few minutes, there was a repetition of the first act, the angry roar of the tiger, the shrill trumpeting of the elephant, and the rapid return to the open, until when two further attempts had failed in the same way, it became clear that the tiger was determined not to make his appearance.

By now the sun was on the point of setting, and my host came up and invited me to enter the "ring" and try my luck alone, seeing that all else had failed and that little of daylight remained. Jumping at the chance and acting on the assumption that the tiger would think mine to be the beating elephant, returning for a further dose of frightfulness, I followed the same line into the grass and was soon greeted by the menacing challenge and crash of grass as the tiger charged. Although standing, with eye-level fully seventeen feet above the ground, all that I could see of this were the grass plumes moving towards me a foot or so below. This time, however, there was to be no "strategic withdrawal", for my staunch elephant stood his ground like a rock and to save him from a mauling, I fired blindly in the direction of the tiger's coming. To quote that overworked and inept journalese as my shot "rang out", all noise and movement ceased, as if by some lucky fluke I had killed. Many have been the fatal accidents due to such fond imaginings! Even I, with experience of many similar happenings, felt a certain optimism when seconds lengthened into minutes without a sound from a direction so shortly before made sinister with evil melody. Time had now become the essence of the contract, for it was already growing dark in that formidable cover, and presently I made the mahout take his elephant slowly forward, in the hope that a dead tiger would be revealed. Within a few yards, bent and broken grass showed where its charge had ended, but that was all! Without the slightest sound or sign of movement, the tiger had gone!

Nothing now remained but to quarter the grass, and this we did until the tiger charged again, once more to be stopped by an undirected shot.

By this time night was approaching so rapidly that I recall looking at my wrist-watch and determining that, unless I could kill within a further ten minutes, the chase must be abandoned, for to wound a tiger in darkness might easily result in grave harm to my elephant, and perhaps create a future man-eater.

It was then that I recalled an admirable tip given by the best Scots ghillie I have ever been out with, "When in doubt, look for colour" (i.e. the curious tint of the Red Deer). Although the yellow body and black stripes of a tiger enable it to blend into such grass to an amazing degree, there is just a detectable difference, caused by its under-shadow, and seizing upon this forlorn hope, I abandoned further movement and, foot by foot, gazed methodically up each narrow channel of grass from right to left. In few places was it possible to see further than a few yards, except where the grass had been disturbed by the tiger's charge, but when I came to the last limited avenue of vision, I seemed to detect a faint difference of colour some twenty yards away; one so slight that I at first dismissed it from my mind as imaginary, and turned to look elsewhere. It has been my experience that one somehow senses when a dangerous animal is watching one closely, and this subconscious feeling soon became so strong that I was compelled to look back again. Was it merely a figment of desire born from anxious hope, or did I detect a slight movement? I thought I did and aimed at the suspected patch of shadow. Again I was undecided and had brought my rifle down when it suddenly resolved itself into a huge and angry tiger, coughing his hate and in full charge! Fortunately I was ready and hit him so hard that he fell over and lay as if dead. It is at such moments that the over-punctilious or the novice can make costly mistakes, for the former will refrain from putting in a further shot for fear of detracting from initial prowess, while the latter is prone to suffer from the impression that if a tiger stays motionless it is dead: whole cemeteries could be filled with the mortal remains of those who have paid the price of such folly. Not being a member of that suicide club I therefore gave him the second barrel, this time aiming at his head. The wisdom of this was shown by the tiger responding by rising to his feet before falling dead, which showed that, although mortally wounded, he had retained sufficient vitality to be capable of great harm.

It was now so gloomy that only the fact that I was carrying a "Leica Summar" camera, with its wonderful 1·2 lens enabled me to get a photograph, and even a few minutes later, that would have been impossible. That taken by my other camera, with a 4·5 lens, was little better than a blur.

Throughout this episode, those outside the high grass knew nothing of these happenings, but my host soon reached the scene, when I was delighted to be told that though he had been present at the "ringing" of many a tiger, this was the first which he had known killed within one by a solitary gun.

Next followed the Nepalese system of measurement—direct between point of nose and tip of tail; a disappointing method for those who are prone to exaggerate, for it reduced the size of a tiger which could, by the usual system of following the curves, be made to measure well over ten

feet, to just a fraction under that length, in spite of the tail being exceptionally short, but still within the record class. In perfect condition, he was not only the largest but the finest tiger in my experience.

Previous success with tiger does not, however, exonerate one in Nepal from the "blooding" ceremony, for now, although I had shot others before, I was called upon to endure having my face and ears smeared with blood by the head shikari.

Before me as I write hangs a frame containing two photographs—one of a radiant subaltern with his first tiger in 1907, the other of an aged ex-Brigade Commander with his last one, almost exactly thirty years later; one and the same person: an unusual record in an India which does not suffer old men gladly, and one which I think few Britons can claim.

This last experience of hunting had, however, shown me that, in the interim, my sympathy for wild animal life had grown to such a degree that throughout this shoot I had felt no desire to kill beyond that of ridding the neighbourhood of a menace, the fear of which overshadowed the existence of the Indian living near. Call it sentimentality, call it what you will, I prefer to think that it is abnormal for a man to carry into old age a spirit of destruction: nor was the sensation new to me, for it had been growing upon me ever since my visit to Africa and now, when I looked upon this tiger's fearful symmetry stretched out in death, it suddenly came to me that here was the opportunity to end my shooting career on a good wicket so to speak, and to resolve to exchange the rifle for the camera at a propitious moment.

This resolution was quickly put to the test, for next morning came news of another kill, which culminated in the tiger concerned being located in high grass surrounded by light jungle. "Nothing succeeds like success" is an axiom well exemplified in tiger hunting, where shikari and mahout, naturally enough, are apt to place faith in those who have previously met with good fortune, even if accidental. Knowing this from past experience, and knowing also that my host was anxious for Baron von Mannerheim to get the shot, I took particular pains to explain to the head shikari on the way out that I wished to be placed anywhere but where the tiger might be expected to appear, should it be located. With an assurance that he had selected the negative position I desired, he departed to take charge of the drive. But I had served a long apprenticeship in such hunting and, knowing my India, I had detected a suspicious glint in his eye, so when he had gone I invited the Baron to take my place and had my elephant moved elsewhere. Scarcely had I done so when a tigress broke cover exactly where I had been stationed, falling dead to a magnificent shot from von Mannerheim's rifle.

Being now due to return to duty, I left that pleasant camp after dinner and travelled through the darkness on my faithful elephant and with two Nepalese puppies, saddened by the knowledge that I was leaving those fascinating jungles for ever.

On arrival at the railway a tent was pitched for my shelter until the arrival of my train at dawn, after which my loyal mahout started back to camp, while my bearer went off to a neighbouring village, there to indulge

in that interminable chatter which forms a great part of their lives, and generally revolves about women, money, and water.

I was sitting outside my tent alone, and in somewhat melancholy mood when, to my glad surprise, my elephant loomed silently out of the darkness, and I found that my mahout had returned in order to pay what he knew to be a last farewell to one who had hunted with his father before him.

Dismounting, he salaamed, and expressed his sorrow at the parting in a simple and pleasing fashion—a regret shared by me for he had proved a brave and reliable mahout, without whose aid I could not have got the tiger, while one will travel far to meet the equal of an unspoilt Indian. This homage was quite genuine, for he had already his reward and now refused an additional gift. Indeed this little drama played in the silence of the night affected us both, for I realized that never again would I revisit those scenes of yesterday. Twice had I shot tiger from this same elephant without his suffering a scratch, and I like to think that he remembered this, seeing that elephant are said never to forget. For when the mahout had remounted, and was on the point of departure, the elephant stretched out his trunk and gave my arm the softest of caresses before lifting it in a last salaam. Then they melted into the darkness of the night like a dream, and my last contact with those glamorous jungles had ended.

In the full blaze of an Indian hot-weather day had I first entered them thirty-four years before, and in the full zest of youth, and there was therefore something curiously fitting that I should be saying good-bye in the darkness of night; my feeling was akin to that at the fall of the final curtain on the long run of an attractive play.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PRELUDE TO PHOTOGRAPHIC HUNTING

THERE is a type of man who, after hunting wild animals for most of his life, later feels such an ultra-sentimental detestation for it as to take the line of denouncing all who shoot; just as the reformed drunkard would deprive others from indulging in even a glass of beer.

I hope that what I am about to write will not create the impression that I have joined that super-critical company, for I have every sympathy with those who are called upon to protect their possessions against the depredations of wild animals or those others who wish to secure a few trophies of the chase, or who kill for food. What blatant hypocrisy it is for those in civilized communities who eat meat, or wear furs, obtained from animals killed by proxy to protest against others who kill wild animals usually in far more humane fashion, and particularly those which are dangerous.

My own experience, however, has been that with growing age come both a reluctance to take life and a greater sympathy with wild animals and these last experiences in Africa and India had shown that, while the hunting instinct was still as strong as ever, my enjoyment would be greater were I to forsake the rifle and to place what knowledge I had gained to photographic purpose.

On the other hand, it had also been made apparent that, although I had used a camera for many years, my photographic knowledge was yet insufficient, more especially as wild animals often offer but fleeting opportunities and prove elusive subjects, while the rapid and correct gauging of varying conditions of light added to an almost automatic adjustment of the necessary gadgets is essential towards success in their photography.

Determined to do my best to correct this on my return to England, I added a Kodak "Magazine" Cine-Camera to the Leica (Summar-) and Zeiss "Ikon" cameras, which, although imperfectly understood, had already served me well in China, Africa and India. In addition, I invested in an exposure meter, which was to prove of great value, for it is almost impossible to determine changing conditions of light by eye, in tropical countries especially.

In passing, I should add that the Kodak "Magazine" Cine-Camera was to prove ideal for its purpose, seeing that one can re-charge it, or change from colour film to black and white and vice versa with rapidity, which is of the utmost value in big game photography. Often during the subsequent safari, especially when in process of filming lion or elephant at close quarters, the sky would become overcast and the light unsuitable for the colour film I was using, when it was a simple matter to substitute ordinary film, reversing such procedure as the light improved.

The advantage in possessing a camera of the type of the Leica—for

British cameras of the same character and just as good, if not better, are now in production—is that it holds sufficient film for thirty exposures. This was to prove immensely valuable at those times when changing one's film would have entailed movement to frighten away one's subject, or even aroused its anger.

I decided also to dispense with the aid of tripods, anticipating that opportunities might be lost were the cameras not instantly capable of being switched in any direction; a conjecture proved so correct in the light of subsequent experience that I question if otherwise I could have obtained a quarter of my best results. Better a little flicker in the showing of the resultant film than no picture at all!

Writing as one who has been called upon to visit practically all the British Commonwealth and Empire, and much else of the world during some fifty years, and writing as one who during most of that time must plead equally guilty, why is it that so many amateurs purchase and travel about with expensive cameras without knowing how to get the best value from them? How often have I seen admirable opportunities of securing much-desired photographs of peoples or scenes never likely to be met with again wantonly thrown away by such easily remedied ignorance!

I now paid attention to this important part of a big game hunter's education and in order to get accustomed to their weight, for there can be times in big game hunting when almost every ounce tells, and the better familiar with their use, I made a habit of carrying the three cameras on long walks prior to leaving England, and photographed or filmed horses, cows, and other moving and preferably shy animals. This may have been somewhat suspicious to country rustics or bewildering to domestic stock, but it served me in good stead when I again reached Africa.

Most of us know how in amateur theatricals there are always some members of the cast who will not learn their lines and who, if remonstrated with, will fatuously reply, "I shall be all right on the night," and who then proceed to let their fellow actors and the whole play down when it comes into production. So in big game photography, there is a tendency on the part of some—indeed, as I have already shown, I have suffered from it myself—to think that there will be compensation for ignorance of detail by some miraculous chance when the opportunity arrives to photograph wild animals. Neither was I thorough enough for often, later, and when presented with admirable chances, I had cause to regret this, as also, and particularly, having been far too parsimonious in the use of film during my preliminary practice. I would strongly emphasize this last for the benefit of those who propose to take up big game photography, for if to shoot well necessitates the expenditure of many cartridges, so such specialized photography demands wasting much film in preliminary practice. Even with professional films it is questionable if more than a seventh part of the film taken is ever seen on the screen.

Sooner or later, in all big game photographic hunting, come those vital moments when the ability to make essential adjustment quickly and accurately means all the difference between success and failure, while it is almost always when rare beasts offer brief chances that the unskilled become

mentally fogged as to which levers, buttons or wheels to pull over, push in or twist, and fumble when they should photograph.

Looking back upon the hunting expedition which was to follow, I realize that I could have made far more of the magnificent chances which were offered, had I placed myself before leaving England, in the capable hands of a Press photographer, who has no equal in gauging conditions of light or in rapidity of action combined with certainty of good results, and this I would strongly advise others to do.

In order to save expense I decided to dispense with a rifle, seeing that I had no intention of killing, and also because I felt that I could depend upon my long experience of wild animal life to keep me from danger. It is necessary to add this qualification, for a novice to big game hunting and one unfamiliar with Africa would be taking grave risk if without the experienced help of a white hunter. There were to be times when I should have felt more comfortable had I been armed, as I shall presently show, as the hunting which followed was to include Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda and the Belgian Congo, but the necessary game licences required for carrying a rifle would have increased expenses enormously.

The all-important thing to anyone hunting in Africa is to obtain the help of someone familiar with the country, its peoples and wild animals, and here I was to be exceptionally fortunate, for there could be no better sportsmen than those who were to help my efforts.

I only hope I shall be able to show, writing from a long experience, how infinitely more attractive big game photography was to prove than its killing; that the most satisfying of all trophies are films showing vibrant wild animal life, which remained unharmed at the end of their "hunt". Indeed, I look back with the deepest regret that this photography only became possible so late in life, for what would I give to-day for a coloured film of that arresting sight of tiger springing across that Indian stream, or other scenes of yesterday which can never come my way again? What higher form of pleasure could come the way of an old hunter in his arm-chair days than to be able to see pictures of wild animal life he had once been in close contact with?

But I would make it clear that in all that follows I make no pretence at having in the remotest degree emulated those rightly famous big game photographic hunters, Major A. Radclyffe Dugmore and Cherry Kearton, the latter, alas, did not survive the Second World War, indomitable and courageous pioneers of this most humane form of hunting. To attempt to do so would, indeed, be ludicrous, for not only did these gallant men accomplish their safaris largely on foot and in days when such travel was both risky and difficult, but their wonderful pictures were obtained when such photography was far more difficult and dangerous than it is to-day. To face a dangerous wild animal with one's head buried beneath the focusing cloth of a heavy camera must have proved a test of nerve of a high order; to walk thousands of miles through Central Africa at a time when railways, roads and bridges were conspicuous by their absence and native tribes not always tolerant was one thing; to make the same journey to-day by comfortable motor-car quite another. To carry out development

in the stifling heat of a tent, as compared with posting one's film back to the wonderfully helpful Kodak's shop in Nairobi is a very different question. Yet those are the main differences between the hunting carried out by those two great "pioneers" of fascinating and humane hunting and amateurs who, like myself, if following in their footsteps in a microscopical degree, did so by comfortable motor-car at a time when travel, which once took weary weeks, could be accomplished within a few hours and when both risks and hardships were infinitesimal compared with those they had endured.

They did their hunting, too, when to get close enough for their purpose meant long and patient stalking on foot with the odds weighing heavily against them; when success depended upon a combination of experience, skill and long-suffering endurance, and not on approaching certain wild animals—particularly the lion and elephant—in a motor-car, a conveyance which they, in particular, have not yet learned to associate with man. Yet, to their everlasting honour, be it added that, notwithstanding the vast differences between the past and present, with the scales weighed heavily on the side of the modern big game photographer, certain of the pictures which those intrepid hunters succeeded in obtaining will ever remain unequalled.

I have no wish to claim any merit for what small measure of success attended my own poor efforts, while I should feel strangely mean were I not to pay this tribute to those who blazed the trail to what is unquestionably the most fascinating and most humane of all forms of hunting; those who by their artistic skill with camera and pen induced so many to forsake killing and to follow their example.

I am, for that reason, honoured that Major A. Radclyffe Dugmore has been generous enough to write the foreword to this book, for no other big game photographer has shown a greater humanity nor commands my greater respect.

CHAPTER XXIII

INTO LION COUNTRY

NEXT came a visit to East Africa, where, after a visit to Kenya, I motored to Tanganyika, seeing much wild animal life *en route* on the famous Athi Plains; then a game reserve.

From Arusha, I left for the Serengeti Plains as one of a small party under the wise guidance of Ray R. Ulyate, a white hunter of long experience and high repute who was then engaged in running a series of short safaris —if they merit that description—into this famous haunt of lion.

During this long travel we saw many Masai, a race which once inflicted a grievous toll upon less warlike neighbours; dignified men armed with spears, with clay-stiffened pigtails, and saffron-hued robes draped about their shapely figures, who watched us with magnificent unconcern. Peaceful settlement has proved unpopular with the Masai, for they are warriors by hereditary instinct, and formerly regarded raiding other tribes with the zest with which a débutante looks forward to her first Court. They brought to mind those pathetic Zulus, survivors of that once magnificent tribe, who pull rickshaws in Durban and make mockery for tourists, with tragic eyes which seem to reflect those mighty Impis and martial traditions of a not-so-distant past, and whose strict code of morals find no reflection in the Divorce Courts of the so-called civilized society of 1947. After crossing the Great Rift we camped on the 8,000-feet rim of the age-old crater of Ngorongoro, probably the most remarkable game preserve in the world; thirty-five miles in circumference, with its floor 2,000 feet below, although still 6,000 feet above sea level. It has been aptly described in *East Africa* (London) as:

> literally an Africa in miniature, complete with swamps, forests, jungles, pasture lands and two lakes—one of perfectly good fresh water, the other a "soda" lake similar in every respect to Eyasi to the south and Netron to the north-east—each feature, it would seem, placed in its right and natural position by a thoughtful architect working on a gigantic scale.
>
> Here, in a mist-laden atmosphere and a temperature which is never torrid even at midday, there are immense areas of grass such as highland cattle would thrive upon, and, what is more wonderful still, thousands of acres of clover, growing to a height of 2 feet or more at some seasons. How it got there is a mystery, seeing that it is not to be found in the vicinity outside, but it is there, and it is not surprising, therefore, that the crater is a paradise for game. Drought is unknown, and when the rest of Africa is dry and brown, here are countless acres of lush feed, and at all times enormous numbers of animals, providing an almost incredible spectacle.

Considering that one can fly to Arusha within three days, there to find comfortable hotel accommodation and the efficient Tanganyika Railways and private enterprise willing and able to take one to see this wonderful

spectacle, and even to the Serengeti Plains to watch its lion in perfect comfort and safety, why do so many prefer to spend their money upon travel in foreign countries in preference to spending it within the British Commonwealth; an Empire which can offer things scenically far more wonderful and more beautiful than is to be found in any part of Europe? I am glad to think that I was one of those many who signed a petition for this wonderful crater of Ngorongoro—this unique habitat of wild animal life—to be made a game reserve, while it testifies to the humane foresight of the Government of Tanganyika and its Game Department that this was done not long after my visit of 1938; for it is not always that those concerned in such matters in Africa possess that power of vision which forsees a not-far-distant time when such sanctuaries for game life will bring many visitors and provide a handsome revenue.

As affording some idea of what this crater has to offer, as seen from what appears as a natural "grandstand" above, a recent estimate places the number of beasts which it contains as 100,000, including lion, leopard, cheetah, hippo, zebra, antelope and gazelle. We camped for the night on its lip and watched through our field-glasses the myriads of wild animals leading their lives far below unmolested by man, although there were doubtless those in Africa who would have preferred to have made its lakes run red with blood and would willingly have shot every living animal within it.

Up at break of day the following morning we again watched this fascinating scene until the time came to tear ourselves away and to commence the downward travel to the Serengeti Plains; a journey which entailed several hours of passing through clouds of volcanic dust and over a surface which, in the rainy season, becomes such a quagmire as to make motor travel impossible; giving its wild animal life a welcome respite from the curiosity of man. Its best game portion runs for some hundred miles by sixty, while its high plateau, over 4,000 feet above sea level, is undulating in character and studded at infrequent intervals with miniature kopjes, not unlike in character the tors of Dartmoor and consisting of tumbled piles of great granite boulders, with bush and gnarled, stunted trees. Not only do these form a characteristic feature of the Serengeti, but Nature might have designed them as a habitat for lion, offering as they do both ideal harbourage and look-out points of vantage.

Long before the white man's arrival on the Serengeti with his deadly weapons, the lion kept in satisfactory check its great herds of game; for carnivora constitute Nature's means of keeping a correct balance, without which must come over-stocking, disease, and starvation. It is a system, too, which proves superior to any other known method of game control, as has often been shown when an Indian jungle has been closed to shooting for several years.

Water exists in but few parts of the Serengeti, with the consequence that, in days when safaris had to be made on foot, few but well-equipped sportsmen could either afford to penetrate into its interior, or were prepared to do so. But the advent of the motor-car brought terror to a plain which, unfortunately for its wild animal life, is of such motorable character that

one can travel without discomfort across much of it during the dry season at thirty miles per hour. The result was that cases occurred in which "motor-sports"—to coin a printable title—took advantage of this fact and butchered its lion in such contemptible fashion that, it is said, a party which had come from outside Tanganyika returned from this cad's adventure with a car filled with lions' tails only!

Needless to say, cowardly and wanton slaughter of this kind stirred the indignation of all sportsmen in East Africa, and served to strengthen the efforts of its fine Game Preservation Societies, which have done and are doing such splendid work in safeguarding wild animal life. In passing I would add that those who have a regard for its protection would do well to give financial support to these admirable organizations. Far more good would result by so doing than by indiscriminate criticism of the cruelty of hunting, the more especially in that it is the big game hunter especially who has been largely responsible in checking cruel native methods of trapping wild animals and the wrong shooting methods of others. Eliminate such hunting altogether, and the bounder or the African would be left free to slaughter game by any cruel fashion undisturbed!

Directly we reached the Serengeti Plains came the sight of its wondrous herds of game: myriads of hartebeest, oryx, wildebeest, eland, stenbok, zebra, Grant, and other species of gazelle and antelope, grazing or travelling in serried array as far as the eye could see, one herd of wildebeest being estimated at over three thousand head—a truly amazing sight.

Nor had we long to wait for our first sight of lion, for as we passed over a ridge we saw a lioness and her half-grown cub standing within a hundred yards, and looking as if surprised at our arriving without either invitation or ration cards. She was, however, gracious enough to remain while we photographed her, after which, as if satisfied with having behaved like a perfect hostess, she trotted away with her offspring, stopping at intervals to make sure that we were not going to intrude on her privacy again.

Next we met three hyenas, presenting the characteristic tucked-in appearance of their kind, as if they had just been kicked, and probably returning from some disgusting orgy. To their credit be it added that they played their film parts admirably, one particularly revolting specimen striking a cringing pose within ten yards as if hopeful of a film career, even if handicapped in his screen test by his glazed eyes of replete gluttony.

But this formed but the minor prelude to the adventure of that day, for presently we came to twin kopjes, or "tors", upon the nearest of which two lionesses lay outstretched on a flat-topped rock, watching in opposite directions for those spiralling vultures which, as smoke does fire, denote the presence of a dead or dying animal. For, unlike the tiger, who almost invariably hunts alone and kills what he consumes, the lion is a carrion eater, and generally works in combination, although it can kill equally as expertly on occasions. It is important to make this clear, seeing that it is the lion's readiness to eat anything dead which can be taken advantage of for photographic purposes; but to attempt in India to lure the tiger by such means would be doomed to certain failure.

Ulyate had anticipated such a contingency, and had come well supplied with carcases for use as "bait" in our attendant lorry, and now, acting on the assumption that the second kopje might contain the male lion, had a carcase tied to a long rope and towed around it, after which it was left in the open while we sat in our car nearby to await the result. We must have been under observation the while and were to be fortunate, for soon a fine black-maned lion strode majestically out to the carcase, and, taking a firm hold in his powerful jaws, started to drag it towards the kopje. It was, however, heavy, while the sun was by this time at its fiercest, and full-blooded carnivora feel the heat greatly. The result was that he soon thought better of the project and for a time appeared lost in contemplation, as if thinking out a satisfactory solution.

There is something curiously human about lion, and this was apparent now, when he so evidently came to the conclusion that it was a case of "ladies first", and a task more fitting for his wives. Sustaining his very human rôle and as if renouncing a real pleasure, he then strode into the cool shade of the trees, and a few moments later a pair of lionesses emerged, exhibiting every sign of distaste for the task in hand, and stood at guard over a carcase which had already attracted many keen-visioned and optimistic vultures.

The Majesty of the Lion may suffer from this tale of over-bearing selfishness and, trying as the lionesses' duty would be—for probably he would not dine before sunset—had this precaution been omitted there would have been nothing left by then had the vulture been allowed an innings. We watched and filmed these proceedings for nearly an hour, during which the lion took small notice of us. It is this remarkable boldness, combined with their inability to associate the motor-car with danger, and the ease with which one can both lure and approach them, which makes their hunting so vastly different from that of the tiger. Not that I wish to discredit their hunting, for cool nerve is required to stand up to a charging lion on foot, for his fury and speed then must be seen to be credited.

By fortunate chance our next experience was as accidental as it was exceptional, for we were motoring along when we saw, showing over a low ridge, the large pricked-up ears of a pack of wild dogs; closer approach revealed some twenty of these fiendishly-skilled killers—gaunt, mangy, and vicious-looking brutes—consuming a dead zebra. They are animals feared by all others, whether in Africa or India, for they hunt on a well-regulated system, and stick to their quarry with relentless determination. Those best in a position to know say they use their speed, cunning, and skill so to direct the chase as to drive their wretched victim in a decreasing circle and by a system of relays effect the kill close to their dens in order that their cubs may also participate.

Whether this is so or not, the animals unfortunate enough to become the object of their attention have just cause for terror-stricken fear, because of their almost deadly certainty and terrible technique of slowing down speed and wearing out resistance by tearing open the viscera during the chase. All other wild animal life, including the tiger, will desert an Indian

jungle in which wild dogs take up their abode. Those now before us were clearly famished and so engrossed in their grim task that, except for an occasional bestial glare, to see that we were not going to interfere, they allowed us to drive within twenty feet for photographic purposes.

Although satisfactory from that point of view, there was another side to the picture, for at such close proximity we exchanged the aromatic scent of the tropics for a pungent odour arising from the scattered interior of the defunct zebra served up by a hot breeze in nauseating draughts. But while olfactory nerves were called upon to pay the price of this coign of vantage, it was to prove proportionately small for what we were privileged to see.

Meanwhile, as this disgusting banquet proceeded, it was interesting to observe the high standard of co-operation and discipline, for seldom more than four of the pack eat at one time, the others acting as sentries on every side. That such precaution was necessary was shown by a steadily growing assembly of hyena, jackal, and vulture, standing round like spectators at a Cup Final; those grisly harbingers of lingering and awful death to wild animals which suffer from accident, wounds, or old age, yet Nature's wonderful scavengers; vultures which I shall ever see in memory following our weary columns in the South African War, fully aware that sooner or later their hunger would be satisfied.

Periodically, the dogs temporarily satiated (or was it perhaps that in such a well-regulated assembly they worked by trade union rules?), with blood-besmeared and slavering jaws, would exchange places with those on guard, which then plunged into the horrid meal with zealous gusto; an almost courteous exchange of duty indicative of a well-regulated code of behaviour, which their appearance greatly belied.

All this while my attention had been so focused upon this busy and nauseating scene, that I had failed to notice the approach of a lion which I now saw standing about a hundred yards beyond the kill and gazing fixedly towards it, while behind him and a further two hundred yards away stood a pride of nine others. The nearest lion had obviously been entrusted with the task of wresting the carcase from the wild dog and diverting it to more worthy purpose, for as I watched he sprang into action and approached at a massive trot. Possibly our position might have proved unpleasant had the lion succeeded in his intention and then, in the flush of victory and with passions raised to fever heat, found us in his path. But this did not occur to me at the time; instead, the reaction was one of intense elation at having a front-stall view of such a unique happening. So all-consuming becomes the desire to obtain pictures beyond the ordinary in big game photography, of perpetuating interesting sights and thrilling moments.

My cine-camera was consequently in full operation by the time the lion exchanged his trot for a charge, presumably with a view to frightening off the dogs by a demonstration of menacing fury. If this was his hope, he was to be sadly disappointed, for I was just congratulating myself on being about to film a scene of rare combat, when I saw through my view-finder the lion turn abruptly round and bound away in terrified flight. Looking up, it was with amazement that I saw that this sudden change of plan had

been caused by one wild dog which was still in hot pursuit! How had the mighty fallen!

Now was to follow an amusing interlude, for when the defeated one rejoined his pride, its members gathered round him exactly as if asking him to explain his act of renunciation, or, to quote a somewhat overworked phrase, "strategic withdrawal"—to put it kindly. One could, indeed, imagine the purport of his explanation: "Not worth worrying about. A perfectly revolting zebra, and dogs so mangy as to be contaminating." But whatever it may have been, it was clearly unacceptable, for presently he slunk to the rear with dejected appearance, what time another took over the task, as if determined to stand no nonsense. When within some fifty yards, he stopped as if to key himself up to the final effort and then, after a half-hearted start, which was the signal for several wild dogs to run towards him, he seemingly remembered a more pressing engagement and trotted back to his pride.

Again we saw its members go into critical conference, after which a lioness repeated the performance with a similar result, which conclusively showed the respect of the lion family for wild dogs. Not that their efforts had worried the latter in the least degree, for all except those on guard had meanwhile remained engrossed in their eating. It had been, indeed, visible proof of the value of unity, team-spirit, and pluck when opposed to brute strength.

I have already mentioned that lion can be very human, and these, having failed so ignominiously, evidently now decided to "save face" by pretending that zebra meat was an unheard-of article of diet, and in an amusing attempt to preserve what small dignity remained, they strode past us in single file, with eyes averted from the scene, like a girls' school "crocodile", ignoring the taunts of vulgar urchins. Following their departure, and having by this time secured all the film we could spare, we left a scene which had become indescribably revolting.

As we were to camp at one of the few water-holes of the Serengeti, not far distant, it was now decided to try to lure the pride of lion there in order to enlist their aid as photographic subjects. To that end, the leg of a carcase was attached by a long rope to our lorry and its driver instructed to proceed slowly to camp. As the lorry swung across their front, we saw the leading lion run forward and seize hold of the "bait", holding on with such grim determination as to be dragged along on his side for some little way before relinquishing his hold, after which the pride trotted behind the lorry as if there were Dalmatian blood in their ancestry. Satisfied that all was well, we went on ahead at the fullest speed possible until we reached our camping ground.

So much had to be done before our leonine guests arrived, that one experienced something of the sensation with which the best spare room has to be rapidly prepared for an unexpected and distinguished guest. As, however, we had a capable team of Africans to complete these arrangements, and wanting to stretch my legs, I went for a walk in the grove of trees surrounding the water-hole, until soon I heard Ulyate shouting behind me: "What on earth are you doing? Don't you know this place is

swarming with lion?" My folly, no doubt, had been inexcusable, but somehow the peaceful atmosphere prevailing had not associated itself with thought of danger. However, having no means of protection, I now lost no time in seeking the security of his car.

If some may wonder why an experienced hunter acted in this suicidal fashion, the answer can only be that it is exactly those who so often take unnecessary risks, probably because the more one's contact with wild animal life, the greater becomes the knowledge that very few are instinctively aggressive. While the novice is apt to regard all carnivora as filled with a lust for human gore, the expert is equally as liable to obtain a familiarity which induces the taking of chances, when a really vicious animal or—what is far more probable—one who has recently been wounded, may be met with, and tragedy follows.

In my judgment, the risk from unprovoked wild animal attack, or even snakes (providing one gives warning of one's presence, for surprise may cause fear and reprisals), is no greater than that taken in crossing Piccadilly Circus on a dark and busy night.

However, be that as it may, I felt grateful to Ulyate for having interrupted a walk which might have ended like that of the

Young lady of Riga
Who went for a ride on a tiger.
They returned from the ride
With the lady inside,
And a smile on the face of the tiger.

for we were to find before nightfall that there were some thirty lion, including cubs, sharing the shelter of this comparatively small grove.

Our first task was to guard ourselves from disturbance during the night, and to this end a carcase was hauled up a tree within some two hundred yards from our tents, the other end of the rope being attached to a car, which kept it suspended sufficiently high to prevent the lion from consuming it before we wished. Without such an arresting attraction it might have proved unpleasant to have been camped in such close proximity, for lion are both bold and curious, and for a like reason, our tents were surrounded by five fires to act as a deterrent during the hours of darkness.

We had scarcely finished these preparations when the "drag" lorry arrived, following which the ten lion came straggling in to slake what was obviously a considerable thirst at the water-hole. Pursuing our investigations, we now came across two lionesses, both with families of tiny cubs, and these we drove towards the suspended carcase, with a view to photography on the morrow. This revealed yet another fallacy concerning so-called dangerous animals, as it is generally supposed that lion mothers with young are exceptionally vicious, yet these allowed themselves to be shepherded and "shooed" along like sheep in front of our car until they had joined the other lion, which by this time had assembled below the carcase and were gazing up as if rapt in prayer.

Even if it be accepted, as was the case, that these particular lion had become accustomed to visitors with cameras, at least this very fact must

Some do not know that young lion climb trees with agility.

Parental responsibility.

Wild dogs and hopeful, if optimistic, vulture, with envious lion in background.

A dead zebra and wild dogs.

show that lion are not the malignant beasts that they are usually represented as being, for this was not at that time a game reserve; indeed, only shortly before our visit, a lion had been killed there by a German. Actually, of over seventy lion I was to meet with during safaris which included many thousands of square miles of East Africa, only three proved unapproachable, and probably these had been wounded.

We had arrived to find two young lions high up the tree, one standing astride the bough from which the carcase was suspended and trying vainly to reach it with outstretched paws, while, as we watched, another climbed up with almost the dexterity of a cat. Although, somehow, I had not associated lion with such ability, I ought to have done so, seeing that I was familiar with the fact that young tiger can climb trees too.

One more task yet remained before nightfall, namely, that of lowering the carcase for the night's repast; a duty requiring great delicacy of treatment, as the tree from which it swung had now beneath it a regular conversazione of lion. It savoured, indeed, of a maritime operation, as our car swung alongside that to which the rope holding the carcase was attached, and permitted the "pilot" as represented by Ulyate, to be put aboard to release the brake. This done, the car slid back as the carcase sank to earth, to be immediately pounced upon by the waiting lion. There was just sufficient light to allow of a photograph to be taken of so many sharing the same "dish" before returning to camp to partake of a much-needed "Sun-downer".

On getting to our tents, and being by this time very grimy, I went out to a small hollow containing a pool of water not thirty yards beyond our protective fires in order to make a hasty toilet; a somewhat anxious proceeding, for lion were by this time prowling about quite close, and the sequel to which will follow.

It was somewhat eerie to sit in the open at dinner that night while under the close scrutiny of many lion; knowledge emphasized by dimly moving shadows and glaring eyes reflecting the light of our lamps and fires, as also by the demeanour of the African servants, which last, however, gave the comforting assurance that there would be no lack of stokers till dawn.

Before retiring, I went out beyond the ring of fires and swung my electric torch slowly round into the darkness, reflecting in its beam the opalescent eyes of eight lion, gleaming like green lanterns and not more than thirty to forty yards away. Sleep that night took some wooing, disturbed as it was by the close and reverberating roar of lion: awesome sound which made the very ground tremble.

CHAPTER XXIV

MORE ABOUT LION

WHEN, at early dawn next morning, my tent-mate went to wash in the self-same hollow in which I had trifled with that refreshing duty the night before, it was to return in haste in gorgeous *déshabillé*, having found it occupied by four lions engaged in their ablutions!

Others, too, we could see roaming about nearby, while some optimistic cubs were raking through the remains of a carcase which had paid the price for keeping the adult members satisfied during the night. There were also those who clearly longed to participate, and who were anxiously watching from a respectful distance: hyena, jackal, and Marabout crane, while the branches of the trees about bent beneath the weight of vultures, those ghoulish harbingers of grisly death, whose spiralling descent many a man and beast have had occasion to see with horror; scavengers which beneficent Nature creates in such plenty in Africa that they must lose no opportunity of securing a meal, however horrid.

We were to find also that our camp had been the object of attention, for the pugs or footprints of lion showed almost up to the ring of fires, while one had actually braved them and walked between our tents, for lion can be as suburban in their curiosity as they are bold.

In order to avoid disturbing them unduly, we motored from camp after breakfast, and scoured the plain for a considerable distance on the look-out for animal pictures of interest. As we drove along, herds of antelope and gazelle, startled by our coming, would gallop past as if engaged in a race, their members springing high into the air, with erratic twists and contorted leaps, often crossing so close to the car that it seemed like a game of "last across the road"; curiously enough, and I have not seen this mentioned before, almost invariably anti-clockwise. This totally unnecessary feat accomplished, they would suddenly stop and start grazing with all signs of panic gone, and treat us as we swept past as if we were non-existent.

Our first photography was directed at several hyenas, so little perturbed or so surfeited by some probably disgusting meal that they permitted us to get to within a few yards; repulsive looking brutes which it has truly been said laugh when they should cry, and with jaws so powerful that they can deal with bones which even lion find difficult. Yet the hyena plays an important part in the scheme of Nature, especially at times when disease ravishes herds of game, as has been shown when strychnine poisoning has resulted in their extermination. Similarly, when this same sorry fate has been meted out to the leopard, experience has shown that wild pig then multiply exceedingly and do far greater harm to settlements than the depredations of these natural killers. Let facts speak for themselves, and

here I quote from the Game Department's Annual Report on Kenya for 1937:

> Early in the year I was engaged in the Digo district, poisoning pigs, baboons, monkeys and porcupines. Due to leopard having been destroyed by trapping in considerable numbers in the past, vermin of all sorts had become a curse and the planting of food crops a hazard.

Mankind accepts a grave responsibility when it takes upon itself the correction of the balance of Nature where wild animal life is concerned, and many cases can be cited—especially in Africa—in which far greater harm than good has resulted from the indiscriminate killing of carnivora.

To revert to my story, the hyenas, bloated as they were, proved dull photographic subjects, but soon afterwards we saw a magnificent black-maned lion standing in the open, whose rotundity of outline made it evident that he had not only dined lately but exceedingly well. A thunder-storm, unfortunately, was approaching, and it was heavily overcast, making the light too poor for photography, which was a pity, for a condition of repletion is conducive to good-temper in either man or beast, and in all probability we should have otherwise been able to get a good close-up. As it was, we decided not to disturb him, hoping—but in vain—to meet him again on our return journey.

These were merely chance encounters, for the real business of the day began after we got back to camp, by when the sun was shining again and the lion resting in the shade of the trees, in a ripe mood for our purpose; their docility accounted for, doubtless, by the wealth of game life to be found about their harbourage, leaving little excuse for any to go hungry, plus periodic visits by photographers like ourselves, although the Serengeti plains had not then become a game reserve.

Meanwhile, naturally, the carcases we had brought with us had improved in attractive quality, at least as far as lions were concerned, and we found another had been hoisted up the tree. Beneath it were several lion gazing up as if hoping to mesmerize it down, and two young ones were high up in the tree. These last, as screen artistes, were to prove as irritating as a temperamental Hollywood "star", for one could see them from a distance striking statuesque poses and looking models of "alertness and grace", only to find them in a state of sprawling ungainliness when, often after great difficulty, one got close enough for photographic purpose.

The majestic leader of all was conspicuous by his absence, except on rare occasions, for not only did a sense of dignity appear to keep him aloof from his encumbrances, as represented by four wives and seventeen cubs, but he was quite evidently an aristocratic old lion who seemed to regard the others of his kind as not quite out of the top drawer. Had he been a man, I feel confident that he would have been a die-hard of the old school and anti-everything modern, although a perfect gentleman withal. Generally, one would find him reclining in solitary state and apparently deep in contemplation, looking like some landowner of vast estates, dazed with taxation and the unwonted absence of servants and the other, to him, regrettable changes of democratic times.

A slight and constant breeze fortunately prevailed, and this was important, for approach to lion—as indeed to all wild animals—must be made up-wind, as they will not suffer the smell of man. However humiliating its acceptance may be, the fact remains that the greater one's experience the more certain it becomes that human beings possess an odour as unpleasant to wild animals as that of a skunk to us. How often has an unwelcome change of wind carried my scent down to an animal I have been stalking, when, although I hope I am no more revolting in that respect than other of my kind, the result has been a horrified and protesting roar or snort, followed by a rapid clearance. How little do the inexperienced realize the difficulty of stalking wild animals, whether stag or lion, owing to this fact!

Under Ulyate's kindly and experienced care, many had been the photographic parties which had made acquaintance with these lion, so that the more or less "permanent residents" clearly recognized him as a friend, and the faith reposed in him had become so great that we were able to film the lion family from within ten yards, as the cubs romped with one another and teased or suckled their mothers, which was pleasant, for there can be no prettier sight than little lions at play.

Indeed, so little notice did they take of us, and the whole atmosphere seemed so devoid of cause for fear, that it was necessary to remind oneself continually that these animals were capable of instant harm and that an incautious movement, or even a loud utterance might stir them into defensive action. Nor can the lion be blamed for this after man's hand has been turned against them throughout the ages, because—like most human beings—they have to kill in order to live, they have been regarded as savage beasts whose killing is laudatory. Inherited fear in carnivora is apt to result in aggressive action, just as in man it constitutes one of the chief causes of war!

Leaving camp again, we saw some giraffe in the distance and were approaching them when, passing over a rise, came a troop of lion looking so aggressive that we circled round in the car and made off. It may have been only frolicsome humour, but it was perhaps fortunate that we did so, for although we were travelling as quickly as the rough ground allowed, they bounded along close behind for some little distance, looking far from pleasant. Lion can show such an amazing burst of speed over a short distance that, it is said, they can catch up with a man on a horse if both have a standing start fifty yards apart. There is little doubt that in this instance we had aroused their ire by unintentionally interrupting their designs upon the unsuspicious giraffe.

Having shaken off the pursuit, we made a wide sweep and again tried to approach the giraffe from another quarter, but it was not to be, for just when we seemed on the point of success, up came the lion again, this time showing such obvious resentment that we thought it best to withdraw from the competition.

This may appear to indicate the fallacy of my contention that few wild animals are naturally aggressive, but it should be borne in mind that they were probably hungry and that we had spoilt their chance of dinner, and even civilized man would feel justified in being peevish at such a time.

That lion can kill giraffe is shown by the following extract from the Annual Report for 1937 of the Tanganyika Territory Game Preservation Department, which, like those of Kenya and Uganda, have done much to prevent indiscriminate hunting:

Colonel Gray reports that his herd boys watched a lion run after a large giraffe bull, jump up one of its legs and eventually climb up on its back and neck. The giraffe rushed towards some trees, probably with the intention of brushing off the lion, but on the way fell into a dry donga. The boys went towards the place, but the lion moved off. Upon Colonel Gray's arrival he found the giraffe still alive and able to move its hindquarters and its eyes, but its neck was immovable. The latter appeared to have a slight curve in it. The animal was clawed and bitten about the hind leg, and about one foot below the neck, but none of the bites nor claw marks were deep enough to reach the vertebræ. It appeared that its neck must have been broken when it fell into the donga, aided perhaps by the weight of the lion. It measured 18 feet 9 inches in height.

Compensation, however, was not to be long delayed, for shortly after our failure with the giraffe, we came to a picturesque "tor". As we approached this, from behind a massive granite boulder on its summit, strode a fine black-maned lion, which stood majestically at gaze, as if demanding our passports before admitting us to his domain. Such was the mimicry of her colouration and so tightly was she squeezed against the opposite side of this rock, that it was some little time before we saw that a lioness was also watching us intently; and she continued to do so throughout our stay. The picture was all the more striking because the lion was outlined against a vivid blue sky and the rock of a varied and delicate hue, while a patch of bush in his immediate front combined to present an attractive *tout ensemble.*

In addition, the lion could not possibly have struck a better pose had he known our purpose, nor was he in the least perturbed as we got into photographic action. On the contrary, he occasionally turned his splendid head and looked in the opposite direction, to show either his trust in man or contempt for the whole human race. For fully a qarter of an hour were we favoured in such fashion, when this colourful audience with the King of Beasts was correctly ended by his dignified withdrawal into the bush beyond, which was the signal for us to make our departure. This combination of fortuitous chance and lion co-operation was to result in my securing the best photograph and film of the whole tour in East Africa. It constitutes the frontispiece to this book and served as a model for a painting by Lord Baden-Powell, which he entitled: "Halt! Who goes there?" and presented to me during our voyage home together at the end of my East African tour. The splendid Chief Scout of the world was then eighty-one years of age; while I had had the honour of having been his Staff Officer at the first Royal Review of the Boy Scouts at Windsor Great Park in 1911, as also at the All-India "Jamboree" held at Delhi in 1937.

Nor do I have to rely on memory alone for the recollection of the impressive sight of that lion, for one of the great charms and advantages

of coloured film "Trophies" over those from animals which have been killed, is that one can revive such delightful scenes whenever fancy dictates and give pleasure to thousands who could otherwise never see wild animals in their natural surroundings.

On our return to camp, we found two lions still in the tree which bore the carcase, while four lionesses and many cubs resting at its foot helped to complete an attractive picture. It was not, however, to prove an easy approach, for two strange lions of somewhat fiercer aspect were standing between, their faces smeared in blood, which had probably come to slake their thirst after a successful kill. Not were they tolerant of our presence, for they made ugly grimaces as they paced to and from, creating a somewhat unpleasant situation until, presently, they went scowling away.

Meanwhile, the resident lion had behaved with great decorum, as if disclaiming all relationship with such vulgarians, and now allowed our car within ten yards. It was then we saw the aloof black-maned lion, the magnificent leader of the pride, approaching with all the dignity of a bishop leaving the Athenæum, even if it was to suffer when two wee cubs ran out and romped about him with discreet abandon, circling between his massive forelegs and licking his face in delightful fashion! Adoration "father" pretended to suffer with resignation, although obviously enjoying it.

The chance was too good to be missed, and when he had joined his extensive family, waiting with anticipatory hope beneath the swaying carcase, this was lowered until all but the small cubs could reach it. Then followed a display of arresting description, for as if to show off his massive strength, the lion seized hold of it and pulled it away from the tree in an endeavour to break the rope by which it was suspended.

Not until then had I fully appreciated the colossal strength of a lion, for he toyed with this heavy carcase as if it were a feather, alternating such demonstrations by wrenching away large pieces of flesh, what time the larger cubs stood upon their hind-legs, and seized those portions which came within their more limited reach, and those too small to participate gave vent to appealing mews, and looked attractively pathetic.

Meanwhile, a lioness near by was passively engaged in suckling her cubs, so unperturbed by our close presence that presently she turned upon her back and played with them most prettily. Nor were the tiniest cubs awed by the old lion, for we watched them seize tasty morsels from his very mouth; impertinence which he suffered with bland composure, if not parental pride, as proof that the young idea were going to prove worthy of their sire.

This fascinating entertainment ended when the carcase was pulled up again, for it was required to fulfil its purpose during the ensuing night; the parting prove such bitter sorrow that a lion sprang upon it when still within reach and hung suspended for fully a minute.

Next was to follow an experience for which we were indebted to Ulyate, who seemed to know exactly what lion would do under every possible circumstance. The setting for this masterpiece was a small pool on the opposite bank of which some meat, after having been first towed about the grove to act as a lure, had been tied to a stake. We had not long

to wait, for soon a lioness came out of the high grass on the far bank and started to partake, to be almost instantly joined by another. It was then that I heard stealthy footsteps behind and, turning, saw a gaunt old lioness striding slowly past and not twelve feet away, looking so sinister that I hesitated to use my cine-camera. But she took not the slightest notice and even stopped to slake her thirst, so close that I secured a film which shows her tongue actually lapping up the water.

Then followed one of the most artistic scenes of the safari, when, outlined against the gorgeous colouring of the African setting sun, which reflected her shape in a mirror-like pool, and with her powerful form moving with easy grace, she made along the bank towards the others—a scene which the colour film I was using captured to an amazingly realistic degree.

CHAPTER XXV

FURTHER LION EXPERIENCES

OUR entertainment for the day had not ended, however, for we were next driven to where a lioness was engaged in eating some meat which had been tied to an iron post; so intent upon her meal that she allowed us to get within ten yards.

As if part of a well-rehearsed play, it was then that we saw a lion with a very tousled mane approaching from the far side, so directly in line that both could be included in the same view-finder, which was fortunate, for he looked particularly bad-tempered, and it was clear from the outset that he would stand no nonsense. If the King of Beasts lends itself to heraldry as a token of knightly conduct, his manners are not always chivalrous, and this was the case now, for when he reached the lioness he butted her violently aside and seized the meat in his powerful jaws as if to make clear that she was poaching on his preserves.

The lioness, however, of equal mettle, persisted in retaining her hold; the amusing struggle for possession which followed, if not a vulgar brawl, was at least a demonstration of might over right. The "lion's share" is no idle saying, apparently, for after a somewhat pathetic attempt on the lioness' part to retain her position on the principle of "First come, first served", she resigned herself to the inevitable and, relinquishing her hold with a sorry grace, turned sulkily away. Self-renunciation is probably repugnant to a lion, for her expression of reproach and a lashing tail showed as plainly as any words that she thought him a "Mean thing", an opinion, which I am sorry to add, seemed but to stimulate the lion's appetite. It is with a certain regret that I record this happening, having already said that the lion can be most human, for fear that this episode may be interpreted as casting aspersions upon the proverbial unselfishness of the masculine sex in general.

Unfortunately, the lion did not suffer photography gladly, and when we tried for a close-up, he tore the meat from its strong lashing, and holding it high in air, strode triumphantly away, followed by some vultures optimistic enough to hope for pickings.

Our last duty that eventful day was to lower the carcase to the waiting lion, and I was again struck by the many who were participating without quarrelling.

The day of departure opened, as usual, with noisy chatter—for the African seems to find it possible to keep awake for most of the twenty-four hours, and always to have an unlimited fund of conversation.

As I left my tent, I saw eight lion standing within a hundred yards, displaying great interest at the unwonted activity. Having a busy day before us, we started photographic operations early, commencing with another attempt to get a good film of the old black-maned lion, the leader of all

within the grove; which, although tolerant of our presence, had, throughout our stay, both maintained aloofness and an aggravating habit of lying down at the wrong moment.

Time after time we had seen him in the distance holding a majestic pose, only to arrive within photographic range to find him lying prostrate and inartistically relaxed. A long wait in the hot sun would follow, during which he would look as if sunk in recollection of happier days, or dreamily perplexed by modern invention as represented by our motor-car. But always he had shown himself the perfect gentleman, and I shall ever like to feel that on this last occasion he wished to show his gratitude for our behaviour and the hospitality we had offered those of his kind.

For, as we now drew near, he rose to the occasion in both senses of the word, and at precisely the right moment, strode with truly regal mien across our front and within twenty yards. Admirable as this was, what I had particularly desired had been the film of a lion bearing a similarity to that which is borne upon the British Royal Arms. As if this noble beast was able to read my thoughts, or we had rehearsed this desired happening for some time, he now stopped and, striking the identical pose, remained like a statue until we had taken all the film we wanted. Then, as if a gentleman usher had said, "The audience is over", he turned with great dignity and strode into the bush; a fitting finale to our stay.

I was leaving with a totally different opinion of lion from the one I had held on arrival, for they had shown such a wonderful example of happy family life that not once when watching them feeding had we observed a display of temper. It is, however, only right to add that those of the Serengeti have always possessed a reputation for tractability, due to their not having been molested by man as much as those in more get-at-able parts of Africa. In other words, lion, like most other creatures, are largely what man chooses to make them!

We breakfasted while our tents were being struck and loaded on the lorry, while seven lion stood within fifty yards, as if to speed our departure and to thank us for our gastronomic help—or was it that they hoped for more? Presently the task fell to me to haul in the long towing rope, by aid of which we had lured the lion to the camera upon many an occasion. This still had a large bone attached to it, and as this bobbed along the ground in the process, a lion ran forward and seized hold, giving a mighty tug which threw me over. Now followed a tug-of-war in which I was so badly worsted that soon I was being jerked along towards other lion spectators, and had perforce to let go. Nor were my efforts so puny, for four powerful men next essayed this same task without success, the lion showing such amazing strength that ultimately the rope had to be towed away by the lorry.

Among my prized possessions is a testimonial later given to me, signed by Ray R. Ulyate and those others present, which reads as follows:

We, the undersigned, certify upon our honour that we were witness to a spirited tug-of-war on the Serengeti Plains on the 22nd February, 1938, between Colonel James L. Sleeman and a lion. Alas, we have to state that the lion won.

When all was ready to move, although many other lion were present, it seemed that we were to leave without a final sight of the old lion. But throughout our stay he had proved a perfect master of the art of doing the correct thing and of timing, and it was then that he came striding towards us with leisurely dignity until come thirty yards away. Then he stopped, gazed firmly at us like an old aristocrat speeding his parting guests, and conveying the impression that, had he been able to talk, he would have said "Good-bye, and thanks for not shooting us. I hope you have enjoyed yourselves, for you seem harmless creatures." Then, turning about, he made his final exit with impressive deliberation and without once looking back.

We left with the lion still hanging on to the rope, even to the extent of allowing itself to be dragged along on its side before letting go. When well clear, we stopped to haul it in, a task which had to be expedited, for seven lion were trotting after us as if loath to part. If this was a correct assumption, I shared their feelings, for never have I left a hunting camp with greater regret.

Throughout our stay, the lion sharing the waterhole and its grove of trees had varied in numbers but, including cubs, had always been somewhat between twenty and thirty, the lionesses with young cubs remaining constant, while others arrived to slake their thirst and were transitory visitors. One thing had been made clear by our visit, namely, that the lion is not the vicious beast which he is generally represented as being. One cannot have it both ways! Either lion are so aggressive that nothing but killing should be their portion, or so responsive to kindly treatment as to call for a greater understanding and sympathy than they get. Certainly they kill, but so does man, even if by proxy, while, austere as the times may be, and however limited the coupons, it would still be indefensible to shoot a gentleman in Bond Street, merely because he is wearing a good suit or kills stags in Scotland. Let me hasten to add that I do not include in this those lion which are really dangerous or those others which prey upon the stock of settlers.

There are, of course, vicious lion which should be shot, such as those man-eating lions of Tsavo, just as there are evil men who require execution; but because lion resent being wounded and turn aggressive in consequence, this is no reason why it is meritorious to kill every one you meet, or to take the view that they should be exterminated.

Supposing an old gentleman was hit in the pants by an air pellet each time he entered the Albany—if one can imagine such a happening—one would expect him to resent it, however good-tempered a character!

Neither is this simile as absurd as it may read, for—following my return to England from this safari—I was approached by a gentleman who possessed a property in Kenya and who said that the lion to be met with close to his estate were not the good-tempered ones such as I had shown in my film. Upon my asking the reason for their being aggressive it was to receive the somewhat ingenuous reply, for he seemed to see no humour in it, that they were, of course, always being shot at by those who passed that way!

Even the man-eating lions of Tsavo, dreadful as they were, deserve some defence, for I was told by a highly experienced hunter who knew the facts that it was man who had been responsible for their fall from grace in the original instance. This because, in the building of the railway, many Indian coolies died from fever, and could not always be deeply buried, with the result that this particular pride of lion resorted to eating them as a means of livelihood and, gradually losing their fear of man in consequence, became the bold and terrible man-eaters they were before an end was put to their activities. In almost every case of a man-killing animal in my experience there has been some man-made reason to account for such abnormality, ranging from crippling or irritating wounds, to the undue destruction of the other game life upon which carnivora must live.

It may be wondered, too, how one carcase a night had satisfied so many lion during our stay, and here I can but conjecture, never having felt any inclination to go out into the darkness and count them. But, judging by what happened by day, there would seem little doubt but that—probably largely by the intimidation of the old lion—it was confined to his "family", else the many cubs would have suffered. Those other lion visitors, who "dropped in for a drink" after successful hunting, were probably regarded by the "permanents" with something approaching that same spirit of resigned dislike, which was later not infrequently shown to bombed-out people during the Second World War.

With our departure, the task of replenishing the larder from which so many infantile mouths had to be fed, must have proved immensely difficult, for although wild animal life was abundant on the surrounding plain these wisely gave the grove a wide berth, except when driven by necessity to drink there. Many a weary prowl and difficult stalk must fail of its purpose and often must the young lion family know what hunger means.

If I have represented the lion we had met with as being on the whole good-tempered, I do not suggest that they could have been taken liberties with, for they are carnivorous animals, easily stirred to aggressive action and capable of instant and fatal harm. In their photography it is necessary to keep reminding oneself of this when at close quarters, for lion faces in repose bear such a sweet expression that one feels tempted to stroke them when so close that this could easily have been done. A foolish liberty which might well have resulted in one's arriving prematurely in the next world.

We had not, however, finished with lion, for some hours later and when driving across the plain past vast herds of game, we suddenly saw a black-maned lion crouched low and facing us within thirty yards, probably one which we had disturbed in a long and difficult stalk and not in the best of tempers in consequence. By this time, blasé with lion, the driver stopped the car, and incidentally, its engine, while we got into photographic operation. All was going well when we saw the lion gather himself together with tail stiffly upright; that characteristic preliminary to a charge. Fortunately, the self-starter functioned instantly, and we got away at speed, else things might have become unpleasant to say the least, for it was a low and open car.

The great rule in all big game hunting is always to be prepared for the

unexpected and to approach those animals potentially harmful with circumspection, for unfortunately, one can never tell whether they have been recently wounded and may prove revengeful in consequence. Neither are such happenings rare, for I have heard of a case in which an elephant was found to have been wounded on over twenty occasions before meeting its end, and have shot several tiger and bear which showed proof of having been wounded more than once before. Small wonder that such animals can prove vicious on occasions, or that it becomes necessary to approach them with care.

Next followed long travel over the roadless plain until we came to a small kopje, against the base of which was standing a magnificent lion, whose fine dark mane bristled around his head like a halo. It was the only saint-like thing about him, for as we got close enough to take our pictures, unpleasant grimaces and an agitated tail told us plainly that he disliked our presence greatly and would stand no nonsense. But he made such an attractive picture against a surround of soft-coloured rock that we took a chance and made our film while he, obviously ill at ease, turned his head this way and that as if attempting to puzzle out a situation he was unaccustomed to. But film stars, wherever they may be can prove temperamental, and this one showed such signs of increasing petulance, that we took our departure, leaving him looking like an old-time squire watching trespassers in his park.

It is impossible to describe how experience teaches one to determine the mood of a wild animal one is approaching, but this power of discernment requires a longer period of probation than those fresh to the fields of hunting give credit for. Profiting by experience somehow one generally senses whether liberties can or cannot be taken without great risk. Just as a doctor can detect a grave condition before it develops by signs which mean nothing to those unversed in the science of medicine, so the experienced hunter is often able to anticipate a savage attack and get going before it comes. Big game hunting in other words, like all worthwhile careers, takes time and patience to learn; one cannot, or should not, merely purchase a rifle or camera and plunge into the wild on the off-chance of meeting with success, for this would be not only unfair to oneself but to the wild animal life too.

Fortune was to smile upon us yet once again that day when we came upon another lion sheltering from a hot sun in the shady pile of jumbled rocks singularly reminiscent of a Dartmoor tor. As we drove near, he climbed slowly up until he reached a great granite boulder which formed its apex. Not once but many times during this safari had there seemed something instinctive about a lion's histrionic and artistic quality, for, instead of placing this between us and so disappearing from view, which seemed the obvious thing to do, he chose this most appropriate moment to turn and stand at gaze with his forefeet planted on a rock, which formed a natural pedestal. This noble pose, combined with a deep tropical sky and colourful rock, offered one of the best chances I had been given to obtain a super colour film, and it was with a thrill that I started my cine-camera into operation.

Alas, once again was I called upon to pay the price for insufficient practice and unpreparedness, for almost instantly my film ran out! Such opportunities seldom recur in big game photography, and by the time I had replaced the magazine, the lion had gone. Some compensation was offered not long after, when we saw a lioness stalking some Grant's gazelle; a patient process, as she glided almost imperceptibly flattened to ground which offered practically no cover, enabling us the better to appreciate the difficulty which lion must often have in staying their hunger, and why it is not surprising that they are likely to lose their composure when disturbed at such a time.

We camped that night by a kopje which stood about half a mile from that upon which we had seen the lion on first arrival on the Serengeti Plains. The afternoon was drawing on, and while our tents were being pitched, Smalley and I set out to make sure that this was not similarly occupied, on the principle of preferring whatever risk there might be to spending an anxious night in perplexity. Closer acquaintance revealed the difficulty of the task which we had taken on, for the kopje was high and consisted of massive boulders often widely separated by deep, gloomy and cave-like recesses from which was wafted such pungent odour of lion that, as we climbed higher and were both unarmed, I presently found myself peering over every boulder with a certain hesitation, fully prepared if necessary to emulate the chamois in my descent.

Fortunately, our search proved negative, and we returned to camp to find that the indefatigable Ulyate had meanwhile shot a wildebeeste almost midway between the two kopjes, both for our own sustenance and also to attract the attention of any wandering lion during the night. Going out to inspect the carcase, I found it to be of such a considerable size as to justify hope that there would be enough left to permit of any leonine activity being photographed at dawn.

Until darkness fell not a lion showed, but before turning in, I went towards the bait and flashed a torch upon it; its beam instantly reflecting the opalescent glare of four pairs of lions' eyes; a sight which filled me with optimistic hope for the morrow. It was not, however, to prove a peaceful night, for periodically one was awakened by the reverberating roar of lions challenging one another from opposite sides of the camp, while a hyena elected to take up its position on the kopje immediately behind my tent, giving vent at intervals to melancholy howls, punctuated by bursts of maniacal laughter.

At dawn I went out to the kill, only to find that, not only had the lion departed, but the only sign of their feast remaining was a few hairs and a minute fragment of bone, the ground otherwise swept as clean as if they had a team of well-trained servants for that purpose, such as civilization once knew in days which will never come again. Nature is, indeed, far less wasteful than man, and a carcase weighing over four hundred pounds had been "cleared away" by lion and other helpers with praiseworthy skill between darkness and daylight, the "empty dish" leaving us with the sad realization that the finale had come to our lion hunting on those wonderful Serengeti Plains.

We had scarcely left these behind and were passing through open bush country when we came across a number of giraffe grazing about mimosa trees and, framed in a background of the imposing Ngorongoro Mountain, bathed in that deep blue haze so peculiar to Central Africa, an attractive picture which we took photographic advantage of before commencing the long pull up this extinct volcano. We were halfway up when, rounding a bend, we almost ran into a dozen giraffe, which made off at that ambling canter which is so deceptive in regard to speed. It is an astonishing thing that these animals which look so huge in captivity appear so proportionate in the mighty surroundings in which they normally live. This was so precisely the case now, that with a wish to perpetuate this impression I left the car and dashed in pursuit, passing over a series of grass-covered ridges, surmounting each only to find the giraffe disappearing over the next ahead. Eventually I got a distant film of them, looking little greater in size than cattle against the mountain background. It was then that there came a queer feeling, such a sinister one in quality that I looked cautiously about me while, unarmed and alone I made my way back to the car, although I had neither seen nor heard anything to give cause for trepidation. Whereupon I was scolded for my folly, and told that this particular part was notorious for lion, wild buffalo, and mamba, the latter of which probably accounted for my uneasiness, seeing that I am strongly allergic to snakes and that some sixth sense always warns me when they are near.

Once again that evening we were privileged to sit on the edge of the crater of Ngorongoro and to gaze upon its vast circumference and wondrous game life beneath, until it became too dark to see. The next morning came our last view of the Serengeti stretching out into the distance below, plains which had shown us so much of their fascinating charm. That night we camped by a Masai village, where members of this one-time warrior tribe carried off with triumph a discarded motor tyre from which they would fashion sandals, for civilization always leads to softness.

We reached Arusha late the following day, when our brief but memorable safari ended. Its success was entirely due to the splendid leadership of Ray R. Ulyate, not only a skilled white hunter who had accompanied Theodore Roosevelt and Cherry Garrard on their hunting expeditions, but one whose sympathy for and knowledge of wild animal life, and the lion in particular, had proved phenomenal. Apart from all else, I was glad to have participated in this short visit to lion country, seeing that my photographic results were later to show how much can be seen of lion and other wild animal life to-day within a short compass of time; moreover with such a degree of both comfort and safety that it could have been undertaken without fear by an assembly of maiden aunts. This is of considerable importance, for the more who can familiarize themselves with the charm of wild animal life, the less the latter will suffer at man's hands. This was made possible only by being in the experienced and capable hands of Ray R. Ulyate, who has guided more people to lion without hurt to either, than probably anyone else in Africa.

I was so impressed with the wondrous game life of Tanganyika that it is with particular pleasure that I have recently heard from its Game

Warden, M.S. Moore, Esq., that the Ngorongoro Crater was made a complete game reserve not long after my visit of 1938, and part of the Serengeti Plains a complete game reserve the year following. Since then I understand that a National Park has been commenced, which testifies to the humane wisdom and foresightedness of its Government and Game Department, while ensuring that its wealth of wild animal life will survive to bring pleasure to future generations long after it has disappeared in other parts of Africa. Although no parties have been taken out during the War, owing to petrol restrictions, short safaris, such as I have described in these pages, will be resumed by both the efficient Tanganyika Railways as also by private enterprise, in which I hope that the Ulyate family will still function.

Before leaving Arusha, I visited its market, where Arusha women (who copy the Masai in all respects), with wire necklaces spiralling out a foot from their necks, and earrings the size of tobacco tin lids, bought or sold with an exceptional dignity. Like the Masai, part of the diet of this warrior tribe is a mixture of blood and milk, and for that reason cattle are their principal possession. To obtain the blood, constriction is applied to the neck of the beast selected, and a distended artery punctured, after which about a quart of blood is drawn off and, mixed with milk, is allowed to curdle before being consumed. It is an operation less repugnant to our ideas now that we have become accustomed to even delicate British women nobly giving their blood to help save human life from the battlefields of the last war: vital help which saved countless thousands of lives. However nauseating this may seem, and whatever its dietetic value, it can at least be said that the Masai possess outstandingly graceful figures.

The time had now come to turn my attention to rhinoceros, now unfortunately a rare beast owing to the wanton shooting of this easily shot, once-plentiful and short-sighted prehistoric survival.

With regard to choice of animals for one's hunting, East Africa bears a resemblance to the Army and Navy Stores, or Selfridges, in that any particular species required is most likely to be found in certain parts. The "shop-walker", alias the experienced hunter, instead of guiding one to some store department, could direct an enquirer as follows: "Lion, sir? Certainly, sir. By all means, sir. One hundred and fifty miles North and seventy East. Elephant and Hippopotamus? With pleasure, sir. A thousand miles West and four hundred and thirty South." That, broadly speaking, was how my programme was to take me during the rest of my tour. In other words, the rarer wild animals can be generally located within an approximately definite area, a choice of habitat largely determined to-day by the incursion of human settlement, undue molestation by man, the nature of the food available, and climatic and other conditions.

It was, moreover, by no accident of chance that I was to pass from one species of wild animal to another, but due to the admirable arrangements made by valued friends in East Africa, through whose capable instrumentality I was now delivered like a well-directed parcel into the competent charge of Captain Gethin, an experienced white hunter, whose task it was to lead me to rhino.

CHAPTER XXVI

MOSTLY ABOUT RHINO

We left Arusha in company with A. J. Smalley, who had been with me after lion and who had proved both a pleasant and resolute companion—qualities of great value in all big game hunting. During the journey from Tanganyika into Kenya we were offered a magnificent view of the highest mountain in Africa, Kilimanjaro, 19,321 feet in height and snow-topped, although so close to the equator. For much of the way our road formed the boundary of a game reserve, the right being barred to shooting, the left open to those in possession of game licences.

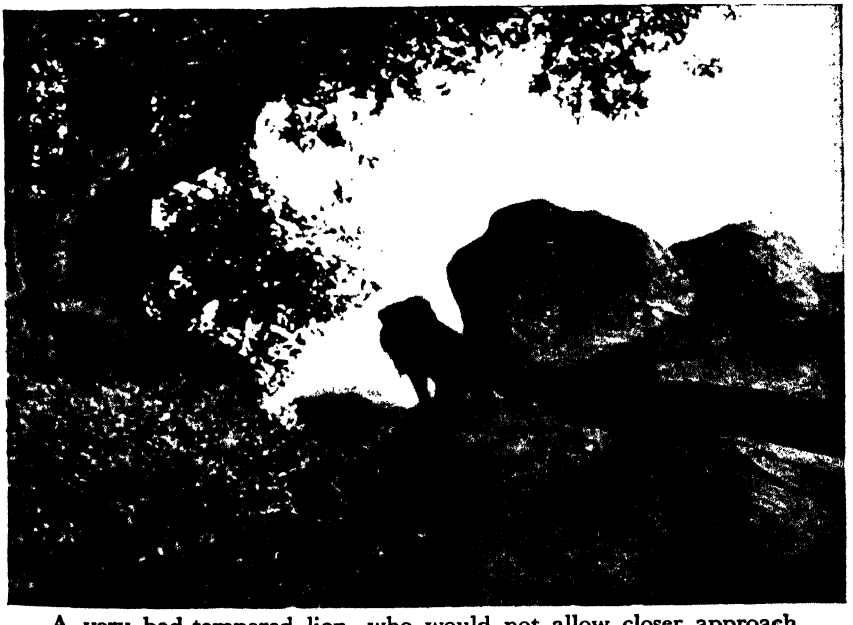
I make mention of this because it occurred too frequently to be accidental, that herds of antelope and gazelle grazing on the left-hand side would gallop across the road into the safety zone directly they saw our cars approaching, from which they would then watch us pass close by, showing the intelligence of wild animals, for they must have learned the difference between safety and danger within a few short years.

Eventually we turned off the main road, when followed long travel along a track of the roughest motorable description and in great heat, until we reached our camping ground: one situated in bush which had but recently suffered from the depredation of elephant; which, however much my regard for it in other respects, cannot be said to prove helpful in afforestation.

Although a favourite haunt of rhinoceri, it was rare to find lion there and it was, therefore, with some surprise that the first animals we were to see that evening was a pride of lion, fully thirty in all, and presenting a delightful domestic picture as they basked in the sun on the edge of the bush, the splendid black-maned leader standing majestically in their midst. Apart from their not being in the least perturbed by our coming, although not the half-tamed lion of the Serengeti, it was equally remarkable to see a herd of zebra grazing placidly by, as if unconscious of the risk they would run when darkness fell and the hour of hunting came. Yet this is not unusual, for often I have seen lion walking close to herds of game which showed a complete indifference, which suggests that either wild animals are able to discriminate between carnivora out on hunting bent or merely travelling. Or is it that they accept such risk just as man faces those of our roads in England, while hoping that with such numbers to select from disaster, if it comes, will fall to the lot of some other? One thing is clear, namely, that if wild animals in Africa invariably sought safety in flight, theirs would be a life of perpetual motion.

Having already obtained all the photographs of lion that we wanted we left these undisturbed, although they allowed us to get quite near before we left them bearing a semblance to a party of picnickers. This was to prove a fortunate decision, for we had not travelled far before we saw

Sprawling ungainliness.



A very bad-tempered lion, who would not allow closer approach.

"Mother Africa", with all her *lares et penates* in a lion-infested part of the Congo.

Arusha women and boys.

a rhinoceros come out of the bush, looking like a prehistoric tank and meander about the open some little distance ahead. Upon his back were four white egrets, birds which not only rid it of ticks but also prove vigilant sentinels, giving vociferous warning when their host blunders into danger.

Knowing that the rhino shares with the elephant remarkably poor sight and the wind being favourable, Smalley and I now left the car and got within forty yards before the birds took alarm and circled about the rhino's head giving vent to shrill cries. Until then he had been facing away from us but now, jinking round with—for such a massive brute—surprising agility, he faced us, tossing his great ugly head in ominous fashion and sniffing violently in an attempt to catch our wind. Failing in this and with a loud snort, he whisked about like a teetotem and trotted into the bush.

Our first attempt having failed, we climbed to the top of a hill, from which we saw another rhino in the distance, and eighteen giraffe in various parts of the mixed terrain below including two which were engaged in courtship; an intriguing sight as they stood close together and entwined their long necks or pecked delicately at each other's head as if bestowing a chaste kiss. Love-making is evidently a prolonged affair in the giraffe community, and proved one which was so filled with interest that it was still continuing when a gorgeous sunset announced that the time had come to start back to camp. Love, ever blind, had indeed misled us, for when repassing the pride of lion, still where we had left them it was to see a herd of elephant forming, as it were, their background and containing several tuskers. Alas, it was by this time too dark for photography, else we could have secured a unique film of lion and elephant in the one picture; an opportunity lost which was never to come my way again!

With lion so close to camp and although I knew that they prefer succulent zebra to indigestible man, it was not altogether pleasant to be woken several times during the ensuing night to the vibrating sound of their roaring, not unmindful of the fact that thin canvas alone formed the only barrier between us.

Next morning we again climbed the look-out hill, from which on the one side stretched a vast swamp, covered in high elephant-grass and papyrus which, although a favourite resort of wild buffalo, hippo and rhino, was impenetrable to man. It was therefore with surprise that we saw a spiral of bluish vapour rising from its midst, looking exactly like smoke and yet which could not have been produced by human agency. This had, perhaps, greater significance to me than to my two companions, for almost forty years before I had rejected the offer of a farm in South Africa upon which a diamond mine was found three years later! Did this gaseous discharge indicate the existence of rich oil deposits and was it to be my fate to leave untold wealth behind in Africa for the enrichment of others? It was a question impossible to investigate during a short stay so, with depressive thoughts of a bank overdraft incurred by the expenses of this same safari I reluctantly left this mystery for others to solve.

The heat was by this time so terrific that there had been no sign of animal life and we were on our way back to camp for a spell of rest when we saw a rhinoceros standing in the open, and leaving the car Smalley

and I made towards it. Its tick-birds, however, spotted us before we could get sufficiently close for our purpose, soaring about him with shrill cries until his microscopical brain sensed a danger which was not actually present, when it lumbered away.

It was too hot, however, for continued exertion and either owing to this, or more probably, because his bemused mind had forgotten the reason for his departure, he soon stopped, when we again tried to close the range. Unfortunately he again proved so amenable to the warnings of his winged sentinels that he now trotted into a deep donga, so filled with bush and huge boulder as to present great difficulty to unarmed men, for rhino can be aggressive in a stupid sort of way and will charge one like a runaway locomotive. Although we made an attempt to follow we were ultimately compelled to abandon it, emerging almost melted with heat which approximated that of a Turkish bath.

We now climbed the hill again, only to reach the top to see the rhino standing in a clearing of the donga, as if posing for its photograph, leaving us with the mortifying knowledge that had we continued for another few minutes we should have secured the pictures we wanted, for until then we had thought the whole donga to be of similar tangled character! Big game hunting, like golf, owes much of its charm to its exasperating quality!

Descending the hill as rapidly as possible in the hope of being yet in time to take advantage of this opportunity, we were still on our way down when the wind suddenly veered and blew towards the rhino. Although fully three hundred yards away its scent proved so acute that it almost instantly got our wind and trotted off. Our chance had gone!

By this time it had been forced upon us that it was going to prove immensely difficult to get a close-up of rhino by fair means; this because while such photographs had been secured without harm to the Rhino concerned by men of high courage and great experience, like Radclyffe-Dugmore, there had been, alas! many others in which the wretched animal had paid the price for its filming by death or—what is worse—lingering torment.

Many have seen such professional films and heard the announcer blandly explaining that a shot will be fired over the head of a rhino to turn it just before it reaches the dauntless operator concerned. It is then that the experienced eye can detect the spurt of dust from the poor beast's head, which tells of the strike of a bullet—a dastardly deed, confirmed by its mad prancing as it turns away. Neither is this mere conjecture, for I quote from a letter from a responsible Government official in East Africa:

> As regards malpractices by those who photograph, the Game Department know of instances where in photographing rhino the photographer is usually covered by a friend with a rifle. If the rhino approaches too closely, the friend fires and the animal is either killed or not infrequently hit in the upper lip and left to go on his way. This means that the animal dies as a result, for he cannot graze.

So much for this type of game photography and, having no wish to resort to such cruel and contemptible means, it was clear that our chance

of filming rhino at close quarters was going to be remote. There was one possible alternative, namely, that I had been told by my soldier son previously that it is possible to avoid the charge of a rhino by waiting until it is almost upon one and then jumping nimbly aside. Theoretically it then is carried onwards by its ponderous momentum, after which its weak mental processes cause it to forget the purpose of its activity, when it may go peacefully away. Without having reason to doubt the practicability of this harmless method, somehow I had not the least desire to put it to the test.

Doubtless, when an irresponsible and agile subaltern, I should have been eager to try the experiment, but the approach to old age brings with it a distaste for risking contact with some tons of ferocious rhino, as also a certain lack of nimbleness, especially when girded about by three cameras and field-glasses, in themselves handicapping to such circus-like feats. From our experience to date, it therefore seemed unlikely that in the short stay at our command we should be able to secure photographs other than those of rapidly receding rhino hindquarters, such as offer no particular charm. But just as we had come to that conclusion fortune smiled upon us to a moderate degree and we succeeded in getting within twenty yards of a rhino and filming it as it went away.

It was, indeed, to be our lucky day, for not long after we saw some twenty giraffe in the centre of a dry river-bed, probably driven to take refuge there owing to the activities of the pride of lion we had seen on first arrival. Framed in a background of snow-capped Kilimanjaro, these graceful creatures presented an attractive scene as they stood or paced before us in their perplexity, too frightened of lion to re-enter the bush or too inquisitive to run away, and yet ill at ease as we approached them on foot.

One, a magnificent bull, standing fully eighteen feet in height and with a sheen upon his dappled hide like satin, might well have been trained by a Guards' sergeant-major and taught deportment by a Court chaperone, for he could not possibly have stood or moved with greater dignity or grace. From a photographic point of view it was a rare opportunity, and the colour film which resulted was to turn out one of my best efforts.

Except on the West Coast of Africa, I have seldom known such humid heat as when we next set out; one so great that a mirage gave such a realistic effect of a lake as to make it seem incredible that it had actually no existence. It was, indeed, so terrific that it seemed hopeless to continue and we were on the point of returning to camp, when a huge and hideous-looking rhino suddenly rose from a wallow some three hundred yards away, presenting an unexpected appearance like the Demon King at a pantomime, and so plastered in mud as to look like some prehistoric survival. Fortunately this last had temporarily got rid of his tick-birds, which was in our favour, and leaving to Gethin the all-important task of keeping the car in instant readiness for a hasty withdrawl, Smalley and I cautiously walked towards him until close enough to see that he had recently been fighting, for chest and head were gashed and bleeding, contributing greatly to a make-up already sufficiently fearsome.

To all appearance he had relaxed into that torpid condition which so often forms the aftermath of bathing, and taking full advantage of this

we got to within some forty yards and started to film. The result was immediate, for faint as was the sound of our cameras, the rhino heard it instantly, and lifting his huge head high in air, searched for our wind, giving vent the while to a series of loud snorts and then, failing to get it, and with our cameras temporarily out of action, he again seemingly relaxed into a state of coma, with his ponderous head and long and vicious-looking horn resting on the ground. Again we applied ourselves to our task until, with eye glued to view-finder, it presently seemed as if my subject was growing larger, as if indeed the rhino was moving! As the disturbing possibility of this dawned upon me, I looked up to find it to be no figment of the imagination, but that the rhino was charging down with menacing fury and giving vent to what bore resemblance to the escape of highly compressed steam.

As we stood upon ground which offered no cover, no more ideal moment could possibly have presented itself in which to put into practice the sideways jumping act. Somehow, however, we felt no inclination to try this experiment; instead it was proposed, seconded, and carried in a split second of time that the meeting be adjourned, and—speaking for myself—without any over-punctiliousness regarding the preservation of dignity—we made for the car. Although it is many years since I felt capable of the pace which I exhibited on this occasion, if ever before, even then the rhino was uncomfortably close by the time we reached it.

Fortunately, Gethin, as cool and unperturbed as always, had anticipated such a happening, with the result that as we sprang on the running-boards, the car was already under way and we were driven to safety, watching this mass of animated spitefulness ploughing along in pursuit and scattering great clods of earth like the bow-waves of a destroyer. The chase continued for some little distance, during which Gethin drove with consummate skill over terrain of a character for which a motor-car was never designed. Then as suddenly as it had sprung into action, and probably because a fit of absent-mindedness had caused it to forget the reason for such haste, the rhino stopped and again appeared to pass into a deep reverie. This time, however, we were taking no chances and in any case had to regain our breath, so waited until it seemed clear that he was asleep, when again we essayed a stealthy approach.

We had been over-sanguine, however, for we no sooner started our cameras into action, than the rhino swung around, and getting into full stride with startling suddenness and with a snort like an exploding boiler, compelled us once more to change our minds and to quit the scene while experiencing all the sensation of a Swiss mountaineer avoiding an avalanche. Again we reached the car in time, but now the pursuit was so vigorous and prolonged as to require all Gethin's calm skill to get away without mishap. Not only did that short journey afford testimony of the high quality of British springs, but I can imagine no better form of treatment for those suffering from liver especially when, apart from protecting one's own person when standing on the running-board of a car behaving like some Mexican buck-jumper, one had to safeguard precious cameras.

By the time the pursuit had ended we had all had enough and, feeling

that we had justly earned our African running "Blues", Smalley and I rested from our labours and watched with mixed feelings the rhino walk stolidly away, either all het up through his failure to get to grips, or more probably having forgotten the whole incident.

Unfortunately, it was to be our last chance, for the time had now arrived to break camp; a disappointment softened by the fact that we had by this time learned that a photographer who is not prepared to shoot, or has not someone by his side prepared to do so, stands small chance of getting a close-up of rhino without great risk.

We reached Nairobi two days later, when I parted from Captain Gethin and A. J. Smalley with great regret, for both had proved good sportsmen and dependable companions.

Every big game hunter in Africa classifies its three most dangerous animals to be the lion, elephant, and wild buffalo, although there is a variety of opinion regarding the sequence in which they are placed, some thinking the lion should head the list, others the buffalo or elephant. But all are agreed that they represent the three most formidable to encounter, rhino being regarded in the nature of a blundering, if dangerous, idiot which does not know what it wants, but won't be happy until it gets it.

Having been successful with lion, if only partially so with rhino, it was therefore wild buffalo and elephant that I now desired to photograph, and having restocked with film at Kodak's wonderful shop in Nairobi, I set out on a safari which was to take me to Uganda, the Belgian Congo, and back again into Tanganyika, Zanzibar, and Kenya.

CHAPTER XXVII

ELEPHANT, WILD BUFFALO, AND HIPPO

THROUGHOUT the safari in Uganda I was to be fortunate in being accompanied by a valued friend in the person of Major E. Temple Perkins, a Provincial Commissioner, and one of the most experienced big game hunters in all Africa, and it was almost entirely due to his leadership and knowledge that I was to owe whatever success resulted. We had soldiered together in the Great War, and had last met when sword-fishing in New Zealand, and I now joined him at Jinja, where the Ripon Falls, flowing from the Victoria Nyanza, forms the head waters of the Nile: the start of a four-thousand-mile river which has seen so much of war and was so shortly destined to be witness to its fell activity again. From there we motored to Fort Portal, reaching there just too late to meet with a herd of elephant which had passed close by shortly before. We were, however, compensated by being given a magnificent view of Ruwenzori, or the Mountains of the Moon, a range of jagged mountain peaks all too frequently veiled by cloud.

Next we visited the Great Rift Valley, which I had seen on our way to the Serengeti Plains; that peculiar geological formation which cleaves Africa from the central lakes to the Red Sea. This awesome gap where we struck it now was some two thousand feet in depth and seven miles across and then closed to human settlement owing to tsetse fly, that *Glossina Palpalis*, which carries sleeping-sickness, and which—prior to the compulsory evacuation of the native population—had taken fearful toll. It is a melancholy fact that wherever man ceases to reside there always follows an increase in wild animal life, as was evidenced here by our seeing large herds of wild buffalo, antelope, gazelle, and many hippo and giraffe from the escarpment above.

This proved the prelude to a wonderful safari, which is the only description allowable, seeing that it is an unwritten law of all correct big game hunting—although, unfortunately, since the era of the motor-car one so often offended against—that those who meet with success should not impart the location in which it has been obtained to others. Otherwise (whatever the pledge of secrecy) experience teaches that such knowledge spreads like a forest fire, until continual disturbance of the animals concerned either drives them away or results in their decimation.

The first chance came with wart-hog, not only the ugliest of all animals but also one which has a curious habit of entering its den backwards: a wise precaution, as they constitute a favourite item on the menu of lion, while the razor-edged tushes with which their gnarled faces bristle form a useful deterrent until their disappearance underground. In passing, it should be added that the damage which a wild boar can inflict with its tushes in one swift sweep of its head is amazing, ripping open a horse's

abdomen when out pig-sticking, as if with a razor, while there is no braver animal.

I stalked these wart-hog by taking advantage of patches of bush until close to a huge boar and his numerous family, which I filmed until they detected my presence and departed. There were, however, other sounders beyond; indeed, the scene before me looked like the gathering of the clans of wart-hog, and I now turned my attention to these until far from Temple Perkins, who had remained in our car. I then had just cause to be thankful for long hunting experience having drilled into me the importance of being ever on the alert, until it had become an automatic habit for, although intent on securing my photographs, I still kept a wary eye about me.

As a consequence, I now caught sight of something suspicious in the deep shadow of a tree I was approaching; a shape which to the inexperienced eye would have meant nothing, but which was suspiciously like that of a wild buffalo. A dangerous animal at all times, and being without a rifle and alone, the charm of wart-hog hunting evaporated with surprising rapidity, and I commenced to tiptoe my way toward safety. But he either heard, or had been watching me, although fortunately not in an aggressive mood, for—snorting his disapproval—he galloped off for some fifty yards before stopping to give me a prolonged stare and going away for good, all of which I filmed.

Then followed further long travel, during which the next experience of any moment was when we saw a small herd of elephant grouped together in a large but negotiable swamp, which we stalked through soaking waist-high grass during the full fury of a tropical thunderstorm. Eventually we got close enough to take our pictures; but here we encountered difficulty, for not only were there no trees up which to seek safety should the elephant discover our presence, but we were by now far from our car, while the height of the grass and a flat terrain made it essential to obtain a higher elevation from which to make my film. Perhaps this serves to show better than all else the poor sight with which Nature, for some inscrutable purpose of her own, has endowed the elephant; for, although at times within less than a hundred yards from many elephant and in full view from the belt upwards, we were able to walk to and fro in patient search till we happened across a thorn bush, which they had uprooted earlier in the day.

To make use of it for my purpose entailed balancing precariously upon its sloping stem, while surrounded by a natural zariba of three-inch thorn, all complicated by both hands being required for operating the camera. That I succeeded in completing this delicate feat without disturbing either equilibrium or elephant was fortunate, for the latter were manœuvring about and often passed quite close; but the resultant film proved to be moderately satisfactory, although the direction of the wind compelled it to be taken with the sun in my lens—which, at risk of repetition, I would stress again as one of the chief difficulties of big game photography. As the elephant were grazing towards us and by now getting uncomfortably close, fortunately as it turned out—we made our way back to the car, passing through grass which had been set on fire by the lightning and then

extinguished by the torrential rain we had endured, the ashes of which did much to increase our already disreputable appearance.

Being now on higher ground we saw, to our surprise, a number of elephant, until then concealed from sight by a ridge, making towards those we had left and realized that we had been unwittingly operating between two temporarily separated portions of a large herd, a position which might easily have resulted in unpleasantness.

As to miss this chance was unthinkable, and the elephant we had so recently left had withdrawn to where we had first seen them, we now retraced our steps, and succeeded in regaining the unstable thorn-bush platform just as the herd joined forces; easy as it is to write, in actual practice no mean feat, entailing as it did the keeping of a keen eye upon two separate groups of elephant in a wind which was by this time erratic. We were, however, to have occasion to congratulate ourselves upon having made the effort, for we were now to watch a most interesting and amusing exhibition, one singularly reminiscent of military evolutions.

First, the now assembled herd formed a rough circle and with heads close together seemingly listened to the C.O. explaining the manœuvre which was to follow. That done, the elephants moved off in two parallel lines, which later merged into single file, as if they were departing. Such evolutions continued until presently they about-turned, marched back again, and wheeled into line directly facing us—not altogether a pleasant moment, for some fifty elephant cover a wide frontage, but an evolution which, perhaps fortunately for us, concluded the parade. They now bunched together again as though for what the Old Army knew as a "pow-wow", but which I expect in these more enlightened and refined days is described as a conference. However accidental, or imaginary, I can but say that the whole procedure bore an amazing similarity to organized drill, particularly as it was led by a majestic and somewhat irascible-looking old Bull, whose splendid tusks reminded me of a fiery colonel under whom I once served, who was adorned with a typical pair of Crimean War moustaches.

To resume the simile: the "dismiss" having apparently taken place, the elephant now began to graze in our direction, which was a stroke of good fortune in light of what was to follow, seeing that it compelled us to quit the scene as rapidly as possible. For we were scarcely clear, when the wind changed abruptly round, when followed a shrill trumpeting, and we saw the elephants with ears outstretched and trunks held high running excitedly to and fro over where we had so recently been.

The next major happening was when we came to a lake surrounded by high elephant grass and from whose sheltered depths resounded the curious booming bark of hippo. There can be more pleasant progress than that necessitated by forcing one's way through stout reed standing up to fifteen feet in height in great heat, but it was effort rewarded when we emerged upon the lake edge at a re-entrant bend, in which dozens of hippo were standing and lying about within a few yards. We had indeed, so "gate-crashed", that they looked goggle-eyed at us for an appreciable moment, as if unable to credit such a revolting sight, then plunged into the water as if to wash it from memory as quickly as possible. Fortunately they were

either not seriously frightened or else curiosity overcame fear, for presently their heads appeared above the surface close by and they gazed stolidly at us: scrutiny of a humbling character, punctuated by vulgar ear-splitting yawns and sighs indicative of extreme boredom. Huge as hippos are (and some weigh at least three tons, and can run up to thirteen feet in total length, while most have a bulk like miniature barrage balloons), in some mysterious fashion they succeed in bunching so closely together in the water that their heads are often almost side by side.

One, indeed, felt quite embarrassed as those great horse-like heads subjected us to such an inquisitive stare that we might have been mannequins; then, either satisfied or disgusted, they would submerge with incredible smoothness. A few moments later, as if their reason boggled at the idea that we could possibly be real, up they would come again, overbrimming with curiosity, like visitors at the zoo at feeding-time.

There are those who class the hippo as aggressive, and tales are told of their attacking canoes and savaging their occupants, but I incline to the view that these are either for the most part accidental happenings or, in rare cases, the revenge of those which have suffered at man's hands. All that I can say is that none of the many hundreds of hippos we were to pass close to in canoes during our safari offered us the slightest harm.

Unfortunately, the hippo make succulent eating for the African; while, as they are compelled, like the whale, to return periodically to the surface in order to breathe, they form easy targets for those who, if not black outside and with far less excuse, like "potting at things". The consequence is that many rivers and lakes of Africa in which these harmless animals were once plentiful now do not possess one. Small wonder that the hippo may sometimes resent the presence of man!

Our next camp overlooked a lake framed by the mountains of the Congo—which was fortunate, seeing that one of the penalties of big game photography in which shooting plays no part (a distinction with a great difference) is that it naturally compels resource to tinned food—for this could now be supplemented by fish: *N'teg*, of which I never tired, and *Mamba*, a lungless fish—if not so appetizing, at least filling—a sufficiency of which could be purchased for our needs for sixpence a day from native fishermen. While we could have shot partridge and guinea-fowl had we wished, none knows better than the experienced hunter the chances so often lost by firing an unnecessary shot in wild animal country, and we refrained. Small use to travel thousands of miles at great expense and then to destroy one's chance in such fashion, yet the great majority out hunting for the first time do so!

How often, indeed, does the novice to big game hunting ignore the fact that even the human voice carries an incredible distance to the supersensitive ears of wild animals and destroys the chance of seeing them.

Our luck was to be in, for next morning we saw a herd of almost a hundred elephant winding its way down a hill on the opposite side of the lake, in which they disported themselves in happy abandon for some two hours, during which we waited in the hope that they might later travel towards us. But when instead they started to go in the opposite direction

and to wend their way leisurely up a hill in the direction of the vast Ituri forest, we jumped into our car and made at what speed was possible in an attempt to cut them off. Fortunately so, for we presently reached the opposite side of the hill to find that the herd had stopped for a noon-day siesta in the heavy bush about a third of the way down. What little breeze there was—so hot that it seemed as if coming straight from an oven—was blowing towards the elephant, compelling a wide detour until we had climbed above them, when we tried to get to close quarters with the wind in our favour.

This proved no easy task, for it was immensely difficult to determine the position of the scattered elephant owing to the denseness of the bush in which they had sought shelter from the sun. Eventually, however, we succeeded in getting to what we judged to be the centre of the herd and descended until within fifteen yards of several elephant, only to find that, in spite of the heat, they were so closely bunched together and in such thick cover that their photography was hopeless. We watched them for some time as they tore off and crunched boughs of trees as if they were celery, while they remained unconscious of our proximity, although we were close enough to hear the rumbling of their digestive processes. Curiously enough, although many carried tick-birds, these took no notice of us.

In our dilemma we decided to climb up again and to make the attempt elsewhere, and had gained an open and level spur, when out from the bush and not a cricket-pitch away, and between us and safety, strode a gaunt and enormous bull elephant with long and curling tusks, evidently the leader of the herd. The ground between being completely bare of cover, we had just cause to be thankful for the poor sight of his species, for he looked most forbidding and as if nursing a grievance which, with perhaps twenty wives or more, to look after, was not surprising. His unexpected and sudden appearance had, indeed, caught us napping. To move might have proved provocative, so we did the only thing possible, namely, "froze", as, spreading his gigantic ears, he stared suspiciously in our direction. Our imitation of tree-trunks to which our military training lent aid, must have been of a high quality, for after the ordeal had lasted much longer than was comfortable, he turned away and sought the shade of a giant *Candelabria Euphorbia* tree with his great bulk outlined against a brazen sky.

Although offering an admirable opportunity in all other respects, it was marred by the sun shining almost in my lens, for in such photography one's position in relation to the subject concerned must always be dictated by the direction of the wind.

In spite of there being a sinister quality about this bull, it was too good a picture to lose, while a glance at T. P. behind me proved reassuring, for he looked like a proud father watching his son going in to bat at the Eton and Harrow.

Knowing his great reputation as a hunter of the elephant, this gave me just the necessary confidence, although to my strained ears the all but noiseless cine-camera sounded like a mowing-machine when I started it

into operation. To my great relief, the elephant had either fallen asleep or else the sound was drowned by the disturbance made by the herd about him, for I had made a satisfactory length of film when we noticed that the breeze was becoming erratic and threatening to veer right round, in which event our position—with the whole herd of elephant stretched between us and safety and covering a frontage of fully four hundred yards, would be—to say the least—uncomfortable. With the stealth of mice, but as rapidly as was consistent with safety, for in such thick cover we never knew when we might bump into an elephant, we withdrew and made our way along until we passed the last of the herd, with a deep breath of thankfulness, and emulated mountain goats in our descent.

Fortunately so, for before we reached the bottom, the wind was blowing from the opposite direction, and there came the scream of frightened elephant and a mighty crashing of bush, and we saw a veritable cascade of them stampeding over the place where we had been standing so shortly before. Although probably not as aggressive in intention as they were perplexed at scenting man so unexpectedly, actually it makes small difference to an unarmed hunter whether several tons of elephant step on him accidentally or intentionally, for in either case his name will soon after appear in *The Times* in an obituary notice. For that reason, we were glad that we had not delayed our departure for "just one more", a habit, whether big game photographic, or alcoholic, which has so often led to disaster.

On our way back we crossed the Equator for one of the thirteen times we were to do so in our several safaris, and here T. P. and I shook hands across the post marking the imaginary line in a "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" attitude and photographed one another with a foot in each hemisphere; however seemingly infantile, a relief after the experience we had been through, for the hunter—no less than the soldier—must learn to dismiss unpleasant memories quickly.

Some days later, having left camp long before dawn, we made such unexpectedly good progress across what we had thought would prove difficult country that we reached our objective before the light was strong enough for good photography. Here stood a low escarpment bounding a dried-up river-bed, then a wilderness of immense elephant grass, marsh, bush, and open clearing where we had hoped to find elephant. Here stood a small hill which we climbed and, thinking that there would be ample time before I should need them, I foolishly left my cameras in the car below. It was inexcusable folly for which I was soon to pay the price, for on reaching the top and peering over an almost sheer slope, we were confronted with the amazing sight of a herd of fully three hundred wild buffalo relaxed in lazy abandon, the nearest so immediately below that I could have hit it with a stone!

The pity of it was that my Leica, so near and yet so far, had a 1·2 lens, which would have allowed me to obtain a picture of this rare sight, even although the light was unsatisfactory. Unfortunately, too, we were dealing with animals of the keenest sense and vision, and as if controlled by a master switch, immediately every great head looked up—an astonishing sight. A moment later the peaceful scene gave place to one of mass hysteria, the

buffalo bolting in every direction, although the speed of the fastest could not have excelled mine as I ran down for my cameras in a hopeless effort to retrieve the situation.

Seasoned Indian jungle and African plain running "Blue" as I was, I was too late, for by the time I reached the top again the buffalo were winding their way through the bush beyond in several narrow columns, each protected by the bulls, who stood facing the possible threat of danger until those which they were protecting had gained safety. The chance of taking a unique photograph had gone; experience had once again been purchased at irredeemable cost!

To help towards the picture I am now going to endeavour to paint, it will be necessary to describe the country which lay before us as it was to play an important part in subsequent happenings. From the hill the escarpment stretched away on both sides, on the left it led almost directly into dense bush, but in front it was clear for some two hundred yards of swampy ground, which ended in a wide belt of high elephant grass, through which a stream meandered, although visible only where it widened into pools in which we could see hippo disporting. Beyond this came moderate bush, framing a pleasant grass-clad glade containing several noble trees, as if a portion of an English park had in some miraculous fashion been transplanted to Central Africa. From there and stretching away to the horizon was high forest. On the right of our coign of vantage, the swamp opened out into a wide expanse of high elephant-grass and papyrus. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, I shall refer to this whole setting as the "amphitheatre", for such it was subsequently to prove.

Following the departure of the buffalo, we climbed down into the swamp and separated, T. P. going into the bush on the left to look for elephant, while I entered the high grass to the right in order to get close-ups of hippo.

Forcing a perspiring way along, for the heat radiating off the swamp was terrific, I presently came to a small pool in which several hippo were wallowing, displaying startled amazement at my appearance and sinking until only their protuberant eyes remained visible. Next the head of a female hippo was thrust out of the grass opposite, to be rapidly withdrawn and replaced by another, the expressions of both registering undisguised horror as if some modest maidens caught in *déshabillé*, following which came a bold rush for the pool and they plunged in. In this way they showed greater courage than a huge bull hippo which now took their place and which, after staring as if unable to credit my appearance, thought discretion the better part of valour and withdrew.

Pressing on, I had just caught sight of another pool through the interstices of the dense grass when my foot struck against something curiously yielding. I was not left long in doubt as to its nature for, like some monstrous Jack-in-the-Box, a bull hippo of gigantic size sprang up with an indignant snort, an almost four-foot wall of palpitating flesh within a few inches. Hemmed in by that stupendous reed it was not a pleasant situation, but—possibly thinking me to be a super-man for my temerity in kicking him—he plunged into the pool.

I gained the bank and got my camera into operation just as his great head and shoulders rose high out of water some five yards away, which position he maintained in some incredible way for fully a minute, giving me, meanwhile, an exceedingly nasty look.

How hippo maintain this attitude when in deep water, I am unable to say, for so much of his great bulk was above the surface as to make it seem as though standing on the bottom, yet this was impossible, for next he sank until nothing but his projecting eyes showed as he floated past.

By now, however, a reaction had set in, and imagination started to run riot—always an unwise thing to allow in wild Africa—bringing with it disturbing thoughts of buffalo, rhino, crocodile or snake, with the result that being unarmed, thirst for further adventure oozed rapidly away, and feeling like a calf which has lost its mother, I returned to the comforting companionship of T.P.

Over our "sundowners" that night we comforted ourselves with the pleasant imagery that the morrow would again find the buffalo herd in the "amphitheatre", for hope runs ever high in the mind of the hunter; were he not 90 per cent. optimist, his life would indeed be a sorry one.

In order not to repeat the mistake of arriving prematurely, we determined to err upon the safe side next morning, and were still at breakfast when we saw two bull elephants both carrying massive tusks, striding along a long spit of land or miniature peninsula which ran out into the lake below and about two miles away. It was like pressing the bell in those rapidly-receding and glorious days when good domestic labour was available—for everybody sprang into full activity on the instant, and soon we were being paddled in a dug-out canoe through hundreds of curious hippo, heading for the direction in which the elephant were travelling.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MORE OF ELEPHANT

THE long tongue of land or peninsula was enclosed by a dense belt of immense grass and we rounded its point without sight or sound of the elephant, but soon we came across a wallow, its grass bent and trampled which they had evidently been making for when we had seen them. We went on, following the lake-edge in the hope of finding others, periodically arousing hippo from their torpors, when they would make a wild dash for the water. They were indeed so plentiful that the lake resounded with their booming bark. We had covered a further mile in this fashion when, looking back, I saw a huge elephant standing well out in the lake and opposite the wallow we had passed. Although we made a wide détour, it caught our wind and returned into the concealing grass again.

Having once more reached the wallow, we decided to pull in to the bank on its leeward side and remain there in the hope that the elephant would re-appear, selecting a position within thirty yards of the wallow, concealed by light reed, through the interstices of which we could see. Here we were to spend an uncomfortable hour in the canoe, upon which a grilling sun beat down with full force and persistent mosquitoes took full advantage of our close confinement.

Then followed a mighty splashing, and we saw a magnificent bull elephant entering the lake from the wallow, outlined in high relief by the yellow reed and sparkling water beyond, the whole effect presenting an arresting picture. All that had to be done now before setting to work to perpetuate it by medium of film, was to paddle quietly out until clear of the reed. It seemed a matter of extreme simplicity and foregone conclusion, but we had counted without the raw African who, admirable as he is in many respects, can also prove unbelievably stupid on occasions. Until then our paddlers had obeyed every order with promptitude and skill. They must also have known that this was the opportunity for which we had been so patiently waiting, while Temple Perkins had gone to particular pains to explain to them beforehand what would be required should elephant appear. Yet they chose that vital moment to go so completely gaga, that two paddled one way and two another, propelling the canoe in such eccentric spirals that a crew of baboon could have behaved no worse, until finally we revolved back to where we had started.

Had it been a comic water carnival, this would have been amusing, but as an aid to animal photography it was a flop of the first magnitude, seeing that our erratic progress had not unnaturally been accompanied by vitriolic, if subdued, profanity. As a consequence, what with the splashing and the rebukes, it was not surprising to find that the elephant had gone.

Looking back on what had then seemed little short of tragedy, there was something irresistibly droll about it. The elephant posing majestically,

the paddlers behaving like buffoons and propelling the canoe all ways except the right one, while we, with faces distorted by a hideous passion, were whispering blood-curdling oaths as though they were soft blandishments, abjurations which we would have much preferred to have shouted at the tops of our voices.

A certain relief to our feelings was afforded by movement in the high grass showing that the elephant were still there, and after going to considerable pains to represent to the paddlers our exact opinion of them, we settled down to further tedious waiting. Then, when feeling like a stage manager peeping through the curtain to ascertain the size of his audience, I saw an elephant part the grass opposite and test the air suspiciously with his uplifted trunk, his great ears flapping like sails in the vivid sunlight, a veritable monument of massive strength. For a moment it seemed as if he were going to enter the water and give us our chance, but it was not to be, for he was obviously perturbed, and presently withdrew; after which we could see by the movement of the grass that he was departing.

We now decided to land and try our luck on foot, although this was easier said than done, as the fringe of the lake was churned into a quagmire by elephant and hippo, and the reed which lined it immensely thick. Eventually we found a narrow channel, little broader than the canoe itself, and overhung by grass and thorn bush. Up this the crew were hauling the canoe when I, seated in the bow, suddenly heard a sharp hissing and looking up, saw a mamba, one of the most deadly and aggressive snakes in existence, writhing in the bush above me and quite evidently roused to a state of anger. No council of war was called, no lengthy weighing of the pros and cons became necessary, for our crew, now working in perfect unison, withdrew the canoe with such aplomb that it positively shot out into the lake. Eventually we managed to get ashore and, taking with us two of the paddlers, we left the others to pick us up on the far side of the peninsula at a rendezvous they had themselves suggested.

Then followed hard going through stifling grass, fully fifteen feet in height, until we emerged into park-like country and almost immediately saw two bull elephants sheltering beneath a large tree. Unfortunately, and although we succeeded in getting within twenty yards of them, the deep shadow made photography impossible, but as the tree stood some distance from the nearest other cover, it appeared a certainty that we would be offered a splendid chance when the time came for the elephant to move. Nothing, indeed, could have been better, for it was by now the hottest part of the day, when such animals prefer shade, and it seemed to be a good opportunity for a much-wanted lunch. With that intent, we posted our two Africans where they could keep the elephant in sight, and after carefully telling them to warn us should they exhibit any signs of departure, we sought the shade of the nearest bush, where, although out of sight of our quarry, we could see our sentinels while we ate. After their previous misbehaviour, it was refreshing to see how alert they were with eyes so glued upon their charge as to renew a sense of confidence largely shattered by the canoe episode.

Lunch ended, we joined them, to find to our dismay that the elephant

had gone! "Oh, yes, they've gone," agreed the two idiot-boys, beaming with pleasure at our rapid grasp of the situations. "There they are," they added brightly, pointing to two enormous departing sterns wending their way into deep bush almost a mile away! When the air had cleared a little, and breath returned, we learnt that the elephant had not only left the shade of the tree almost directly after we had commenced our lunch, but had meandered about in front of our incompetents, while they had maintained their gaze upon the tree thinking this to be their task. Murder has often been done for less, but by this time disappointment, heat, and irritation had numbed us to such a degree that words failed to satisfy, and realizing that we had suffered an irretrievable loss, we decided to call it a day—and what a Day!

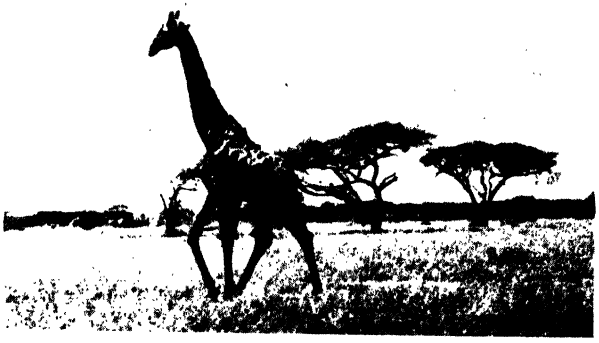
In all probability the truth was that these raw Africans could not realize why we were not killing animals which they could eat, and regarded big game photographers much as a "Blimp" does a pacifist. But that they had not yet reached the full peak of their capacity for error was shown when we told them to lead us to the waiting canoe. This they did with an air of supreme confidence while we forced our way wearily behind through hundreds of yards of stifling elephant grass, only to find when we reached the lake that we had struck the wrong place. In suffocating heat we retraced our steps, only to twice more suffer the same result until it was clear that our guides were lost, a fact which they now cheerfully admitted as if it were all part of some amusing game. Fortunately, those in the canoe proved more sensible and eventually came to our aid shortly before sunset, by when we had both had as much as we wanted. It had, indeed, proved one of those irritating days which occur in all forms of hunting, when everything goes wrong just when success seems in sight. Yet, without such patches of misfortune, such gloomy backgrounds in which to frame bright days of success, sport would not possess the charm it does.

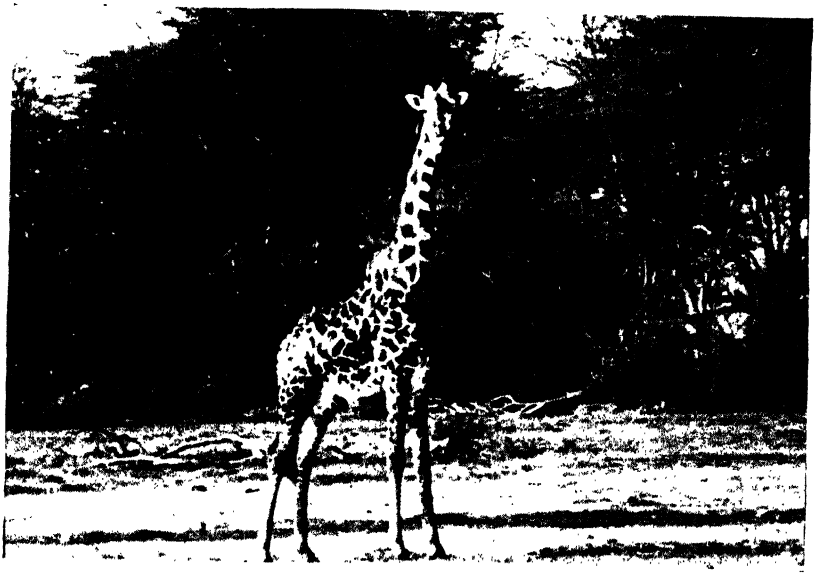
Early the next morning we left for the "amphitheatre" again in the hope that the buffalo had returned, meeting on the way a party of excited African fishermen, armed with spears, and asking our aid to deal with an aggressive wild buffalo which they said had already injured one of their number; one which frequented a part which they were compelled to visit to get their firewood. Thinking this to be only an excuse to obtain that meat which is like unto precious gems to the African, we refused and left them disconsolately behind.

Curiously enough, not long after, we met a small herd of wild buffalo which allowed us to approach to within thirty yards, probably regarding our car as some form of rhinoceros. While I filmed them, they stood swinging their massive heads to and fro in perplexity before finally making off, having decided that all was not well.

Arrived at the look-out hill, we climbed it with caution, needless to say, this time complete with cameras, and peered over its crest in optimistic hope.

It was as if some magical transformation scene had taken place for, to our amazement, the whole arena which we had last seen teeming with wild buffalo, was now occupied by a considerable herd of wild elephant,





Owing to their curiosity Giraffe prove both easy and attractive subjects for photography.

A splendid bull, carrying the best tusks of all.

a truly impressive sight, apart from its unexpectedness. This was not to be the only stroke of good fortune, for the wind was favourable and allowed of our watching this fascinating sight—a herd of well over a hundred elephant scattered over a wide area.

The principal attraction, however, was the park-like glade in the centre which had obviously become the nursery, and now contained fourteen young elephant, ranging in size from that of a small pony to half-grown specimens. Attendant upon them were four matronly-looking females behaving like gargantuan "nursemaids", or at any rate, and as elephants seldom have more than one calf at a time, we liked to think so. It was a conjecture strengthened when periodically other females would come out of the bush to fondle or feed their calves, or was it to make sure that the "nursemaids" were doing their duty? As if satisfied on this point, they would then disappear, as if returning to the Bridge room.

Meanwhile it was amusing to watch the young ones indulging in trials of strength, in which head was planted against head in their proportionate sizes, and they tried to push one another backwards—a test of strength which I have seen played so often by red deer. At times it seemed almost as if they were grouped in sizes, the aloofness of the bigger calves reminding one of prefects at a Public School. However impossible it may be adequately to describe this delightful scene, some indication of its interest will be afforded by the fact that we, hardened old hunters as we were, spent the entire day absorbed in watching it, for the wind remained constant throughout.

It was then, too, that I realized as never before how much those bent on killing, as I had been in the past, miss in the way of interest, for had we been out for ivory, this time would have been spent in stalking the elephant carrying the most profitable tusks. Instead, we stayed put, with ample leisure to watch this fascinating scene, and to obtain this unique glimpse into their intimate family life.

From our high position and towards evening we could see the mighty leader of the herd with five other tuskers who were feeding just within the bush to our left and that they were out of sight of most of the herd, some members of which were fully a thousand yards away, which is important in light of what followed, when the leader suddenly sprang into action and came towards us with purposeful stride. For although there had not been an audible sound, there came an instant response from the widely-scattered herd, as if controlled by wireless and obviously due to some sense of sound imperceptible to man. Like streams joining rivers, soon the entire herd was coming towards us in a long winding procession with the fine old bull in front, followed in Indian file by the other five bulls and the remainder of the herd. By this time it was clear that it was going to be a race between darkness and their arrival upon the escarpment above, upon which we were waiting, for the leader in his climb set an aggravatingly deliberate pace, stopping at intervals to eat or contemplate. Finally, these waits became so unendurable that we climbed down until within some fifteen yards of him, only to find the bush so dense that all we could see were his head and shoulders. Nor was the situation altogether comfortable, for immediately

following was a vicious-looking bull with head and chest gashed and bleeding as the result of recent fighting, and looking so savage that discretion urged me to return to the height above.

Now followed an exasperating wait, with the sun nearing its setting and the leader climbing with slow deliberation until at long last his great head and shoulders showed above the edge of the escarpment, when yet once again followed a long pause during which I stole up to within fifteen feet and got a close-up; too much of a one indeed, seeing that the resultant film showed only part of his massive head and flapping ears. But I was not to lose my chance after all, for presently he levered himself out upon the bare plain with the aid of his massive tusks, slightly to one side of us and, stirred to full activity at exactly the wrong moment, started off as if in a hurry to catch a train. Seeing that views of receding elephant hindquarters lack photographic interest and that there was no cover of any kind available, on a flat and all but grassless plain, there was nothing left but to run after him until fortunately he stopped. My long-sought chance had come!

Unfortunately, we were now to be confronted with a difficult problem in that although the wind was in the right quarter as far as this elephant was concerned, it was in consequence exactly the opposite with regard to the malignant-looking monster still making its way up and which we knew would be joining the party in a matter of minutes. Something had to be done, and that quickly, and as it was no time for undue caution I hurried forward with all the feelings of a Lilliputian until within fifteen yards, and there took a coloured film of the great leader with an exultation somewhat dimmed by fear that he would hear me.

Good, however, sprang from evil at this critical time, for the elephant still climbing up behind fortunately elected to choose that moment to create such a disturbance—he was, I seel sure, in a poisonous temper—as to drown all other sound, with the result that I had obtained a satisfactory length of film when my vast subject strode majestically away. Perhaps fortunately, for by this time the blood-bespattered head of the other bull was showing above the escarpment, and although we ran to one side as fast as caution would allow, we were only just in time; for soon there came a trumpeting scream of rage and looking back we saw him with uplifted trunk running this way and that where we had been standing so shortly before; looking, indeed, so formidable that we made all haste to our car and got away.

On looking back over the events of that interesting day, I cannot help but wonder how long it will be before the "amphitheatre" in which we saw this fascinating scene enacted will become included in a settlement of civilization, when—the haunt of elephant for centuries—they will be regarded as intruders and exterminated because they dare to infringe upon the rights of man. Unfortunately, it does not require a powerful imagination to picture such a happening, seeing that it is a true picture of what has occurred to the elephant in other parts of Africa within my own recollection.

It was with anticipatory pleasure that we set out at early dawn next day to revisit the scene and hoping to find the elephant again, meeting on

the way a hippo out for a matutinal stroll. Leaving the car, I succeeded in heading it off from a stream and followed it into the bush, in which we indulged in a game of hide and seek in my efforts to film it; a game brought to an abrupt conclusion when I, weaponless, happened upon a recent lion kill, a very gory sight and the smell of lion most pungent.

Yet again we reached the look-out hill, and with hearts beating high, climbed up and peered over its crest. Was it to reveal wild buffalo or elephant? It was to be neither. For, except for its hippo habitués, the stage which had showed us such fascinating activity was now empty and, sadly disappointed, we returned to camp. Fortunately so, for no sooner had we reached it than five bull elephant came into view on the peninsula below and making for the now familiar wallow. Soon we, too, were approaching it in a dug-out canoe, though with a confidence somewhat strained by the fact that it was being propelled by the self-same crew as on the previous occasion. This time, however, we were to have greater luck, for as we rounded the point, we saw the uplifted trunk of an elephant searching the air above the high reed, which indicated that the others were not far distant.

The wind being favourable, we tied up close to the wallow as before, while the steamy wait which followed was made tolerable by the close sound of branches being torn down and powerful mastication. Finally patience was rewarded when three bull elephants, all with good tusks, entered the wallow and splashed and squirted water over their heated bodies in joyous abandon; the time for action had arrived! It was then that a feeling of dismay swept over me, for never have I reposed less faith in human beings than in our paddlers, and yet our whole chance of photographic success rested in their hands, in every sense of the word.

But the idiosyncrasies of the raw African are many, not least of which is an astounding capacity for displaying utterly contrasting qualities with kaleidoscopic rapidity. It was to be so now, for instead of a further display of grotesque idiocy, this time they performed their momentous rôle with oarsmanship worthy of a Varsity "Eight"; which was fortunate, for we were soon close enough to the elephant to be able to see their eyebrows. Probably they thought we were a cluster of hippo, but that six men and a canoe could approach so close without either being recognized or creating alarm serves to show the incredibly poor sight of elephant. If, therefore, small merit attaches to such photographic success, this would equally apply to shooting elephant, the more particularly in that one can do the latter from a far greater distance than is required for photographic work.

Not that we were altogether undetected, for the finest of all, and quite evidently the sentinel, a splendid bull carrying the most massive tusks, displayed anxiety, peering hard in our direction with searching trunk and outstretched ears. What was particularly remarkable throughout a long séance, was that while he remained suspicious, the others took no notice whatsoever, browsing with that happy contentment and dangerous disregard for self-protection so reminiscent of our own national attitude in times of peace. And however much the lordly "sentinel" formed a majestic picture, and performed his duty so nobly, there are many who would have

seen him from the view point of the value of his ivory alone, and would have cheerfully killed him, even had he been the last elephant in Africa!

Only once did he show signs of wading out to make a closer investigation; an intention which ended as suddenly as it had begun, he being apparently satisfied that we were harmless and were therefore qualified for entrance as honorary members of the elephant club.

For over an hour this intimate peep into the habits of the elephant continued, until we were again to be witnesses of the mysterious way in which they communicate with one another. This came at a time when the five were well separated, three having their backs turned to the leader. Yet directly he started to depart without having made a perceptible sound, the others simultaneously followed in his wake.

When paddling back to camp, a huge bull hippo, alarmed by our quiet approach, suddenly shot out of the grass and almost joined us in the canoe as he plunged into the water, causing not only a welcome shower bath, but such momentary trepidation that had we been on shooting bent, we should almost certainly have regarded it as an aggressive attack and killed it. Instead, it was probably highly frightened and disappeared for good.

Early next day we made a further visit to the "amphitheatre", this time to find to our joy, that its "nursery" contained eight baby elephants and three "nursemaids". The curious thing was that there was no sign of other elephant, as if the mothers concerned had entrusted their infants to a crèche while spending a few hours at whatever corresponds to the "Pictures" in Wild Africa. The young calves were frolicsome, if this description fits a demeanour composed of lightness of heart combined with clumsy movement and comic dignity.

Again we witnessed trials of strength, varying from a tug-of-war of intertwined trunks to what could quite easily have been imagined as a game of touch-me-last. But what was even more intriguing were their amusing attempts to uproot trees of a size which would have baffled a full-grown elephant. Nothing daunted, the wee mites would stand upon their hind legs in order to obtain a better purchase, efforts which failed to flutter a leaf but as delightful to watch as doubtless they were satisfying to make.

Again, too, we were to see the fussy attentions of the "nursmaids", and how carefully they looked after their smaller charges, picking them up and dusting them down as it were, as they fell in play. However much imagination may have entered into this description of such a delightful scene, I am only attempting to convey the general impression created while we were privileged to have this rare insight into the domestic privacy of the wild elephant.

Nor were they alone in providing us with entertainment, for while we were watching, a Giant Hog trotted past beneath us, a type of animal which is now becoming rare, and a boar of stupendous size. We watched the nursery until the sun had set and a misty curtain shut out the attractive scene. But with dusk in the primitive wild ever comes melody, and the whole wonderful setting now awoke to quaint sound, varying from the "onk-onk-onk-ee'or" of hippo to the distant lowing of wild buffalo, and

the trumpeting of elephant. Beyond, the jagged peaks of the Congo mountains stood silhouetted against the last rays of a sunset of wondrous colouring, the whole *tout ensemble* creating an impression which will ever remain in memory.

It was with this last salute of primeval harmony and rugged grandeur that we left this fascinating spot with the sad knowledge that while it would continue to unfold its attractive mysteries, our stay was drawing to a close.

There was, however, one consoling feature in our going—one which perhaps struck an old-time hunter with the greater force—namely, that we had neither harmed an animal, nor fired a shot throughout our stay, so that we could look back upon the "amphitheatre" without associating it with other scenes which I had known in the past, with grisly death, rotting carcases and frightened survivors, and were taking with us—as a better form of trophies—films which would reveal the wondrous charm of much which we had seen for the rest of our lives.

We were, indeed, so deeply affected at this parting that our journey back in the darkness was made without a word passing between us; which at least serves to show that long years of hunting do not destroy regard for wild animal life.

CHAPTER XXIX

A NARROW SQUEAK WITH WILD BUFFALO

WE were sitting by the camp fire that night, when an African clad in the usual long white robe came up, who, in reply to an enquiry, announced in faultless English that he had merely come to call. Being far from human settlement and a thousand miles from a railway, this was sufficiently surprising, but was not all. For when asked where he had come from, the reply was that he was "just down from Oxford"; in tones which suggested that he had strolled over from his college in order to have a friendly chat.

Although during forty years I have admired the singular capacity of the African for adapting himself to changed conditions, this came as a surprise. But that great continent is ever a land of strange happenings, and we were to find that he was a Chief's son, who had flown home for the vacation, and his views upon the Africa of the future were to prove of interest, if at times somewhat disturbing.

It was a tropical night of rare quality with a gentle zephyr tempering the heat, and the moon mirrored in a rippling path across the lake below —a primitive paradise—peace personified. Our small talk ended, we sat drinking in this beauty in a silence broken by our dusky visitor exclaiming with deep feeling:

"And they call this 'Darkest Africa'. Just compare it with most of Europe to-day."

At a time when Italy's attack upon Abyssinia and her use of mustard gas had not, to say the least of it, set a particularly Christian example to the coloured peoples of the world, it was a remark to which there was no answer. Yet never in the wildest delirium of high fever had I ever imagined that I should hear such a criticism expressed in a cultured voice by an African so direct from our ancient University and in the heart of Africa! It was then, too, that I realized as never before how the example for good or evil shown by white people is as the widening ripples caused by a pebble thrown into a still pool; how improved publicity, education and mounting ambition of those who are not of our colour is placing Western civilization beneath a powerful and critical microscope.

We had intended that our visit to the "Amphitheatre" that day would be the last, but the temptation to return proved irresistible on the next and last morning of our stay, and we reached there soon after dawn. It was to prove, however, an anti-climax, for it was bare of animal life. Yet there was something curiously fitting in this, for, as if some popular play had ended a successful run, the stage was empty, its talented artistes dispersed, leaving behind the fragrance of their memory and a great emptiness. Disappointed as we were, we realized in our heart of hearts that it was better so, for had we been shown yet another attractive tableau of wild animal life, the wrench of the parting would have been the greater. As it

was, we reluctantly left it, looking as if swept and garnished for another presentation, and were deeply grateful for what it had shown us. Long may it remain a harbourage for its wild denizens, in which they can live their lives without molestation from man.

During the return journey to camp we were met by the same band of Africans who had appealed to us previously, now even more excited, because two of their number had been attacked by the wild buffalo they feared, escaping only by climbing a tree in which they had been compelled to spend the night. It now became clear that their complaint was genuine, and that it had become our duty to kill this dangerous beast before leaving.

With this object, Temple Perkins returned to camp and fetched his rifle and, together with the two victims of unprovoked attack as guides, we set out upon our quest, which necessitated bumpy travel across rough country and through waist-high grass until we reached a part where our African, still somewhat pale about the gills, indicated that the herd of buffalo concerned was usually to be found.

As neither looked capable of rendering any further assistance, we left them in the car and walked on for some little way, passing an ancient crater *en route*. As this was to play such an important part in what was to follow a description will not be amiss. Bowl-shaped, its lip almost flush with the ground by the wear of ages, it had a diameter of perhaps three hundred yards and bore a resemblance to a gargantuan bomb-crater, or one formed by the fall of meteorite. Its fissured and boulder-strewn side fell steeply for some two hundred feet, when commenced a thicket of dense bush, forced to abnormal luxuriance in this natural incubator. This had been described by our guides as a favourite lair of the buffalo we were after; but as there was no visible sign of their presence, and as, in addition, it looked a formidable proposition such as would require a lot of combing, we decided first to search the country round about.

Presently we came to a pleasant stream which, sunk deep in its bed, meandered along the foothills of that mighty mountain range which separates Uganda from the Belgian Congo, and here we climbed a hill and glassed the surrounding country for the buffalo, but to no purpose. While engaged in this process I saw a half-grown hippo approaching on the opposite bank, which stood high above the water. It was still about two hundred yards away and, leaving T.P. to continue the search, I hurried down towards it in the hope of obtaining a photograph. Forcing my way through the difficult thornbush which edged the stream, it was to find that the hippo had disappeared as if dissolved into thin air, just as it now passes out of this story. Puzzled by this strange disappearance, I peered over the edge of the high and overhanging bank, thinking to see it climbing down the other side.

If it takes much to thrill an old hunter, the sight which so unexpectedly met my eyes most certainly did so. For into my field of vision and directly below was a pool in which four mother hippo and five tiny calves were disporting themselves. Evidently it was the "children's hour", and as I watched, "Father", as represented by an enormous bull hippo, attempted at intervals and in extremely clumsy fashion to join in the frolics. It soon became obvious that as a playmate he was a failure, and either knew it,

or was told so, for following each gargantuan gambol, he would withdraw to the bank with hurt dignity, and sulk. Reconciliation would then be effected per medium of a diminutive calf, which would swim across and butt his ponderous face in a delightful manner, if with scant respect, until composure would return, and he would again participate, only to meet with the same lack of success. Although I did not then know the whole of my good fortune, I appreciated that I had been exceptionally lucky in happening upon this scene, the more especially as the noise the hippo were making drowned all other sound and enabled me to make the most of it photographically.

There was more to follow, for I had no sooner completed a satisfactory length of film than, exactly as if trained for their part by a good producer, and as if this had been the cue for the curtain to rise on the next act, a hippo mother climbed ponderously up the bank, and, followed by her little calf copying her waddling gait with comic exactitude, crossed an open patch of sand into the high reed beyond. Scarcely had she gone from sight, when another followed suit, the proud mother of a larger calf, who walked with such grotesque dignity that it might well have been a film screen test. But this was not all, for it was now the turn of the third, who had two calves, the first but a few weeks old, and the other a yearling. Up to now I had been alone, but as I was filming her exit from the pool, followed by her disproportionate calves, T. P. arrived, and looking over the overhanging bank, whispered:

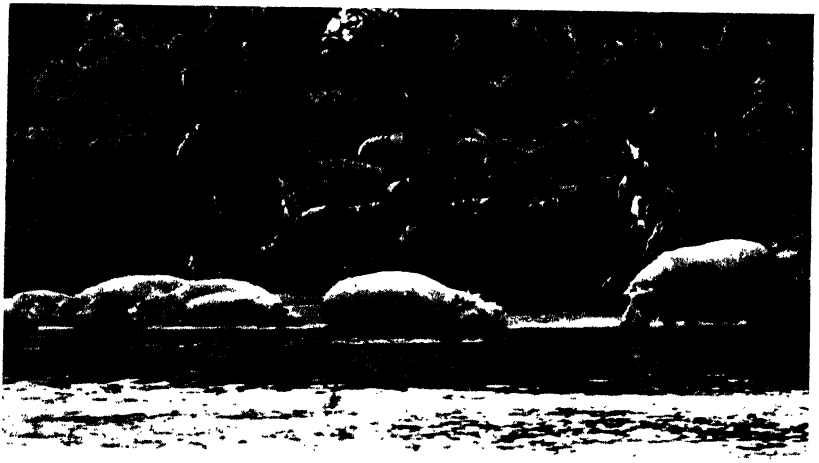
"You are the luckiest man I have ever been out with."

Engaged as I was at that moment in filming the proud mother progressing along a sandy beach with her offspring ranged on either side, and immediately engrossed in a similar task with the fourth hippo and her one calf, there was no time for enquiry then. But when this pleasant scene and unique opportunity had ended, he told me that during over twenty years of hunting in Africa, he had never before seen a hippo with two calves leave the water in daylight, and that in his judgment I had both seen and photographed a somewhat unique happening.

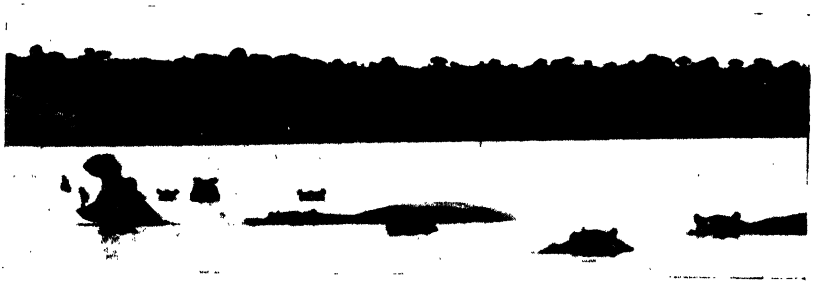
It is a curious characteristic of big game hunting that it usually pursues a course like a fever-temperature chart, in which success drops to failure, hardship to comfort, or safety to danger with amazing, and sometimes disturbing, suddenness, and we were now to find that this safari was to run true to type. Nor was the contrast unduly delayed, for we were on our way back to the car following this pleasant experience, when we saw the herd of buffalo we had been looking for grazing in the distance; some seventeen buffalo in all.

Stalking them with care and making use of scattered clumps of bush, we eventually succeeded in getting to within a hundred yards of them, during which time they remained absorbed in their browsing. Here, however, the cover ended, while as I was not yet close enough for my pictures, and having in mind that anyway the vicious bull had to be shot and this might just as well be done now, I left the shelter of the last remaining bush and, by now completely exposed to view, for the grass here was only some two feet in height, stole quietly towards them.

The horse-like heads of hippo subjected me to an inquisitive stare.



Hippo in the Parc Nationale, Belgian Congo.



"Scrutiny punctuated by vulgar ear-splitting yawns.
(*Lake George. Uganda.*)

"Then followed a display of an arresting description. Nor were the tiniest cubs awed by the old lion."

All went well, for every head remained down as they continued to graze their way along until I was within thirty yards. By now they had assumed gigantic porportions and there had developed an atmosphere of tension, but, assured of T. P.'s armed protection, I threw all caution to the winds and started my film camera into operation. Slight as was the sound made by its delicate mechanism, it proved amply sufficient, for instantly—as if actuated by a master-switch—every awesome head was thrown up and turned towards us, and without a moment's pause, as if drilled to that movement, the buffalo swung round in a semi-circle of which we formed the centre, and within twenty yards.

As far as I personally was concerned, the desire for further photography became immediately supplanted by the strongest urge to quit the scene at the fastest pace possible, but safety lay far behind, and I realized the futility of such an attempt with that swiftness of thought with which one's mind works in moments of crisis. There was, therefore, nothing for it but to stare with fascinated horror at those vast tossing heads, stupendous horns, eyes which seemed to radiate sparks of hatred and hooves pawing up great clods of earth as if preparatory to obtaining a good purchase for a united charge. It was then that I looked back at T. P. for the consoling vision of his armed strength, only to find him, to my dismay, while completely unperturbed, minus that rifle to which I was trusting for deliverance! In the following uncomfortable period, I experienced sensations doubtless akin to those of early Christian martyrs on first introduction to hungry lion. Yet I can remember thinking, in that comic strain peculiar to grave moments, how topsy-turvy the position had become, for now *we* were the exhibits in this natural zoo, without, alas! the intervening iron bars.

Realizing that any attempt to withdraw would be to invite attack, and there being nothing else to do, and actuated more by funk than intrepidity, I somewhat mechanically started to film the snorting beasts before us—an odd reaction, possibly dictated by a desire to perpetuate the cause of our sticky end; a celluloid obituary notice, the tremulous quality of which, as subsequently shown, was not entirely due to the absence of a tripod! Whether allergic to photography or not permitted by their film contracts, I cannot say, but to my immense surprise and greatly to my relief the buffalo now swung round and made off!

It now turned out that T. P. had planned to find the buffalo first and then to fetch his rifle from the car, while I probably failed to notice its absence because until then photography had come first and he had become accustomed to doing without it. Thinking that I knew he was weaponless, T. P. had assumed that I would content myself with getting within long photographic range of these buffalo and, to make my chance better, had himself remained a little way behind. When, however, I had left the last cover and so unexpectedly gone forward to close quarters, and knowing that he could not stop me without alarming the buffalo, he had most courageously followed.

Perhaps in a way it was the old tale of experienced hunters each testing the other out, in that spirit of emulation which has been the cause of so many tragedies, but with this difference, that while he knew we were without means of self-protection, I was relying upon it and acting in the folly of

ignorance. In one sense, and as things turned out, it proved a fortunate contact, for it had given us an opportunity of picking out the aggressive old bull, a particularly evil-looking specimen, which T. P. now determined to shoot.

By the time we had returned to the car and secured the rifle, the buffalo had circled and were approaching the crater I have already described, and in order to catch up with them before they could gain the shelter of its bush-clad depths, we ran as hard as our impedimenta would allow, for three irreplaceable cameras, plus the etceteras, and a pair of field-glasses, constitute a not inconsiderable handicap to speed. We should have even then lost the race, but for the fact that they heard us and swung round, with the savage bull standing in front. Although the moment for action had come, we were puffed by our run, with the consequence that T. P. wisely waited to recover his breath and to make sure of his shot. Had the buffalo followed suit, we should have been saved much subsequent trouble, but the crater was close and the temptation to seek its shelter irresistible, with the result that they now turned and made a dash for it.

Fearing that this would prove positively their last appearance, I dashed in pursuit with my film camera in full operation; the result of which was later to look as if taken from a small boat in a choppy sea, if making up in uniqueness for what it lacks in photographic quality. We reached the edge of the crater in time to see the herd literally plunging down its steep and rugged slope, the bull being last in the spate of mighty beasts. It was a difficult target, for they were leaping and twisting to avoid rocks in their descent, while T. P. had to fire standing. But he was a magnificent shot, and the bull responded by leaping out from the side of the crater and swerving over on his side, plunged from sight behind a large rock, creating a miniature avalanche of stone and a cloud of dust; the rest of the herd, on gaining the bottom, disappeared into the bush.

There seemed nothing left for us to do now except examine the dead bull and then return to the car and inform its African occupants that their enemy was no more. Descending the difficult slope, we reached the concealing rock and looked over, thinking to see the buffalo stretched out in death. Instead, and to our consternation and surprise, he had gone! What made this the more amazing, was that not only had he been obviously hard hit, but his impact with the ground had been terrific, amply sufficient in itself to have stunned most animals.

The hard surface looked indeed as if it had been hit by a lorry, yet the bull's vitality had evidently enabled it to pick itself up and depart almost instantly, probably even while our gaze had been concentrated upon the rest of the herd as they made their exit. It was a problem we had not anticipated, and in the excitement of the moment and his anxiety to put it out of its misery as soon as possible, T. P., good sportsman as he was, entered the bush, acting upon the assumption that the wounded bull would rejoin the others, leaving me to follow the blood trail, which, as it presently turned out, led in a reverse direction.

I now come to a curious part of my story, to appreciate which it must be borne in mind that I had taken part in big game hunting for over thirty years, and almost always when armed with a rifle.

Actually, big game hunters seldom take preventable risks, while I was well familiar with the cunning and vindictive nature of a wounded wild buffalo, as also with its immense capacity for taking punishment. Yet, however strange as it may seem, I became so absorbed in my task that it was not until the spoor led to a large and dense bush on the edge of the central thicket, that the recollection came to me that I was not only unarmed and alone, and at the bottom of what bore a similarity to a gigantic bowl, but in all probability in a perilous proximity to one of the most dangerous wild animals in existence.

With such knowledge came an urgent desire to depart from a scene now suddenly become distasteful and to gain the comparative safety offered by the high ground above. But this would not only mean leaving T. P. to face the risk alone, although how I could help him was not clear, but the Africans waiting out of sight in the car above might misinterpret such action. The honour of the white man was indeed at stake! With this realization came a very naked feeling as I stood at the bottom of that deep hole, which a noonday sun had by now converted into an inferno, and fully cognizant of the fact that a wounded buffalo in particular is renowned for an unpleasant habit of circling upon its own trail to catch the pursuing hunter unawares.

By this time experiencing the sensations which must be those of a fly caught in a spider's web, and acting on the sound principle that the more frightened one is the busier one should keep, I returned to where the bull had fallen and applied myself to checking up the spoor. There had been no mistake: once more it led to the same large bush. Thus my confidence grew, and as the buffalo had not put in an appearance, I commenced to assume that he was dead, and as time went on felt more and more strongly tempted to enter the bush; indeed, I certainly should have done so before this had I not known by experience the infinite capacity for malignant waiting of a wounded buffalo.

Stimulated by the spirit of friendly rivalry always existing between big game hunters, it now took all my self-control to resist the temptation, as I stood outside with a mind see-sawing between desire and caution. "Why not take a peep? It's bound to be dead," the spirit of mischief whispered. "Don't be foolish. Remember the many killed by such folly," urged wisdom. "Call yourself a hunter? What will T. P. think when he finds it dead on the other side of this bush and you still outside?" prompted temptation. "Better be laughed at than a corpse," replied common sense. So between such counsels of the imagination, and with the processes of thought dulled by heat and fatigue, once again I returned to where the buffalo had fallen, feeling completely baffled.

From this elevation the upper part of the far wall of the crater was visible, and I had not been there long when I saw the herd of wild buffalo climbing up one after another, while I counted carefully as they in turn reached the top and passed from sight, until all had gone. The total was not complete—there was one short. Somewhere in the crater was a dead or wounded buffalo! "This is your chance," again prompted foolhardiness. "It's clearly dead, and unless you find it now, T. P. will do so, and make

you look silly." However ludicrous as this mischievous train of thought may seem at normal times, it is just such challenges to reason in times of dangerous hunting which have lured many to their deaths. They form, indeed, the only satisfactory explanation why even highly-experienced hunters sometimes fall victim. It was nearly so with me, for, hesitant no longer, I now approached the bush with the full determination of entering it and clearing up the mystery, by now confident that I would find the bull lying dead just within.

Another few paces would have taken me within its gloomy shelter when I felt as if my arm were being clutched by some invisible force, or as if a voice had said "stop"; a feeling so impelling, and yet not based on fear, that I responded instantly. Call it Providence, premonition, or what you will, I can only say that it was a warning so definite in character that I remained rooted to the spot for what proved vital seconds—for next I heard from the other side of the large bush against which I was standing a sudden bellow of rage and crashing of undergrowth, followed by the sound of a shot; indicative signs of a desperate encounter.

A few seconds later, I was hearing from T. P. of what he himself described as the narrowest escape of his adventurous life, and which, however modestly he told it, had been clearly due to his cool nerve, quick brain, and accurate shooting. It now appeared that he had tracked the herd about the wood, thinking to find the wounded bull with it. This had taken considerable time, for the buffalo had pursued a sinuous course, and had at one time shown an inclination to emerge where they had entered it, which, I can only say, would have proved more surprising than pleasant to me! Finally, though he had seen the last few climbing out of the crater, he was unaware of the number which had already left.

Having assumed all this while that I possessed greater sense than I had shown by leaving the crater, he had then returned in order to ascertain whether I had seen the wounded bull depart from what he presumed to be my better view-point on the level above. When he reached the bush on the other side of which I was standing, the wounded buffalo had charged from its shelter, so close and with such swift suddenness that all T. P. could do was to jump back and fire from the hip as it swept past, even then the tip of one great sweeping horn brushing his jacket. It speaks volumes for his nerve and marksmanship that, notwithstanding the unexpectedness of the attack, finish had been put to the buffalo's account.

Considering that we could have only been separated by a few yards while I had stood in anxious perplexity on three separate occasions, why this buffalo had not attacked was surprising. But one thing is sure, namely, that had I once ventured behind the bush as I had been so tempted to do, this tale would never have been written.

It formed, indeed, a classic example of the dangerous habit of a wounded buffalo of getting into a position to retaliate, for the spoor now showed that this one had almost completed a circle before returning to wait in ambush for his revenge.

It was curious, too, that the only two shots fired during our safari together might so easily have resulted in a memorial tablet in England.

CHAPTER XXX

THE BELGIAN CONGO

We were leaving with intense regret a district which had shown us much in the way of wild animal life, due to most of its former human population having been either decimated by sleeping-sickness or evacuated. The tsetse fly, which carries this fatal disease, had indeed proved terrible to man, but it had at least brought to its game life so large a protection (denied to it by human kind) that, had its wild denizens been able to erect a monument, it would surely have taken the form of a *Glossina Palpis* rampant.

In selecting this forsaken area for our hunting, we had perhaps taken some risk, but we were both well "salted" by those fevers which few old-time hunters escaped; in fact, we were somewhat of a record in this respect, seeing that we had both survived enteric, malaria, and dysentery, while T. P. was one up in being able to add black-water fever to this unenviable record. Whether it was because our fever-*cum*-quinine-laden blood proved objectionable to the tsetse fly, or because we had been fortunate, we suffered no ill-effects.

After the success which had attended our efforts it may be wondered why we had elected to move elsewhere, knowing as we did, that it would be impossible to find a better hunting-ground. I have tried to show that the average big game hunter obtains an increasing regard for wild animal life, while no one knows better than he that man cannot continue to hunt a small area of game country, whether to shoot or to photograph, without creating that spirit of fear which wild animals must ever possess for self-preservation.

It was becoming clearly evident that those which had played their photographic parts so well were now disturbed and—were we to stay—would presently leave the protecting shelter offered by this sleeping-sickness area, when they would meet with those whose intentions would be far from harmless. Therefore we preferred to leave them in undisturbed possession, to continue their normal lives without having to be ever on the alert against spear, or poison-tipped arrow, the ham-stringing sword, pitfall, steel trap, or rifle bullet.

When finally the time came to leave and as we breasted the last hill, we stopped and looked back upon that scene of happy memory: that veritable wonderland of wild animal life, which we were so loath to part from. There was, however, one consolation: namely, that no animal had suffered by our coming with the exception of its dangerous and aggressive buffalo.

Now came long travel through the Belgian Congo and the vast Ituri forest, home of the pygmy and gorilla; still regarded by some as the Darkest Africa of the past. Instead, much of it is of surprising beauty and climatically agreeable, as many who have escaped from Dictators, or who have dodged income-tax in Europe, have discovered. Its African, too, are most respectful,

greeting one with the salutation of "Sober", expressed with such intonation as to suggest surprise at finding us in that condition.

The Congo, too, offers amazing contrasts, from winding mountain roads eight thousand feet up and bitterly cold, with feathery forests of gigantic bamboo, to a type of country singularly reminiscent of the Highlands of Scotland, complete with attractive island-studded lochs. One can, indeed, pass from fresh mountain air to sweltering heat within the space of a few hours, while it is a part of Africa which offers such opportunity, scenery, and temperature for white settlement that I would hazard a guess that the time is not far distant when it will contain a large European population, offering as it does more of the background for a happy retirement than does a distracted Europe.

Here we met sturdy African women carrying heavy loads of salt in elongated bamboo frames, suspended by a strap about their foreheads and climbing twenty miles a day up steep mountain roads. They were accompanied by husbands whose sole luggage consisted of a stick, whether to stimulate the progress of their better halves, or for protection, I cannot say. Certainly they all looked remarkably fit, although handicapping their efforts by extremely heavy bronze anklets weighing up to six and a half pounds apiece (neither is this conjecture, for I have just weighed one!), and which represent their capital.

We were motoring through a gloomy part of the Ituri forest towards the end of a long day of travel, when I awoke from a reverie to the startling sight of the vast hindquarters of an elephant, so close to the car window that I could have slapped it, had I been so minded. Simultaneously, T. P. who was driving, called out: "It's a herd of elephant," and, turning, I saw close to his side the swaying tusks of two great bulls and another massive tusker on the point of crossing in front of the car. Most, under such unexpected circumstances, would have stopped the car and by so doing, invited disaster. Not so T. P.—never rattled in the slightest degree—he accelerated, and practically scraped past several other elephant before getting clear. Luckily so, for later we were to be told that this particular herd had been so molested that they had destroyed a motor-car a few days previously, the occupants escaping only by climbing trees, where they had to spend a night!

Proof that elephant in these parts had just cause to dislike man was there that same evening, when I was offered three carved elephant tusks for less than £1 apiece, which shows better than words what these poor beasts must suffer, especially when it is borne in mind that for every elephant killed by trade rifles and primitive weapons, many more escape with painful and often permanent injuries. It is, moreover, questionable if any elephant carrying good ivory is ever shot in this part of Africa without indications of its having been previously wounded, and more often than not, more than once, and this also applies to other rare animals.

How seldom, too, do those who merely wound, whether white or black —realize what a legacy of evil they may have left behind by wretched marksmanship!

We concluded our safari by a visit to the famous Parc Nationale: a sanctuary for wild animal life, which reflects great credit upon the Belgian

Government. This not alone because of its attractive quality and its admirable game-wardenship, but also because it is supported by Government funds, as compared with those in other parts of Africa which have to supplement a limited grant by monies obtained from various sources, including, unfortunately, the sale of "found" ivory ("found" being, I fear, sometimes interpreted as "found before it is killed"!), or that ivory obtained from elephants which have been "controlled" (which means that often too many are shot *pour encourager les autres*).

In this Parc I counted forty-two hippo grazing in the open like a herd of cattle, while in the river close by these somnolent and bloated beasts were clustered together as if on some cold winter's day, although the heat was suffocating. Outstanding, and resting on a sand-bank opposite, half-submerged, was a female hippo, across whose middle rested the enormous head of a bull. While his stupendous weight was causing her to sag visibly, his grotesque face bore a ridiculously seraphic smile of sublime content; a sight made the more amusing by contrast with that of his over-burdened spouse, which registered unadulterated misery.

Later, Lord Baden-Powell illustrated this by aid of his clever paint-brush and entitled it "Matrimony"—and he a very happily-married man! We gazed at the river containing such a wealth of hippopotamus and were sad at the thought that most of the rivers and lakes of Africa had once been the same; harmless grass-eating animals, long since butchered for their meat, or wantonly shot for "fun", with the result that to-day few —if any—can be found in many rivers of Africa near European settlements.

Two great bull elephant afterwards swept by within a hundred yards of our camp, as if attending some important engagement. I always like to feel that this was in the nature of a farewell call on the part of the elephant tribe, to show their appreciation of our not harming them, for although there was yet another thousand miles of motor travel before us, this was the last sight of elephant we were destined to have during our safari.

During our stay in the Belgian Congo we visited Lake Kivu, 4,700 feet above sea level, and the highest lake in Africa. Here we saw Muharura volcano, in full eruption, the molten lava streaming down its sombre sides and engulfing in its wake large areas of forest; its cone by day surmounted by a mushroom-shaped plume of smoke, by night flaring like some immense incendiary. Here, too, we struck an up-to-date hotel, complete even to cocktail bar, and an esplanade along the lake edge like that of some seaside resort; for it was once German property and they, and those who followed after, liked things that way!

During the return journey, our arrival at the summit of the 8,000 feet mountain range separating the Congo from Uganda, coincided with the full fury of a tropical thunderstorm: an awe-inspiring experience, with vivid lightning playing about the rocks, and thunder sounding like the explosion of myriads of bombs.

We reached the Victoria Nyanza four days later in the hope of making the acquaintance of "Lutembe", a semi-tamed crocodile, who had of late proved unresponsive to such visits. In the bad old days of Buganda,

"Lutembe" had been kept busily employed for the entertainment of an evil African king, whose special delight it had been to see human victims fed to her. She had then also been credited with the power of determining between guilt and innocence, and had been used for the trial of prisoners, who were lashed to a stake by the side of the lake for that purpose. If found guilty, when this hideous "Judge" arrived, their end had been terrible; if innocent, it was thought that this reptilian adjudicator would spare them.

While history does not reveal the percentage of convictions which resulted, judging by most crocodiles, the list of those acquitted and discharged was probably painfully small!

Following British administration of Buganda, "Lutembe" was removed from her aquatic courthouse to the Victoria Nyanza, in which, although some two hundred miles in length, she had since remained in one particular part, like some old Dowager compelled by taxation to close the big house and live in the Lodge, but refusing to mix with suburbia.

We reached her favourite haunt to find the African who had taught her to come to his call most doubtful of her putting in an appearance, for "Lutembe" had not long before refused to do so for both H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester and H.E. the Governor of Kenya. However, he was persuaded to make the attempt, so, climbing upon a high rock and cupping his mouth in his hands, he began to wail in a prolonged and penetrating voice: "Lu-tem-be! Lu-tem-be!" For almost an hour there was no response during which, as if a leader of the Bar, "Refreshers" had constantly to pass hands to retain his services. At long last we saw the crocodile far out in the lake and approaching slowly, stopping at intervals as if yet undetermined whether to grace us with her presence or not. Eventually, however, she reached the rushes skirting the lake's edge, where she remained for some time, scrutinizing us through her protuberant eyes and looking most sinister. How many wretched victims in the past must have watched that leisurely approach with eyes of horror?

At last, as if satisfied that we were worthy of her condescension, "Lutembe" glided towards us and climbed the bank until within two paces, displaying all of her fifteen feet of gruesome horror. Here she remained as we filmed her, while showing us all the shy girlishness of a film star, in spite of the fact that she was reputed to be one hundred and fifty years old. Although obviously in need of dental attention, this did not handicap her power of consumption, for she dealt with the fish offered her with remarkable aplomb, accompanying the masticatory process with incredibly rapid jerks of her fearsome-looking head.

The African who had had the temerity to tame her, next gave proof of his remarkable control by sitting upon her back and even catching hold of her tail; that wicked flail with which crocodile approaching unobserved under water, sweep their victims from the bank and to their death. Neither was this the only sign of her magnanimous nature, for during that same year her table manners had improved so much that in snatching the fish presented, she had inadvertently caught also the hand which fed her; but apparently, "Lutembe", like myself, had found that with growing age comes a dis-

inclination to kill, for she had then opened her trap-like jaws and released the limb like a perfect lady.

When one remembers that for many years this crocodile had been actually encouraged to kill human beings, this is an astonishing instance of what kindness to even the most savage of reptilian life can effect; what better proof could be afforded that man himself is largely responsible for the viciousness of many of those wild creatures which are classed as dangerous.

For over an hour "Lutembe" posed for us, as if delighted to have gained the world of film and regarding herself in the light of some glamour girl. Then, as if catching her reflection in the water, and compelled to the realization that her looks would bar her from the earthly paradise of Hollywood, she heaved a vast and appropriate sigh, and, re-entering the lake, swam slowly away. I shall ever be grateful to "Lutembe" for her courteous consideration; one which allowed me to take the last and one of the most interesting films of the safari, for this was to form the final peep into the wonderland of big game.

I reached Government House at Entebbe that evening, well content with the wonderful time which we had had, the success of which had been entirely due to the splendid leadership of Temple Perkins.

Then was to follow a voyage across the Victoria Nyanza—3,726 feet above sea level, and almost the size of Scotland, to Mwanza, in Tanganyika, and thence to Dar-es-Salaam, from where I later flew to Zanzibar and back to Kenya again in a tropical downpour, through which we could scarcely make our landing. We had finished our hunting only just in time, for during the rainy season much of the ground we had travelled over becomes a quagmire.

How often in life does it happen that after perhaps great risks have been surmounted, and when peace and safety seem to have been gained, there comes swift and unexpected danger? Such was the case on my last evening in Africa, when a friend and I were out walking in what can only be described as the warmth of the evening, after a furnace-like day. He was walking on the grass verge and I on the road a few paces away, when I heard his warning shout and, turning, saw a large snake within four feet and coming directly at me. Mercifully, I had not spent some years during my soldiering in India in one of its snakiest stations without profit, and the automatic leap which I gave—one which would have done credit to a springbok—landed me on its far side, the snake, fortunately, wriggling into the grass beyond, for we were without sticks.

The whole event took place so rapidly that we could not be quite sure, but its pugnacious quality suggested that it was a mamba, one of the most aggressive snakes in the world.

Considering that during four separate safaris in Africa I had seen but three snakes, it was curious that it should be on this startling note that I ended my East African tour.

I sailed in a terrific rainstorm, which soon blotted from sight the African coast, fortunately so, for I was leaving with infinite regret.

Almost forty years before, Africa had proved hard to me, returning me to England seriously broken in health. Yet, fickle jade, she had called

me back on twelve occasions, and shown me more of her fascinating charms each time.

In compensation, I was taking away pleasant mementoes of wild animal encounters in place of those trophies of the chase which had often in the past proved such an affliction to the olfactory nerves of fellow-travellers; grisly souvenirs which pall so rapidly when once the glamour of the hunt has ended.

It is, indeed, only when one looks back upon a long experience of big game hunting that one realizes how little those shrivelled heads and moulting skins portray those virile animals which once they represented; how rarely the uninitiated, especially those we live with, appreciate either their value or the difficulty of their securing; how, too often, they are regarded by one's better-half as dust traps (perhaps rightly so, though softly be it whispered).

How pleasant it is, too, to possess film mementoes which accumulate no dust nor moth, and can moreover, revive the scenes of stirring incident with almost their exact colouration for the pleasure of others and of oneself! To be able to transport one's friends into the heart of Africa in a moment of time and, without the slightest trouble, discomfort or risk, to exchange the disquieting memories of cunning and diabolical "Dictators", and the inescapable aftermath of war—that supreme folly of man—by the comparative kindliness and charm of so-called savage beasts.

Good fortune had certainly smiled upon me during these safaris, far more than my own poor efforts had deserved, yet never in my wildest dreams could I have foreseen the great distinction which my film was to bring me on return to England. For then I had the high honour of being commanded to show it to Their Majesties the King and Queen, Their Royal Highnesses the Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester and other Members of the Royal Family in the Throne Room at Buckingham Palace—an unforgettable experience which was made the more pleasant inasmuch as Their Majesties and the Duke of Gloucester had themselves experienced the fascinating charm of big game photographic hunting in East Africa. Never, indeed, have I had a more appreciative and understanding audience. Later, too, I had the further honour of showing it to that most gracious Lady, Her Majesty Queen Mary, Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal, and Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester in the Great Hall at Badminton, where the first game ever known by that name had been played.

It will ever be my proudest recollection that I was so highly privileged to entertain our King and Queen and those other Members of a Royal Family so shortly before that Second World War throughout which they set so splendid an example, rightly earning the regard and respect of all civilized peoples.

CHAPTER XXXI

RANDOM MUSINGS AND A FINAL PLEA

THEN came the Second World War, bringing with it varied duties which ultimately took me to the West Indies, the U.S.A., Brazil, and West Africa, but which afforded me no chance of gaining touch with wild animal life; indeed it is questionable if I shall ever again penetrate into those fascinating wilds of Africa, or fulfil the dream of a lifetime—to have unlimited time for one's hunting instead of always being haunted by the knowledge that camp must be struck on a certain day, whatever the prospects ahead: no small renunciation at times. Once, for instance, after keeping watch for two nights for a tiger to return to its kill I had to return unrewarded to my regiment. The young officer who took my place the third night had only just arrived in India and, with typical beginner's luck, saw three tiger arriving together, a unique "party" which never came my way and which so shook him that he failed to fire!

Fortunately the big game hunter has always a host of pleasant memories to look back upon; of wondrous scenes, thrilling moments and of good companionships; of red-letter days which stand out the better against that background of tropical fevers and the hard marches of pre-motor days. Maybe, however, things of value may be extracted from a long experience of such hunting.

A discerning young officer to whom I was showing my now mouldering trophies of the chase touched on this. I was prompted by mounting taxation to express regret at having wasted so much of my substance in the past upon this sport, to which he ingenuously replied: "Oh no, Sir, you must not say that. Your money might otherwise have gone probably in Wine, Woman and Song!" A new angle, this, to me, and one which I hope did not reflect on my propensities (one can never be sure with subalterns!), while it certainly brought a ray of comfort containing a greater measure of truth than he may have realized.

For big game hunting undoubtedly offers wholesome outlet for surplus energy, while bringing one into close contact and, indeed, comradeship with those of every class, race, colour and creed, proving that loyal and noble hearts are not confined to white skins. Experience like this shows, too, how great is the physical energy, fitness and endurance of primitive man, despite his simple fare. To mention only a few—virile Manchus near the Great Wall of China, bursting with rude health, whose food consisted of little else but millet, cheerful Africans displaying and maintaining great energy on *posho*, or Indian corn meal, and Indians likewise upon a dull diet of rice.

Infant mortality among primitive people is admittedly great and these are instances of the survival of the fittest—in fact, the very fittest! How does one, I wonder, account for their perfect teeth which last a lifetime,

and for their very low cancer rate compared with that of civilized communities? Wondrous, too, is the power of Nature's healing of grave injuries remote from all medical aid, treated in a manner which would not meet with the approval of the B.M.A.

Those taxidermists of great artistry, Van Ingen & Van Ingen of Mysore, India, made me realize this incredible power of Nature when, in 1937, they showed me the skull of a tiger with the lower jaw shattered some years before its death. In order to permit upper and lower fangs again to articulate, the skull had been distorted and bent to one side, making mastication possible.

My main purpose, however, in writing these reminiscences has been an attempt to win a greater measure of understanding of, and sympathy with, wild animal life than it has received during the half-century I have known it. Never has the need for sympathy been greater than now, for too terrific a toll has been taken throughout that time. Startling evidence can be found in the works of many writers, beginning with Edward North Buxton who, in 1899, wrote *Two African Trips*. Of this author the distinguished African Governor, Sir Harry H. Johnston, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., wrote in the Foreword as follows:

> The first person of repute having the courage to stand before a snobbish public and proclaim that the best sport for a man of cultured mind is the snapshotting with a camera, rather than the pumping of lead into elephants, rhinoceroses, antelopes, zebras and many other harmless, beautiful or rare beasts and birds.

In his book, Buxton says:

> It is important that people at home should realize the urgency of this question, and I should be glad if I succeeded in stimulating the wholesome public opinion which undoubtedly exists on the subject. That this feeling is not universal and that education is still needed in true sportsmanship, reckless shooting by individuals and the disappearance of the game make it only too manifest.
>
> Superfluous massacre ought to call forth the strongest reprobation from those who like King James (*sic*) "love the great game" as a precious inheritance of the Empire to be most jealously guarded, like a unique picture—something which can easily be lost but cannot be replaced.
>
> Past experience in America and South Africa shows how rapidly the teeming millions born of the soil may be shot out. Writers of half a century ago describe on the veldt in South Africa a paradise of varied life, which is now irretrievably lost, through the carelessness and wastefulness of white men. Some species have absolutely disappeared never to be seen again on the face of the earth.

This opinion was expressed forty-six years ago, but it is all too apposite to-day.

What has C. G. Schillings, the author of *With Flashlight and Rifle* to say upon this subject six years later in 1905?

> As the explorer ruthlessly pursues his victory in every direction he destroys directly and indirectly everything that stands in his way. The original inhabitants of entire countries have to go under when they cannot hit it off with the invader. With them disappears a rich and splendid fauna, which for thousands of years

has made existence possible for the natives, but which now in a few years is recklessly slaughtered. Never before in the history of the world have whole hordes of animals—the larger and stronger animals especially—been killed off so speedily by man. . . . With certain exceptions, therefore, there is no pretext for the killing of African big game on the ground of their harmfulness.

But it would be a great mistake if the fauna of the country were to be generally wiped out, as sometimes it has been locally, in the hope of thereby getting rid of ticks which are known to communicate disease. *According to my information the infectious diseases in question are to be met with in districts where wild animals have long been absolutely exterminated.*

For the most part, the beautiful wild animals of East Africa find ample nourishment on the wide veldt, and do no harm to us whatever.

For "ticks" read "tsetse fly" and you have a picture of parts of British Africa to-day, due to the same strange mentality that would prefer to see the African plains converted into deserts, devoid of game life.

That other distinguished big game photographer, Cherry Kearton, also has pertinent comments worth noting:

Since 1913 (i.e. nine years after Schillings' expression of opinion) great changes have taken place in the Big Game world. In particular does this apply to Africa, where animal life is disappearing at a rate that would astonish the most casual observer.

If a halt is not called to the senseless destruction going on in Africa, there will very soon be nothing left, even on that vast Continent, to make it worth while for the naturalists to pay it a visit, and Zoological Gardens all over the world (to say nothing of Museums) will be unable to replace their specimens, and future generations will curse the thoughtless selfishness of the slaughterers of the present age.

The settler of course must make a living and help to extend the bounds and prosperity of the British Empire; but, alas! alas! there are too many men of this class who consider it no part of their business to preserve the game, or to respect the laws made to protect it.

These views are shared by me after twelve visits to Africa, including two shortly before and after the Second World War during which time I met many who were likewise considerably perturbed at the rate of killing, particularly of the elephant.

To come to 1947. What is the position to-day after wild animal life in Africa has suffered destruction during that War? Here is the opinion of S. S. Rushby:

In Tanganyika the present catchphrase is, the game must go because of tsetse and rinderpest (cattle disease). This is stated so often by people who should know better, that everyone is beginning to believe this is so. Southern Rhodesia has spent a total of £85,000 up to 1941, with an annual expenditure of £1,500, on destroying and driving all game back by shooting on a broad front four hundred to five hundred miles, between two game fences to keep the game back from settlement for the purpose of eradicating tsetse.

There is disagreement on the efficacy of these measures; people responsible for the scheme and tsetse claim success.

European farmers in the area disagree entirely and some go as far as to say that although the game has entirely disappeared and tsetse in some places reduced in numbers, in other parts the density of the fly has increased and there are entirely new outbreaks of *nagana* that could not possibly be due to game.

The density of tsetse to some extent depends on the density of game animals, that is to say, if you destroy or move all game animals, you may reduce the tsetse fly density, but it is impossible to eradicate fly in this manner so long as fly bush in the area remains. On the other hand, if the fly bush is destroyed, the tsetse leaves—regardless of the amount of game left in the area.

Confirmation of this is given by H. R. Welsh, who writes as follows:

I have recently returned from East Africa after three years in the country and I can testify to the appalling fact that the wild game of East Africa has decreased enormously. Any settler will tell you that where, three years ago, herds of a thousand head could be counted, now herds of ten only remain.

During the war thousands of animals were slaughtered, either wantonly or as meat for the troops. To be added to this is the periodic decimation of herds through disease, such as rinderpest, and added to both the insane and utterly useless killing of thousands of beasts in an attempt to reduce the tsetse fly. Is it any wonder that the wild life of the country is disappearing?

The war is now over and the Game Departments are doing excellent work in trying to preserve what remains, but unless this criminal slaughter of game to reduce tsetse fly is stopped their efforts will be in vain. The tsetse fly cannot be dependent upon the fauna of the country for its existence because in Tanganyika I once went on a safari up the Wami River and, in an area of some twenty square miles, I never saw so much as a single head of game, but the fly existed in its thousands. From every bush I passed, dozens started out to settle on my back and bite and sting. I was in the area for a week. Even presuming that the fly depends on the blood of animals, if the wild game is destroyed it will only drive the fly into the haunts of man and the domestic animal, with fatal results—not to the fly, but to man.

This valuable link in the chain of evidence is greatly strengthened by the following extract from a letter written by that experienced and humane Game Warden of Tanganyika, M. S. Moore, dated the 28th June, 1946:

There is a matter which is greatly worrying all lovers of wild animal life and that is the wholesale destruction of game to drive out tsetse. All of us are opposed to this destruction even if it were likely to prove successful. Up to date vast numbers of game have been destroyed in the countries of Eastern Africa, but no evidence has been produced that I know of to show that tsetse flies have diminished, in fact tsetse has spread in places and appears to be on the increase.

An article on this subject from such an experienced and game-loving man as Colonel Sir James Sleeman will, I feel sure, add weight to the snowball of anti-destruction that is slowly but surely gathering in size.

Few men can have had a greater experience of wild animal life than the Warden of the Kruger National Park, established mainly by him and an example of its kind—Colonel J. Stevenson-Hamilton, J.P., D.L., F.R.G.S., C.M.Z.S., LL.D., and his views upon this subject are interesting:

To destroy wild animals wholesale when they are believed or suspected to be suffering from some ailment which might affect domestic stock, were they

brought into contact with the latter, is a perfectly logical proposition viewed from the veterinarian's or the stock-farmer's point of view. From the wild life preservationist's angle, however, things look very different. He sees in such acquired knowledge, in fact, merely one more excuse to destroy the wild animal life of the country; and the more diseases the veterinarian can discover the fauna to be suffering from, or liable to contract, the more cogent his reasons for advocating wholesale and finally complete immolation. It is a perfectly intelligible and correct view from his standpoint; but not one with which wild animal life preservationists will agree.

Practically all the diseases which affect or are carried by wild animals are, in the first instance, communicated to them by domestic ones with which they have come in contact. The only serious disease which menaces stock while not affecting wild animals—though a percentage, albeit not a very high one, of the latter are carriers—is *nagana*, the sickness communicated by the bite of the tsetse fly, and fatal to all domestic animals, though goats have a certain acquired immunity in some areas. Fortunately the various species of tsetse flies are strictly confined to certain types of country, e.g. they cannot exist in cleared agricultural or open pastoral country, nor will they accompany a living host for more than quite a short distance beyond country suitable to them. The chief danger in the spreading of the tsetse fly appears to lie in mechanical vehicles. Individual flies have been known to travel long distances in motor-cars and in *Tsetse Flies in East Africa*, Swynnerton instances a case in which they were carried 200 miles by railway train.

Mechanical vehicles are the only means by which tsetse flies can be carried across a wide space of country unsuitable to them to another in which they find conditions favourable.

From this it would seem that if the tsetse fly menace is to be dealt with effectively the motor-car must be abolished from those parts of Africa which contain domestic stock; which would probably cause greater consternation than the destruction of all wild animal life.

Unfortunately (Colonel Stevenson-Hamilton goes on to report) the modern tendency is to suppose that wild nature can be improved upon by so-called scientific methods founded upon theories which, harmless while confined to mere discussion, can be and are excessively dangerous when carried into practice. The term "science" is properly to be defined as "knowledge", and is the antithesis of theory and guess-work. Yet, in the case of actions taken in respect of wild fauna, how often have we seen theories and guess-work posing as expert knowledge, covered with a camouflage of high-sounding terms which lead the public to believe it is listening to biological facts and not merely biological theories. Unfortunately, the experiments undertaken with the object of justifying these theories may result in irreparable harm, which no thought or effort of man can ever again make good, however much the later advent of knowledge may give him the will to try. It seems unfortunate that the term "Scientist"—which ought to be a most exclusive one—should have come by over-use sometimes to have a much wider significance in the public mind, as regards natural history.

Real knowledge of nature is only to be acquired by long study and sustained observation in the field of nature herself. Technical book study, is only a preliminary. The "biological expert" to-day is in danger of acquiring a one-track mind, enabling him to "see the trees only" to the exclusion of the surrounding "forest" itself. This disqualifies him from necessarily being in a position to give advice of value on subjects lying outside the narrow path he is accustomed to

tread. The tendency is to become *doctrinaire*, to form a "ring" to which none but the elect may be admitted, and which more and more tends to ignore any kind of information or opinion not emanating from a member of the ring. There is, in fact, a leaning towards a form of bureaucracy, contemptuous of everything but itself, and arrogant in expression of dogma. New discoveries sometimes tend to negative previous conclusions. When irrevocable action has already been taken on one or other of these last and has led merely to the destruction of some artificial human effort, nothing has been done that cannot be readjusted in due course, but when some creation of nature has been entirely eliminated, nothing that man can do can ever replace what has been lost. Nature has her own way of repaying outrages upon her, to the sorrow and even the destruction of, at any rate, the descendants of the generation that committed the crime. *Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret!*

When so many expert opinions regarding this subject have failed to stay the hand of those who seem to regard wild animal life as a scourge, I should feel that I was fighting a forlorn hope were I not to be fortunate enough to be able to end this book with the opinion of that great authority on wild life—that popular Editor of *The Field*, Brian Seymour Vesey-Fitzgerald, F.L.S., F.C.S., F.R.G.S., M.B.O.U. If, after reading what he has to write, any feel that the present rate of killing should continue, I feel that nothing further can be usefully said.

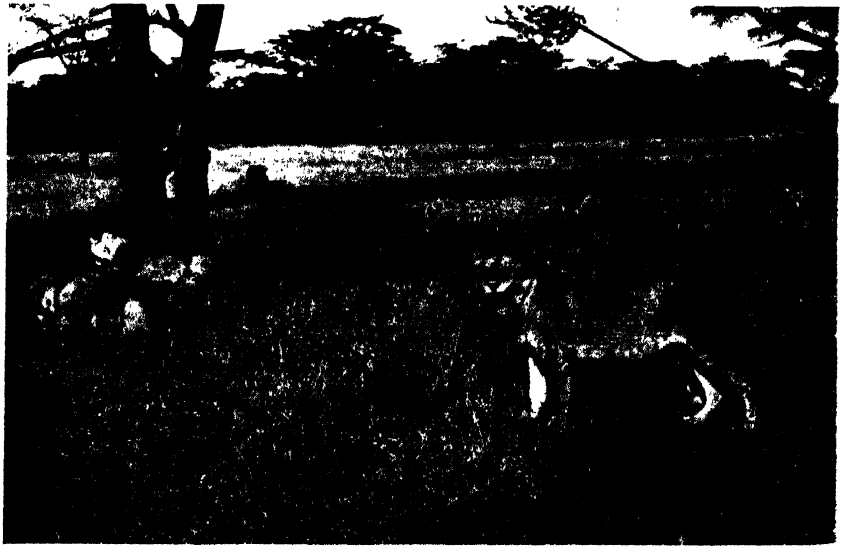
DISAPPEARING WILD LIFE

The recent very heavy destruction of wild animals in those African territorie's which owe allegiance in one form or another to the British Crown, during the course of what are termed "Tsetse Fly Operations", have shocked ("revolted" would, perhaps, be a better word: it would in any case be impossible to find too strong a word) naturalists and animal lovers the world over. Yet the extent of the slaughter is certainly not generally realized, for the powers responsible are not eager to publish figures, and the African papers (which have for the most part protested manfully) have not got large circulations outside their particular areas. I have myself not got all the figures—and it is extremely unlikely that I shall ever get them all—but I have got the official figures for the game slaughtered in Southern Rhodesia during Tsetse Fly Operations in the period 1924–1945 inclusive. I give them here in full with the figures for 1945 separated, for it is more than time that they were widely read and digested.

	1924–1944	1945	*Total*
Elephant	29	12	41
Rhinoceros	219	25	244
Hippopotamus	5	—	5
Giraffe	3	—	3
Buffalo	1,646	465	2,111
Zebra	5,276	381	5,657
Eland	6,532	342	6,874
Kudu	36,596	3,551	40,147
Roan Antelope	2,703	159	2,862
Sable Antelope	23,196	940	24,136
Hartebeeste	288	89	377
Wildebeeste	34	5	39
Waterbuck	8,691	498	9,189

"He chose that most appropriate moment to turn and stand at gaze."

The infamous "Lutembe" displaying all of her fifteen feet of gruesome horror. Said to be 150 years old and to have killed some 350 human beings.



"I wish you'd go away!"

"Winning the confidence of a Hartebeeste.

A rare happening: A hippo with two calves leaving the water in daylight.

The King of Beasts, or Farewell to Africa.

	1924–1944	1945	*Total*
Tsessebee	1,492	59	1,551
Reitbuck	9,959	761	10,720
Impala	10,380	1,595	11,975
Bushbuck	14,799	1,888	16,687
Duiker	79,216	7,518	83,734
Stembuck	3,523	165	3,688
Sharpe's Stembuck	23,551	3,177	28,728
Klipspringer	9,728	912	10,640
Oribi	2,368	187	2,555
Warthog	22,430	2,736	25,166
Bush Pig	8,003	506	8,509
Lion	76	2	78
Leopard	242	20	262
Cheetah	23	1	24
Hyena	56	17	73
Livingstone's Suni	70	40	110
Cat	1,554	—	1,554
Jackal	785	—	785
Lynx	18	—	18
Baboon	16,918	2,029	18,947
Monkey	2,270	—	2,270
Wild Dog	151	6	157
Ant Bear	30	—	30
Badger	97	—	97
Crocodile	45	—	45
Hare	159	—	159
Porcupine	93	—	93
Otter	14	—	14
Ostrich	6	—	6
Python	17	—	17
Unclassified	141	—	141
	293,432	28,086	321,518

Now, these are the official figures. They are the figures given by Captain the Hon. F. E. Harris, C.M.G. (the Minister of Agriculture and Lands), in the Legislative Assembly at Salisbury on 23rd January, 1946. Since they are the official figures they are quite certainly *minimum* figures. I do not know for certain just how the counts are made, but it would, I think, be a safe guess to say that they are made from tails handed in to officials. It will be seen, therefore, that these figures, huge though they are, make no allowance for game killed but not recovered, and no allowance for game wounded. Very definitely they are minimum figures. One would probably not be far wrong if one multiplied them by three.

But they are bad enough as they are. And it must be remembered that this slaughter is not confined to Southern Rhodesia. It is going on more or less throughout East Africa, wherever there is game outside the Reserves, and it is certainly going on wherever there is the Tsetse fly. It will be noticed that though fourteen fewer species were attacked during 1945, the rate of slaughter in Southern Rhodesia in that year pretty well doubled in comparison with the previous twenty years. All this would be bad enough from the game point of view even if Tsetse infestation was lessening, but it would in that case be excusable. But this slaughter has been going on now for twenty-one years at a very high, and increasing.

rate and there is no concrete evidence that the Tsetse is in fact disappearing. Indeed, the greatly increased rate of slaughter in 1945, after so many years of heavy slaughter, can surely only be taken as an admission that the fly has not suffered any great inconvenience? And that, surely, can only mean that the whole policy is wrong and futile. The astonishing list of animals slaughtered lends strong support to the view that the policy is futile. If the Tsetse is really an insect with such catholic taste, then the final disappearance of all game from Africa will not incommode it in the slightest degree. An insect that can adapt itself to baboon or kudu will not find it difficult to adapt itself to man or to man's domestic animals.

But if the Tsetse is not disappearing, the game is. It may be thought that there are so many of these animals in Africa that even this heavy slaughter will not make any noticeable difference. I have, indeed, heard that suggested more than once. But that is not the case. The big game of Africa is to-day merely a remnant of what it once was. The truth is that wild life, and especially the larger forms of wild life, is fighting a losing battle all over the world. Some of it has already lost the battle and has disappeared for ever. And the enemy is man.

It must never be thought that mere numbers are a protection against extinction. Little more than a century ago the Passenger Pigeon existed in countless millions. Any idea of extinction seemed quite fantastic then. In 1906 there were only five Passenger pigeons in all the world, and all five had been bred in captivity. The last died in 1912 in the Zoological Gardens at Cleveland. The Passenger pigeon is extinct. In 1830 there were enormous herds of bison roaming the north American continent. There was very heavy slaughter of them going on all the while, both for their meat and their hides, but in 1867 there were still millions of them left. In that year the building of the Union Pacific, the first great trans-continental railway, cut the herd in two. The southern herd, which consisted of several million animals, was completely wiped out between 1870 and 1874. The northern herd lasted a little longer. It, too, consisted of several million animals, but by 1884 it was estimated that there were only about 900 left. By 1912 there were only two wild herds in existence; one numbering about twenty individuals in Yellowstone Park, and the other of about 250 animals near the Great Slave Lake in Canada. They survived only because of the most rigorous protection.

Africa has its record of extermination also. It took less than sixty years to wipe out the Quagga, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century roamed the plains of South Africa in countless thousands. By 1860 there was not one left; the last is believed to have been shot near Aberdeen, in Cape Colony, in 1858. The last living examples died in European Zoos in 1872 and 1875. The nineteenth century also saw the extermination of two other African mammals, which were once present in vast numbers; the Blaaubok and the typical variety of Burchell's Zebra, though perhaps that should be regarded as a race rather than a species. And to this list might be added the white-tailed gnu, which to-day exists only in Zoos.

Abundance is no protection. There is a very simple principle at work. If the rate of destruction is higher than the rate at which the species can replenish its numbers, it is bound to die out. There is another, and less well-known fact; namely, that if the total number of a species drop below a certain level, that species, unless it has special protection, is almost sure to become extinct.

It must not be thought that I am suggesting that the kudu, for example, or the duiker, are in danger of becoming extinct at this moment. I am suggesting nothing of the kind. There are fortunately, nowadays, Reserves and National Parks, which makes the possibility at least more remote. I am well aware that I shall be accused of scaremongering in certain quarters—quarters which are very anxious to see the elimination of big game over large areas of the African

continent—but . . . well, remember the bison, the quagga, the Passenger pigeon. I do not suggest that there is immediate danger of extinction for any of these species, though there are, of course, quite a number of animals in Africa that are on the border line, that exist in the wild state to-day only because they are rigidly protected. The Mountain Zebra, the white rhinoceros, and the Mountain Gorilla are good examples. But I do suggest that this fantastic slaughter cannot be allowed to go on. It is a fact that, though there are still vast numbers of most of these animals in Africa, the game has already disappeared from places in which it was plentiful not so very long ago, less than twenty years ago. The fact is that over large areas of Africa the game has disappeared, and that over further large areas it is rapidly disappearing. We might with advantage remember the story of the Transvaal. Once it was a paradise for game. By 1912 the lion was nearly extinct; the hyena was extinct; the rhinoceros was extinct; and so were the eland, and the giraffe, and the elephant, and the buffalo. The bontebok, the red hartebeeste, the oribi, the mountain zebra, the grysbok were all so rare as to be practically extinct, and all but a few years before, were present in huge numbers. That has happened in other parts of Africa also. So far as Southern Rhodesia is concerned, it is a question of how long you can go on destroying 28,000 head of game a year. And that, though the figure may be a little different in each case, is true of all the Tsetse country. Those who say that there are plenty of animals left should remember past history.

It is high time that public opinion in this country and throughout the world was aroused on this subject. Almost every man you meet with experience of life in Africa and with experience of big game in that continent is absolutely opposed to the policy of the governments concerned. Indeed, I have yet to meet one that is not. But, though they protest often enough and loudly enough, they do not seem to be able to do anything. The execution of policy seems to have got into the hands of civil servants, able men, but men without real knowledge of the matter they are dealing with. There are now "Committees of Experts". And that is very nearly the end.

There are, of course, a great many reasons why wild animals die out or become scarce. Sometimes the reason is strange. Pere David's deer, a most beautiful species of unknown origin, now exists only at Woburn. Once, presumably, it was plentiful. Then it survived only in the Royal Parks of Pekin. Politics killed Pere David's deer. There was a great political change in China and the sanctity departed from them. A remnant was saved through the foresight of the then Duke of Bedford. Quite probably politics have killed other species as well, but Pere David's deer must remain the outstanding example of this form of extermination. Other great and deadly means of destruction are little seen or realized by the average man. The building of roads and railways, the draining of marshes and so on play a very big part in the removal of animal life. You can see that going on in Britain to-day. But the perennial means of destruction are the use of improved fire-arms by sportsmen, by natives (the destruction in Southern Rhodesia is almost all done by natives), and by those engaged in the commercial pursuit of meat, hides, fur and feathers. Undoubtedly, so far as the big game of the world is concerned, the increased rapidity of transport by sea and rail, by motor-car and aeroplane have greatly increased the danger of modern weapons. The sportsman is now, probably, the least dangerous enemy of big game, because in the big game areas he is very well controlled. But business is very difficult to control. And you cannot control all the natives all the time.

In Southern Rhodesia, I understand, they go rather further in the opposite direction from controlling the shooting of game by the natives in this Tsetse Fly Operation. The natives who do the shooting are paid. They are not paid very

well. They are paid £1 per annum; not £1 per month, but £1 per annum. You cannot live, even in Southern Rhodesia, even if you are a native, on £1 per annum. These natives live by trading meat. They are not going out to shoot where there is no game. They go where the game is, like the sensible people they are. And if the game is where they are not supposed to shoot, then they drive it within the prescribed limits. I am informed that you may now find these native shots fifty miles beyond the cordon and driving the game into the cordon. It is the opinion of those who should know that the shooting has now become absolutely indiscriminate.

The excuse is Tsetse fly. But we are never given any figures to show what the effect on the fly is. As I have already said the extent of the slaughter may be taken as the measure of lack of success. The game suffers, the fly evidently does not. Is it not time—and more—that something new was tried? Has Southern Rhodesia tried D.D.T.? It is a very deadly insecticide indeed, and there appears to be no reason why it should not be as effective in Africa as it is elsewhere in the world. Of course, it means attacking the insects and not their pastures. Of course, it would mean the end of the natives' shooting parties. Of course, it would probably mean the end of the "Committees of Experts", though civil servants have a well-deserved reputation for ingenuity. But does all that really matter?

It might also mean the end of the Tsetse.

A case so admirably presented as this requires no strengthening, but there remains a further aspect of it which deserves mention, before it is too late; one which, fortunately, may well affect the fortunes of man, seeing that often an appeal to the heart proves less unavailing than to the pocket.

Six years of military service during the Second World War have resulted in thousands of Africans becoming accustomed to regard meat as a normal article of diet and now they are demobilized they crave for what has developed into an essential need; one supplied in part by what wild animal life they can kill in the vicinity of their villages, just as their ancestors have done for thousands of years before the first white men arrived in Africa.

In addition we find hundreds of armed Africans now employed in a task which aims at the complete extermination of such wild animal life in parts of Africa; a dangerous experiment surely, besides being a ghastly task which supplies those engaged in it with super-abundance of fresh meat. But what of the morrow? In time meat-hungry Africans must find that a policy of extermination can only result in a complete stoppage of what they crave for most.

Are those settlers in possession of herds of domestic stock, and particularly those who favour a continuance of this policy until it reaches its dreadful conclusion, quite happy about the future? Will Africans, fed for many years upon meat in plenty, take kindly to a return to a grain diet when within sight of domestic stocks? It is a sobering thought, and for that very reason not to be shirked. A very grave responsibility rests upon the shoulders of those informed of the growing menace, and a corresponding harsh criticism if, lacking vision, they barter their heritage for a "mess of pottage."

FROM RIFLE TO CAMERA ends on a serious note, but it need not be an unhappy one.

Reader, it is up to you!

INDEX