

"PORINI"

FOREWORD

THE WHY'S AND WHEREFORE'S OF GAME PRESERVATION

It was my privilege to work for over ten years (1928–1938) as a Game Ranger in the South–Eastern provinces of Tanganyika Territory (an area covering some 100,000 square miles, but little known to the world at large). Those years were, for me, packed with the joys of travel and exploration and the thrills of adventure.

Before recounting some of the experiences which befell me in that country during those ten years, I feel it necessary to give the general reader some idea of the whys and wherefores of wild–life preservation and control.

The advance of civilisation has played havoc with the indigenous fauna of countries and continents. During the last hundred years or so, owing to the advent of firearms and the lack of organised control, many species of interesting and beautiful animals and birds have been exterminated by thoughtless hunters, many others have had their numbers reduced to a dangerous level. Diseases too, such as rinderpest have taken a regular and heavy toll. And, last but not least we have disturbed certain kinds of animals and birds which require a special type of environment for their well–being and the propagation of their species; they, are less adaptable to new conditions forced on them and are unable to survive excepting in their own peculiar habitat, where they must be undisturbed.

Fortunately, during this century, nature lovers all over the world have been taking more and more interest in the protection and preservation of wild life, Societies and organisations are growing in number. But there is still much to be done. Many more followers are needed to ensure the continued existence of all the different species of the wonderful fauna which is Africa's own.

Often I have been asked "Why do we wish to protect our wild animals and birds, of what value are they?" Surely such people have no soul. To such my answer is "Why do we value art galleries or furnish our homes with beautiful ornaments? Why do we set aside parks and gardens in our cities? Why do we grow flowers? And so on ad infinitum. All of these, including wild–life of all kinds, have aesthetic values which help to relieve the monotony of what would be otherwise a very humdrum existence. How desolate the world would be without its wild creatures. It is the full understanding and appreciation of the arts of man and of the beauties of nature that give us a

claim to civilisation. From the scientific point of view also, we have learned much from nature. The biologist is only just beginning to get into his stride and from his observations of all living things we are finding out much that helps us towards a better understanding of ourselves and the world we live in.

By the very slow processes of nature all living things have been altering their structures throughout the ages. Some animals have remained unchanged for millions of years, others have altered beyond all recognition. There is an orderly arrangement and purpose in the complicated web of life and it must be remembered that there can be no reconstruction of any particular form of life that has been destroyed*. Evolution and the balance of nature (an ever changing equilibrium) have been operating under eternal laws ever since life began on this planet, and it is our duty not to disturb this balance and its purpose. Surely it would be a terrible thing to exterminate, wittingly by destruction or carelessly by apathetic attitude, a single species of any living creature. There are exceptions, of course, and such forms of life as are a menace to our existence must come under strict controls.

Apart from noxious insects, poisonous reptiles and destructive birds, there are many animals which may be, on occasion, dangerous to the life of man himself, or a menace to his crops and flocks.

Amongst such animals are the carnivores: Lions, leopards, wild dogs and hyenas. The great pachyderms: elephants, hippopotami and occasionally the rhinoceros, crocodiles, pigs, baboons, monkeys and sometimes buffalo. Less frequently a few of the antelopes and even the almost unoffending giraffe. Therefore wild life must not only be preserved but must also come under careful control.

To ensure proper and systematic methods of the preservation and control of their indigenous fauna the governments of most countries all over the world have instituted special departments. In Tanganyika territory this organisation is called "The Game Preservation Department"

Because people have often asked me sometimes genuinely, sometimes facetiously, what the game (or "games"!) department does for a living, I have done my best, in the opening chapter to portray the life of a game ranger in South-Eastern Tanganyika.

CHAPTER ONE

LIFE OF A GAME RANGER

On arrival in the Southern Province towards the end of 1931 I found it necessary to reorganise the whole system of the Game Department in that area. This was because of the adverse circumstances of the times – owing to the world "slump" our staff had been reduced to a mere skeleton, with the result that Game preservation and control were almost non-existent.

Being a comparative stranger in that area, I had to acquaint myself with the department's previous policy and with a geographical knowledge of the country, to enable me to get on with the job. After collecting all available maps I spent a good 7 or 8 hours a day reading the reports, diaries and correspondence of my predecessors in office.

Meanwhile, by arrangement, the various district officers of the Provinces (eight in number), advertised the fact that native recruits were needed for our job. In due course these were chosen by me, many of them "old hands" and signed on as game scouts. These men, after a course of instruction, were posted to defined areas to carry on the work of preservation and control.

During those first three months, accompanied by an intelligent native scout who knew the country well, I motored over all the roads in the province. On these journeys detailed diaries were kept and much information gathered regarding the lie of the land; the names of the more important headmen, their villages and approximate number of inhabitants, their crops and other industries (fishing, etc.), especially in relation to marauding game. Many names of mountains hills, valleys, rivers and streams and even villages were not marked on the maps and these had to be put in their proper places, with a note of the distances between. Game scouts, native chiefs, headmen, wazee (the old men of the village), fisherman and even travellers on roads and paths were all questioned regarding the fauna in their respective areas. Whenever crossing game tracks, whether we were travelling by car or on foot we stopped to investigate, making a written note of the species and approximate numbers.

I travelled many thousands of miles by car., on foot and by canoe, over my new, range, making careful notes containing detailed observations of all wild life in the province. There were few villages of any importance that I had not visited. Gradually I got to know the people and their customs. the country and its fauna.

During those years I came to know the many different herds of elephant and other game their approximate numbers and the areas they frequented at different seasons. On my excursions it was often necessary to give the native scouts a helping hand and thus it was that many exciting experiences came my way. In between excursions there were many odd jobs to be done and office records had to be kept, diaries, reports and sketch maps were posted as regularly as possible to the Director of Game Preservation whose headquarters was at Kilosa in the early days, later removed to Arusha in the far North. Stores- ledgers were a particular menace; pay sheets, ivory registers, records of ammunition expended, and of all game shot were prepared monthly. Rifles needed repairing and cleaning, so did bicycles, to say nothing of my car which had bumped and bounded over the roughest roads imaginable. Game scouts were brought in regularly for refresher courses and recruits had to be trained. Valuable ivory had to be collected and stored. Lion and leopard skins were cured and sold, so were elephants' tails.

Besides these there were a hundred and one small jobs to be done as methodically as was possible for a man who spent most of his time in the field. We had a native clerk who was supposed

to do the donkey work but in my office there was more than one donkey. In spite of many petty annoyances we managed to keep our heads above water and it was quite a simple expedient to be called away to work in a remote corner of the bush whenever any particularly noxious queries or requests came to hand. Apart from the observation of all fauna (including birds and reptiles and the smaller mammals) concerning which copious notes were made, there were two main jobs to be done, namely game preservation and cultivation protection. All these duties were carried on side by side and all our staff were engaged in carrying them out. Let me deal with them separately.

Game Preservation:- This came under two heads:

1. Protection in accordance with the Game Preservation regulations of all antelopes, the Pachyderms, a few other animals and certain birds in general throughout the province.
2. Absolute conservation of all wild life living within reserved areas proclaimed by government.

The Game Laws allowed for the killing or capture of a limited number of animals under various permits for which fees were payable. Such licenses were subject to provisions regarding species, number and sex and periods of validity. Notwithstanding these regulations it was permissible for anyone to kill any animal caught in the act of raiding crops, destroying property or threatening human life. Lions, leopards, baboons, monkeys, crocodiles etc. were treated as vermin and could be destroyed by anyone wishing to do so. A careful check had to be kept on all these activities.

Unfortunately, Government decided to declare buffalo and hippopotami as vermin. This was much against my will. This policy did not help in the least to improve the effectiveness of cultivation protection and it was a hindrance to our work. Dick, Tom and Harry took odd pot shots at any unfortunate beast that came within their range; many poor animals were wounded and left to die a lingering and painful death. Some became rogues and caused us endless trouble. I should like to see these animals put back in their proper place on scheduled licences for which fees are payable, this would stop promiscuous and senseless slaughter and haphazard shooting.

As can be seen by a glance at the map, the Province covered a huge tract of country. But, to get a fair idea of the ground to be patrolled, one must conjure up in one's mind the hills and valleys, rivers, streams and lakes, bogs and swamps, waterless areas and waterholes, forests, dense scrub, thorn bush, open park-like country, deep ravines, high granite peaks and long grass growing almost everywhere.

Motor roads were few and far between and moreover they were impassable for any form of vehicular traffic throughout the, rainy season which extended from November until May.

In order to get on with the job it was necessary to spend most of my time on safari in wet or dry weather, to visit areas unexpectedly – often travelling throughout the night. My assistants were some forty or fifty game scouts and many of those needed watching, too, as they were armed with rifles for the purpose of cultivation protection.

There were so few Europeans in this range that their every movement was reported to me in minute detail, by scores of natives to whom the doings of a white stranger were major events in their lives. But there were many native poachers. Fortunately for the fauna of the country there was a considerable amount of "fetina" (petty vindictive intrigues and squabbling) amongst the native population at all times.

Because of this "fetina" we generally found out, sooner or later, about most infringements of the game laws. For instance, on one occasion a game scout,

we'll call him Fulani, had been doing a bit of poaching, not far from his own post, because he wanted a big portion of the meat he had shot. The jumbé (headman of the village) had received his "rake off" and so had many of his relations who had helped to dispose of the carcass. When I arrived at the village every thing appeared to be in order but I noticed that the jumbé seemed overanxious to praise the scout. I told my cook Ali to keep his eyes and ears open. In the evening Ali bought a young native round to tell me his troubles. Late that night we raided Fulani's house and several others. In the end many were implicated and many witnesses were found, the latter disgruntled because they had not shared in the distribution of the meat. They had been afraid to report their Jumbé but now that the "cat was out of the bag" they were most willing helpers. The young man had blabbed because Fulani had been carrying on an intrigue with his wife who had received a goodly portion of meat for no good reason. For that offence the scout was discharged from office and he and his accomplices convicted of an offence against the game laws.

Provided that we patrolled the country regularly and were on friendly terms with the natives we were almost bound to get news of any poaching. It was always a question of "sourgrapes" for someone. There were exceptions, especially amongst certain tribes and where the villages were small or remote. For these people and for those who went in for poaching on a grand scale we had other methods. Sometimes we came across travellers who had bought poached meat. Sometimes we came across bits of skin and hoof that gave us a clue. Native footprints far away from habitation were always suspect. Where nets had been used for trapping there were many signs of the "drive" because of the trampled down grass and the numbers involved. When we found that particular herds of animals were very shy we grew suspicious. In the dry season we often found "Ulingo" (platforms built in trees) overlooking waterholes, these we demolished.

If we knew that game animals were fairly plentiful in the vicinity of suspect villages, we often hunted round about in circles looking for signs of foul play. When feeding grounds or water were scarce we inspected all likely looking places which poachers might have used. There were early burns for attracting animals to their doom – these were visited by us. There were many more ways and means of tracking down poachers but I will not enumerate them all.

The native poachers used old muzzle loading guns, bows and poisoned arrows – both cruel instruments because they generally caused a lingering death. In their "drives" they used long nets staked into the ground into which

they hunted frightened antelope in mass. Sometimes they drove their quarry into sharpened bamboo stakes which were fixed firmly, at an angle, into the soil. Many poor animals were impaled and put to death by barbarous methods; others escaped with ghastly wounds. In some areas, game pits were used – these pits were dug on game paths and covered with grass, earth and leaves.

Two game reserves were patrolled regularly by the scouts and by myself from time to time. As most boundaries were roads and rivers there was little to be done in the way of demarcating, but notices were erected at suitable points on roads and footpaths.

Cultivation Protection: –

This was, by far, the most difficult part of our job. Let us start from the beginning. There were half a million natives in the southern province; most of whom lived in small villages scattered far and wide all over the country. They settled in the more fertile areas where they could grow the crops they preferred

and where water was available. Naturally elephant and hippo frequented the same regions because of the more abundant vegetation.

And so, because these pachyderms had always roamed and browsed at will there was constant war between man and beast. The amount of damage done to growing crops and often to grain-bins was appalling. Owing to the fact that the natives, with their primitive weapons, were unable to save their fields from destruction and as we wished all killing to be done as painlessly and systematically as possible, our department undertook all control measures.

Elephants live to a great age, up to 100 years perhaps, and have long memories. From time immemorial their ancestors had ranged freely throughout those parts. Wanderers from birth the present generation had roamed at liberty over the feeding grounds and country that they loved. Their habits, inborn instincts, memories of their old haunts and their favourite foods, made it impossible to persuade them to seek new pastures even when we took the most drastic steps and decimated their numbers. As an instance I mention the village of Barikiwa in the Liwale district and on the edge of the extensive Ruhangino bush. Before my arrival many raiding elephants had been shot whenever they destroyed the crops. After we had shot seventeen Ionides came to assist me and carried on systematically until he had killed 24 out of the remaining 25. Even then the sole survivor, a biggish bull,

continued his depredation, very wily and elusive in the dense bush. In the end he, too, was killed.

I must return to the early stages of our work. During the first three years we tried out various means to frighten the herds away from human habitation. By now they had learned the danger of feeding in open fields in daylight because most of the herds had lost a few of their numbers. So they came after dark. At night we fired shots from Verey pistols and exploded big "Chinese crackers" near them, we fired live rounds over their heads, beat native drums and tin cans, made log-fires and shouted loudly. But elephants cannot be fooled long. By degrees they found out that their lives were not endangered by such stunts. They called our bluff, gradually became bolder, finally they became aggressive. By the aid of electric torches we shot them in the fields at night. This only served to scare them away to other cultivated areas in the vicinity and we could not be everywhere at once. After a while, they became more reckless and returned the same night to those places where one had been killed. Then we got on their tracks in the morning as soon as it was light, came up to them, shot one or two and fired a few rounds over their backs as they fled. This only chased them further afield to other cultivated areas.

In the first year we killed nearly 400 raiders. The next year we increased staff and accounted for over 600, the following year we followed them still further afield and shot about 750.

Contrary to our hopes, raiding appeared to be going from bad to worse. It was exasperating to receive more complaints than ever from the population. Towards the end of the third year I had made a fairly good survey of the province and was able to make a rough estimate of the elephant population which numbered many thousand.

Sadly I came to the conclusion that the shooting had broken up the herds, many of which, after their leaders (the old cows) had been killed had split up into two or more parties, they were now more scattered than ever before. Dazed by the shock of being torn away from their old associations they moved round in circles, became wilder, travelled greater distances and hid themselves by day in the densest cover they could find. But raiding continued over wider fields.

The situation was reported to our Director and I was instructed to put up a new scheme for more effective control. We knew that this was coming but, as a game preservation department, it had been our policy to save from destruction as many lives as possible. We had done our best and the decision we had to make was inevitable. There were extensive areas only

sparsely populated by human beings. These large tracts were set aside for the elephant where no shooting was allowed and where it was hoped that a certain number of elephant would finally take refuge.

In many areas where the elephants' strongholds were too close to extensively cultivated lands we found it necessary to exterminate the raiders. In other places the herds had to be decimated before they had the sense to clear out. There were many remoter tracts of dense bush and forest where the elephants could have found refuge but they were unable to resist the temptation to steal the natives' grain which was to them as strong drink to a drunkard. They knew well that death stared them in the face but the smell of ripening corn was too much for the poor beasts they took full advantage of dense thorny thickets and primeval forest as a refuge after raiding and into these we had to follow them where the going was difficult and not often dangerous. When they came to realise the full meaning of our campaign against them they became not only wily but bad tempered and vindictive. One could scarcely blame them for taking up this attitude. Time and again on punitive expeditions, we came face to face with an anxious mother or a furious bull towering above us and all but hidden by the vegetation. Sometimes we found ourselves surrounded by a frightened and angry herd milling round and round in circles. We were deafened by crashing trees, shrill trumpeting and squealing grunts. All of us had narrow escapes from death and several game scouts were killed.

When the new scheme came into operation its supervision became more than one man could handle. Ionides, a Control Officer of the Game Department came down to help me. He took over the districts of Kilwa and Liwale, getting down to the Job in grand style. This gave me more time for the organisation and supervision of work in the other districts.

During the next four years we were forced to kill several thousand elephant. At the end of that period there were still several thousand left in the province but the situation was much improved. Our native staff had been increased to nearly seventy.

Elephant hunting calls for great endurance and rough living. The easiest hunts generally meant tracking and walking hard all day. Often the heat was almost unbearable, often it rained continuously. There were many occasions when we did not come up with our quarry until it was too dark to shoot and this meant sleeping out in the bush and continuing the hunt in the morning. It was not unusual to return to camp long after dark.

Our African scouts were keen and tough; they went barefooted and lived on the land. On an average they were paid from about one shilling to one and

sixpence a day. Out of this they supported their families, fed themselves and often engaged a follower to accompany them on their rounds. Most of them were good trackers and good shots, some were excellent. They would walk thirty or forty miles a day when necessary or cycle a hundred over the roughest paths imaginable. Their bedding consisted of a blanket and a sleeping mat. We supplied a uniform and they carried a shuka (length of cloth) for night attire. When they used bicycles for travelling long distances in a hurry over rough roads and rougher bush paths they carried their own .404 rifles and ammunition, food utensils, clothes and bedding. Their stamina was amazing and very few Europeans "living on the fat of the land" could compete with them. They were not afraid of long distances and required little comfort at the journey's end. Wonderfully cheerful after the most gruelling day, they were always willing to give a hand in making their "bwana" (master) comfortable for the night. Their eyesight is better than that of most Europeans, so is their hearing and sense of smell. Their colour is an advantage to them in the bush, many are expert stalkers and skilful in the final approach. Moreover, they have many instincts which we have lost – these are often invaluable to them in a difficult situation. They were keen on their work, kept fair diaries and were proud of their status.

Of course, they had their failings but who has not? Most of them were very loyal and in a tight corner one could not wish for a stouter ally.

Next we come to the hippopotami – they frequented the bigger rivers, lakes, deep pools, mangrove and other swamps and were a menace to most green crops, especially young rice, maize and millet.

Where water and fodder were plentiful they consorted in big schools of up to 50 or 60 Strong. In the rainy season they found many hiding places in creeks and swampy pools in the vicinity of rice fields and other young crops which they raided at night

The control of these voracious feeders was a tedious job where one floundered about in mud and slush amongst mosquito-ridden swamps.

Often we had to follow them into crocodile infested bogs amongst rank vegetation. There the going was often difficult and exciting and not without danger, as will be seen in the tales that follow.

Besides cultivation protection it was part of our duty to hunt and kill all rogue elephant, hippo, buffalo and crocodiles which had become man-killers or a danger to life. We were also responsible for the control of the carnivores: lions, leopards, hyaenas and wild-dogs.

ON TOUR

By the end of May each year, the rains, which had been slacking off for some weeks, were practically over. As regularly as clockwork the main roads were open to traffic at the beginning of June. My box-body car had been overhauled and was ready for long, rough journeys ahead. Long because it was nearly five hundred miles from the coast to the shores of Lake Nyasa, and we had to visit all the different districts (8 in all). Rough because we would use many district roads and sidetracks still waterlogged in parts. None of the roads was metalled and, apart from the main road between Lindi Bay and Lake Nyasa which was a wide well-worn earth track, all other roads were mere tracks through the bush – some worse than others. One had to be prepared to build or repair bridges, to level off approaches to deep ravines which had been scoured out by rushing torrents. To corduroy muddy patches, to cut up and remove trees which had been uprooted by elephant and pushed across the track, it was necessary to carry the tools for this work, also chains for the wheels and rope for hauling. One might be held up for hours or even a whole day or more. Sometimes we had to walk to the nearest village, perhaps 15 miles or more to collect a gang of natives to help us out of difficulties.

Always we carried with us at least a week's supply of food as well as camping equipment for foot safari into the bush.

At that time of the year the grass was at its height, from waist-high in poor soil to eight or ten feet high, or even more on fertile ground. The floods were over but the rivers still ran full.

Now that the roads were open I toured the eight districts thoroughly. It was usual to visit Songea first because I did not find it practicable to work in that part of the country during the rains; it was not the distance (my headquarters was at Masasi and later at Lindi, on the coast), that deterred me, but the time.

After several months of foot-safari through long wet grass and flooded ground, it was pleasant to feel the fresh breezes as I opened up the throttle of my car, and to watch the land-marks slipping by. The air was crisp and clear and cold, leather gloves and a sweater were the order of the day.

On these journeys we stopped at every village on the road to make enquiries about marauding game and crops.

On arrival at the various "bomas" (district offices), there were many matters to be discussed with the district officers who looked after the native scouts during my absence, and later with the local scouts who had gathered to give

me, all their news. Whenever possible the Head-scout met me on the borders of the district, and we talked things over as we went along.

After spending a day or two at the boma, we drove out along all roads that were passable to see things for ourselves. This gave the native chiefs and headmen an opportunity to air their views and enables me to investigate any complaints regarding the efficiency of cultivation protection. All scouts posts were visited as often as expedient and their areas were patrolled. These trips entailed many excursions on foot, maybe for a few hours, for several days or even a week or two. Scouts' diaries and reports were checked, advice and assistance given when required. At all those places where excessive raiding was reported I made a careful survey of the fields and a rough estimate of the damage done. Whenever necessary more drastic steps were taken to save the crops from ruin.

Thus it was that I was able to keep my fingers on the strings, to keep myself up to date with the movements of the various herds of animals and to write off those which had been destroyed. Sometimes new schemes had to be inaugurated and there was a certain amount of re-organisation to be done.

All control scouts were supplied with hammers and dies for stamping the Game Department mark indelibly on all ivory immediately the animal was killed – this was done to prevent the theft of tusks which were often left out in the bush for several days before collection and transport to the boma, where they were weighed, registered and locked up in a strong-room. Registers had to be examined and expenditure of ammunition was checked carefully. Rifles were inspected regularly, and tested when required. Minor repairs were effected on the spot. There were many other small jobs to be done.

As I have said before, the range was a vast one, and, to keep in touch with everything was a full time job which meant continuous travel, with little time to spare in the office or at home. Thousands of miles were covered by car and thousands on foot during the six dry months of the year from the beginning of June until the end of November.

June and July were delightful months everywhere, the air was fresh and cool and bracing. The long rains had removed all dust from the atmosphere which was now crystal clear. The temperature rose gradually in August. In September hot winds dried out the land and leaves began to fall.

Then the sun became hotter still, sucking out the last few drops of moisture from the earth leaving the pori bare and black and baked. Many streams and rivers ceased to flow, water remained only in deep pools and scattered waterholes.

During these thirsty days of heat and shadeless trees most wild animals and many birds repaired to those damper regions which had escaped the ravages of fire, there they found frugal food and shelter from the burning sun.

Dotted about, at random there were a few evergreen trees; patches, big and small, of green forest, dense thickets and semi-deciduous bush.

From higher altitudes one could see the waterways well defined by the dark trees that lined their banks.

Soon, in spite of terrific heat and lack of surface water, the trees burst into leaf. Within a few days the whole country was covered by vast canopies of pink or coppery leaves – one of the great wonders of the Pori.

In November the grass began to sprout again and after the first fire-quenching rains had fallen, the land was carpeted in green.

Safari during the last three months before the rains was tough going. Journeys by car and on foot were made, as far as possible, at night to escape the scorching sun. But any hunting or patrol work had to be done by day;. We returned to camp tired and thirsty, begrimed with sweat and dust. We carried water but did not drink because it only made us thirst for more. We ate a light meal before starting and had no more until we returned or camped out for the night

Tracking was extremely difficult because of the hardness of the ground. But this season had it's compensations for us because it forced most animals and many birds to concentrate in the vicinity of water and green vegetation, there was little cover left for them and they could not escape detection by those trained in the art of bushcraft. Thus we were enabled more easily to find them out and to count their numbers accurately. As there were few crops for animals to raid at that time of the year, we spent most of our time visiting waterholes, salt-licks, and feeding grounds, spying out the land and counting all our flocks.

For convenience and comfort we built standing camps in areas which required frequent and prolonged excursions. These consisted of a banda (thatched hut with bamboo walls and an open veranda), for myself, and another for my native followers, a small kitchen and a bathroom.

Shady trees and the proximity of water were the first consideration. And so where wild life was abundant we chose our camping grounds

The main-roads were closed to traffic some time in November and after getting badly bogged on one or two bush tracks I was glad to give the car a rest.

The months had passed quickly but we had travelled far and found a lot.

Now that the rains were on us we went everywhere on foot. Whereas we travelled "light" in the dry season, often without a tent, the wet weather made it necessary to move with heavier equipment. Loads were made waterproof by covering them with canvas tops or bags.

Most people have their own fads and fancies regarding equipment, all depends on personal requirements and the nature of ones journeys. We had a job of work to do, so went as lightly as was convenient for reasonable comfort and mobility. Our funds were limited and we adjusted ourselves according to the travelling allowances allocated by Government.

Nearly always my porters (pack animals were out of the question because most of the bush was infested with tsetse-fly) were volunteers who came because they preferred that kind of work and because it was more than likely that venison would be plentiful – all natives are inordinately fond of meat.

On an average we walked for seventeen to twenty miles a day, rain or sunshine, but the distance depended on the jobs we found to do. Sometimes we might go a hundred miles or more without being called upon for assistance, sometimes we camped for several days at one spot. But there were few days when I did not cover twenty miles or more – there was always something to do in the field, even after a long trek from camp to camp. The jobs to be done were much the same as those of the dry season; only it was more difficult to get about owing to swollen rivers, miles of muddy flats and the long wet grass. Flying insects, ants, scorpions and other small vermin were a pest. But the moisture-laden air was softer and the heat more tolerable, water was plentiful though sometimes muddy, spoor was easier to follow and the nights cool and refreshing. Unless there were very special reasons for surprise visits my scouts were informed. beforehand of an intended tour, they met me on the borders of their allotted areas and accompanied me to the boundaries of a neighbouring scout.

Besides being responsible for protecting the native shambas from marauding game it was the scouts' duty to patrol every inch of his range, to have a thorough knowledge of the wild life and habits and to have a comprehensive knowledge of the various crops and fields. This information they imparted to me as they showed me round the country. The headmen of the villages had been told of my coming and those who wished to do so came along to tell me their troubles, or to thank me for the help they had received. Wherever game was plentiful I made a point of shooting a buffalo or antelope for distribution to all those who deserved the meat. Most Christians and pagans ate elephant and hippo and so were more fortunate than their Mohammedan brothers whose religion forbade the eating of these animals.

Wherever expedient I gave the scouts a helping hand and before leaving their districts made every effort to ensure proper control and preservation during my absence. Sometimes I found it necessary to hunt a dangerous or marauding animal which had been too wily for the scout, sometimes herds had to be decimated or even exterminated because of their persistent depredations. On occasions I gave the scout special permission to do these jobs himself – he was not allowed a "free-hand" in regard to shooting. Ordinarily scouts were limited to the killing of only one or two raiders at a time and these had to be followed from the actual scene of destruction. There was no haphazard shooting.

All antelopes are nervous creatures and can be frightened away easily even by children, therefore the scouts were not allowed to shoot any of these without specific orders which were rarely given. But the laws did not prevent shamba owners from killing any animals which were a nuisance to them – it was the scouts' duty to investigate such killings and to report them immediately, in writing. The natives, also were under a similar obligation, their reports came through their headmen.

The control of vermin such as pigs, baboons and monkeys was left to the natives themselves but we were often called upon for assistance or advice. In many cases where these pests were particularly destructive it was usual for the Native Authorities to employ their own vermin hunters who were armed with 14 bore shotguns; an unusual calibre which enabled us to keep a more accurate check on their activities because a strict record was kept of all ammunition supplied and used.

To avoid unnecessary cruelty we did our best to help in those areas where vermin was a menace. I mention one glaring case of cruelty in a certain locality where baboons had ravaged crops – they are wanton feeders, destroying and damaging far more than they eat – the natives decided to put an end to them by surrounding them at night and "burning them out". Their sleeping places were in tall trees growing in amongst high dense grass which was as dry as tinder. The night was dark and no wind blew. The signal was given and the grass was fired in a circle, simultaneously all round. The rising heat drew in a gust of wind which fanned the fire, causing it to burn furiously. There was no escape for the poor brutes who were roasted alive by flames which licked the highest branches, destroying every leaf. Arriving on the scene, by accident, the following day, I counted over seventy charred bodies. And so it is plain that primitive people cannot be left to their own devices where wild animals are concerned.

Readers may be interested to know what happened to the hundreds of elephant and hippo which were killed every year. In those parts where the population was entirely Mohammedan the meat was left to the scavengers of the pori – hyaenas, jackals, vultures and smaller animals; only the tusks and tushes were removed, either by cutting them out immediately with axes or, by leaving the heads to putrefy first. Elephant tusks were easily "pulled" after the body had lain in the hot sun for three or four days, but hippo heads took longer and had to be buried deep in the ground for ten days or more for the flesh to rot and to prevent them being dragged away by hyaenas or crocodiles. After removal the ivory was washed and scrubbed with earth and sand then put out to dry and deodorise before delivery by porter to the nearest boma.

But, whenever possible, especially in those cases where shooting was done on a big scale under the more drastic measures which we were forced to adopt, we notified the meat-eaters of our intentions. They came long distances to the feast, fifty or sixty miles and more, men, women and children camped out in the vicinity of our operations – we called them when all was ready. To save excessive squabbling we allotted the carcasses to the various groups but, even then, there were many unseemly brawls over the tit-bits. The fat and internal organs were the choicest parts. The belly was ripped open by the more aggressive members of the party who helped themselves first. When the stomach had been cut and torn out there was great competition for what remained inside. The stronger ones wasted no time, diving into the carcass where they sometimes disappeared from sight, slashing at the "innards" and, fighting for their choice. Finally they emerged covered and caked in blood. Meanwhile the women and children had been busy collecting firewood and building grids for spitting the meat which was roasted hard and dry to make the loads lighter and to preserve the flesh from going bad. Every atom, excepting the head and the big bones, was utilised, even the thick tough hide was charred and later made into a gravy. The din made by shouting, talking, squabbling and the thuds of axes is best left to the imagination.

When the roasting was over and the meat dry enough to carry away they returned to their homes heavily laden and happy. Even a woman with a baby on her back would think nothing of carrying a fifty or sixty pound load on her head, balancing it gracefully and walking perhaps twenty miles or more in a day.

Safari was never monotonous because of the many different types of country and because of the variation in the fauna, especially the birds. There were

long sandy stretches of open bush and grass where running streams were numerous at this time of the year. We walked along the coasts and beaches and through thick bush for days on end. In the mangrove swamps we spent many hot and steamy days, in open canoes, chasing marauding hippo and predaceous crocodiles. Along the Ruvuma River we waded through muddy flats and swamps often waist-deep in dirty water for weeks at a time. There were great outcrops of granite kopjes to explore and there were many exciting hunts. The native porters were always a cheery crowd who, after carrying their fifty pound loads for twenty miles or more, pitched camp, collected firewood, dug latrines, bathed themselves regularly at the nearest water and cooked their own food. Then, when one would have expected them to fall asleep from fatigue, they often laughed and talked far into the night. Always they were early risers and astir long before dawn. I carried salt, cigarettes and tobacco which was issued to them after extra heavy days. They lived on the land also, to a great extent; fowls and eggs came from the village, so did cereals and rice, sweet potatoes, gourds and spinach; game birds and venison were on the menu when available. But canned food was carried as "iron-rations" and I always brought tea and coffee, sugar, milk, butter, jam, cheese, bacon and flour, a few condiments and luxuries. It must be remembered that we spent most of our days in the bush, for years on end. We had to keep fit for strenuous work and to ward off disease, such as malaria which was prevalent in most parts of the country. In ten years I did not spend day in hospital and on very few occasions was I forced to lie up for even a day or two at home or in my camp.

I took a fair amount of trouble in selecting camping grounds in the best available sites – even if this meant walking an hour or two extra going to and from my work.

Tired after a long hard trek it was always good to see the green tent pitched under the trees, pots on the fire and the cook hurrying off with the teapot in his hand. After a much needed and refreshing bath I lay back in the old deck-chair, drank several cups of good strong tea and smoked my pipe. Later I made notes of the day's work and of any interesting observations. Then, if it was still daylight, I watched the birds until dusk. When the evening meal was over I read for an hour or so, or talked to the local people, then lay back and listened for a while to the many delightful sounds of the bush. It is only in the wet weather that you can appreciate fully the luxury of a good tent. Be wise and carry a sound one if you travel in the rains.

Of course, there were many nights when I was awakened to go out hunting for a raiding beast. It was a point of honour to go out immediately I was

called, in wet or fine weather, but woe betide the man who called me out to shoot a pig!

Far away, on the Ruvuma River, I hear the lions roar; and now the throbbing of a drum. I see that villainous old wizard. Lijoujo, and his infernal bag of tricks – crocodiles teeth and human hair and bones, the thorn from a lion's tail, two great canine teeth and several claws – we must investigate.

"Twendé porini, bwana, twendé, twendé!

"Let us go into the wilderness, sir, come, let us go!

CHAPTER TWO

IN THE SHADOWS OF SENGWA

As the story that follows is bound up inextricably with the webs of witchcraft and superstition, I give a short explanation to enable the reader to come to a better understanding of the mentality of the natives concerned, many of whom are pagans. Although large numbers have become converts to Islam and others follow the teachings of Christ yet, with few exceptions, Pagan, Mohammedan and Christian alike are greatly influenced by the spirit world. Ancestor worship prevails. Witchcraft is practised everywhere in spite of British law. From birth to death ancestral spirits pervade the atmosphere and must be consulted and placated; before planting or harvesting there are rituals and offerings to be made; no journey starts without the blessing from beyond and, even when under way, the party returns in the event of adverse signs. Sickness and death are brought about by departed souls. They are ruled by superstition and believe in lycanthropy – a troubled man may will himself to enter the body of a lion or some other beast after death. It follows therefore that the MCHAWI, or wizard is a very powerful agent and greatly feared: most of his works are nefarious: he is not to be confused with the MGANGA, or witch doctor, whose services are often sought for the warding off of evil things and whose influence is mostly for good. Now the Mchawi is a crafty, sly individual endowed with a psychic and hypnotic personality by which means he instils fear into people. Besides having a professed influence over the spirit world, a clever Mchawi has a natural gift for observation (often inherited) and bushcraft: he knows his man and he knows the immutable laws of nature. Perhaps it may be possible now to imagine the effects of a wizard's curse upon the minds of a primitive people. Now to the story of Lijonjo's lion:

Lijonjo and his people lived to the south of the Ruvuma River in Portuguese East Africa: he was hereditary Chief of the tribe and as a wizard his fame had spread on both sides of the river, far beyond the borders of his clans. Some years previously one of his nephews Makochera, had quarrelled with him and had then moved to the north of the river, followed by half the tribe. Here they settled comfortably under British rule. Lijonjo visited his nephew from time to time and, realising that there were many advantages in living on Tanganyika soil, one day proposed to join him: Makochera was agreeable but insisted on being ruler of the whole tribe in the event of reunion – this led to a heated argument. Makochera was adamant and finally, in despair, the old

Mchawi threatened to send lions to kill his nephew and all those living in his particular family group. Makochera was not a man to be intimidated easily so he consulted and advised his people, then defied Lijonjo, telling him to do his worst. Now the old sorcerer stood up and called upon the spirit of his father entreating him to enter the body of a lion, to kill and eat his nephew and those around him and having delivered his curse Lijonjo went home to await results. There was dismay in the little village as one and all feared the great Mchawi's power, but they respected their Chief and stood grimly by his decision,

For some days life went on much as usual but there was not a soul who did not live in fear. Barely a week had passed when tragedy began. At grey dawn the women were returning from Lukwamba stream carrying heavy earthenware jars of water on their heads, small girls accompanied them and they, too, carried water. Suddenly there was a piercing scream followed by the shrieks of terror-stricken women – jars were dropped and broken as the crowd fled helter-skelter for home. Shouts of defiance came from the men who knew instinctively what had happened: old and young seized the weapons they possessed and ran to the meeting tree where soon the high pitched resonant notes of a drum beat out rapidly the call to arms: "Ngula m'tu, ngula m'tu, ngula m'tu", the lion call.

From the small villages around the men began to gather, armed with axes, spears, bows and arrows and one or two old muzzle-loading guns. Meanwhile Makochera and a few of the braver men had rushed off to the water-hole where they found the fresh tracks of a lion in the sandy river bed: following these they found the sand spattered with drops of blood and then picked up a woman's garment torn off by savage claws. A little later they noted the trail leading into a dense reed-bed which they approached cautiously. Stopping a few yards short of the reeds they thought it advisable to discuss the plans of the hunt; while they were still talking things over there was a tremendous roar and the lion was amongst them. The sudden and unexpected attack caused a panic and all took to their heels, but one was seized and killed, the back of his head and neck being crushed in by a single bite. The lion stood over his latest victim growling savagely and was about to drag him off when a shot from one of the muzzle-loaders struck the ground a yard short, spraying sand and pebbles in his face; this caused him to retreat and abandon the body. More people joined the hunters but they were unnerved, so, picking up the corpse they all went back to the huts. Meanwhile the lion, having been disturbed at his meal, dragged the woman's body right through the reed-bed and up the river bank into a dense thorny

thicket where he devoured it, leaving only the head, hands, feet and most of the bones.

After a long interval the hunters, reinforced, went off again but when they found the remains (which they collected in a winding sheet) they were unable to follow the killer's tracks owing to the hard and stony nature of the parched ground. That night the villagers went to bed before dark and barricaded their doors.

A few days later the women from an adjoining village were collecting grain from their storage bins on the edge of a thorny thicket and, as they were returning in the evening with their baskets full the lion sprang on the last one in the file and dragged her off into the bush. A small party of men hurried to the spot and followed the trail for several hundred yards in an attempt to recover the body. Again the drums beat out a warning signal and fires were lit in many small clusters of surrounding huts, failing light put an end to the chase. In the morning the remains were found scarcely half a mile away, collected and carried back for burial. By now the hunters had little stomach for the dangers of following this evil beast, moreover they had abandoned themselves to the curse and the futility of following a creature which they believed could change its form at will into the likeness of a jackal or hyaena, thereby putting them off the trail.

There was a small mission school a mile or two distant which was visited regularly by European lady teachers who came on bicycles from Lukwika Mission some ten miles away. These stout-hearted women carried on their work without interruption and through them a message was sent to my headquarters at Chumula near the District Office at Masasi. I happened to be at home so set out in the morning by car accompanied by Game Scout Yussuf and my cook James. A rough drive over sixty miles of bush track brought us to the camp at Makochera's village. I was fairly new to this Province and the natives, not knowing me well, were very suspicious of a Government official's visit, owing to the element of witchcraft in this affair. Very definitely they did not desire my presence nor would they tell me the true story; in fact they did their best to persuade me to return, saying that the lions had left the district and crossed over the Ruvuma River into Portuguese Territory. So insistent were they that I almost believed them. In the end I compromised by telling them that in any case I wished to patrol the district to make a survey of the country and to study the elephant and other game and to visit their various drinking places. James, my cook, had heard about Lijonjo's curse, but told me nothing. He did not like the idea of spending a night in camp in an open banda (temporary grass building), so told me that the country was infested

with the dreaded "Songo" – a crested crowing cobra that chased people on sight, and whose bite was sudden death. In the early afternoon, much against everybody's wish, I set off for the top of Sengwa hill with field-glasses and compass and my note book. Knowing my objective, Makochera informed me as we walked along, that it would be very dark before we could get back. I replied that as the bad lion had gone away it would not matter much if we did return by night. Half an hour later we passed the last hut in the village and entered the pori (bush). Two guides, one carrying a shot gun and ammunition led the way followed by myself, then came Makochera and his nephew Rajab who carried my light rifle; Yussuf and an oldish man brought up the rear; the former carried my double barrel rifle. The hill was further than I had thought and it was not until 5 p.m. that we reached the top of the hill where, perched on the top of a great granite boulder we scanned the bushveld below and took compass bearings on several kopjes and waterholes which were pointed out and named by the local men. These were plotted on my map and notes made in my diary. The party had been restless for some time and I found it increasingly difficult to get intelligent answers to my questions. At last Makochera spoke out, reminding me that the sun was setting and that camp was very far away. It was indeed late when we set off down the steep hill. On the way down the old man slipped badly skinning his elbows. At the foot of the hill we were crossing a deep, damp gully where the long grass had escaped the fires that had burned out most of the country, when I heard a rustle and heavy thudding of feet. Several questions were asked and answered; some said it was a pig, others thought it was an antelope: I had my own ideas but said nothing, only I told Yussuf to load the guns as it was getting late. We continued through the burned up country in extended order, each man choosing his own wavy as fine trees were scattered wide apart and the going easy. The sun had set and dusk was turning rapidly to dark when I called the party into single file. There was no path so we followed closely on the heels of the two guides. It was about 8p.m. and intensely dark in the shadow of Sengwa Hill when we came to the banks of the Lukwamba stream. There was a perpendicular drop of about three feet into the dry white sandy river bed. The guides warned me of the drop before jumping down. I followed, and then came Yussuf. I had scarcely gone two or three paces when I heard a heavy thud behind me, and thinking that the old man had slipped I turned round to chaff him for his clumsiness, and doing so, was just in time to see a flash of fire and to hear the loud report of my heavy rifle fired by Yussuf. At the same time two dark bodies precipitated themselves into the river bed beside me as the terrifying

bellowing roar of an infuriated lion shook us to the core. There followed several heavy thuds along the bank towards our right, and pebbles scattered amongst us like shot. Even then I did not grasp the situation fully until I heard the panic-stricken voice of Makochera saying "Rajab amekufa" (Rajab is dead). With one accord the party bolted ten yards across the white sands where we turned to face the enemy; here at least we would be able to see dimly his approach. We could not distinguish the tufts of grass growing on the black bank, nor could we see anything beyond but the gloomy peak of Sengwa, so intense was the darkness. Upstream on our right we could see only a few yards on the sand owing to a large patch of reeds. A deadly silence reigned. The natives wished to turn and run, but that would have courted disaster, as undoubtedly the lion would have given chase. Besides, I could not go away before making certain that Rajab was dead. So, ordering the party to stand steady I walked back quickly and, having no torch, struck a match to have a look. Rajab was on his face, his head hanging over the bank's edge. I saw four great bloody gashes, two in the lower part of the back of the head and two in the neck below - the head was crushed to a pulp and his neck was broken. The match was still burning when there were yells from behind and I heard the lion charging towards his kill, growling savagely as he came. Still facing him, I ran backwards to the party and fired two rounds of number six birdshot in the direction of the noise. These shots only made him roar and growl more savagely so we backed slowly across the stream and climbed out on the farther side. Here we stood together shouting loudly and I fired several more shots from the shot-gun, making as much noise as possible partly to cheer up our spirits, and partly to scare the lion. No sound came from the far bank and we did not know what the lion was doing so we walked back quickly in single file along a narrow, sandy footpath. Yussuf led the way with the heavy rifle which had only one round left and I brought up the rear with the shot gun and some rounds of birdshot. For nearly an hour we walked in silence and many were the scares we had when some wild pig or antelope scuttled away from our path. On such occasions, the rustle of a small animal, sounds like the crashing of an elephant.

On arrival at the first outlying collection of huts we entered a closed yard where we sat down by the light of a log fire and looked around to see if Rajab was the only missing one. It had been a nerve-racking experience, especially as we thought there might be two, or even three lions on our track. Just as we were starting out from the village that afternoon Makochera, in the hope of putting me off the trip, had told me that three lions had killed several

people in Portuguese Territory in one afternoon; he assured me that it happened in broad daylight. It was a great relief to have the firelight and to get behind a wall, even if it was flimsy and made only of grass and reeds. We waited for the moon and when it rose half an hour later we completed the last two miles of the journey back to camp through tapioca fields and odd patches of scrub.

Word soon passed around the villages by the peculiar penetrating shouts of the natives, telling them our news and instructing them to collect at our camp at daybreak in the morning to join us in tracking the lion to his lair. When the first cocks crowed in the morning, the drummer beat out the "Ngula m'tu" call and when the sun's first rays struck Sengwa's peak some forty men had assembled round the camp fire. They were armed with the most extraordinary assortment of weapons; four muzzle-loaders, spears of all shapes and sizes, bows and poisoned arrows, axes and long, sharpened bamboos. When the sun rose we were on our way.

Perhaps the reader will remember that Rajab carried my light 318 rifle; he also carried one of my haversacks with ammunition for the light and heavy rifles. Luckily I had some S.S.G. for the shotgun and spare ammunition for my 450/400 double-barrel rifle. We did not take long to arrive at the scene of the tragedy, where we found that Rajab's body had been dragged towards a dense thorny thicket. Following the trail we soon found my rifle lying on the ground; it was undamaged, excepting that the strap had been ripped off by the lion's sharp claws, and was quickly cleaned and ready for action. When within about fifty yards of the thicket, I called a halt. It was evident that the lion had entered the scrub, which was a tangled mass of thorny bushes, creepers, shrubs and long yellow grass. This patch of growth which was about half a mile long by two or three hundred yards wide, lay in a damp depression and had escaped the bush fires which had burned the rest of the country black. No one wished to go in with me so I split the party, sending half to the left and the others to the right of the thicket. Following a trail myself I soon found my haversack which had been torn off Rajab's shoulders and cast aside by the lion. Yussuf was following some distance behind so I beckoned to him and gave him the haversack. I didn't want to be encumbered with anything hanging around my neck. The track was easy to follow but I could see only a few yards ahead. Treading very quietly in rubber shoes I kept my rifle at the ready and peered carefully through leaves and grass and tangled bush. Scarcely three hundred yards from the entrance I heard the lion feeding; he was still some twenty yards away. It was quite impossible to see him at that distance so I moved forward very cautiously.

When within about ten yards he must have seen or sensed me because I heard a snarling growl. Standing stock-still, rifle to shoulder, I expected to see him hurtling through the air at any moment. The growls and snarls grew louder and I could see the long grass shiver as his twitching tail struck it, then giving a terrific roar he made a short jump forward in an attempt to rout me. I could see nothing but shaking grass and shrubs and the situation was beginning to get on my nerves, so I began talking to him loudly, calling him insulting names, then with a mighty shout, I rushed forward. This took him by surprise and was too much for the cowardly brute, who retreated swiftly, picking up the carcass as he went. Unfortunately the undergrowth was so thick that my movements were delayed and I failed to see the lion as he left his feeding place. I found one bare shin bone with a foot attached; there was no meat on the bone, which had been cleanly and neatly removed at the knee joint. The grass was flattened out and covered with blood. I could not look back; it was too dangerous as I did not know how far the lion had gone. Speaking to Yussuf I had no answer, so calling loudly, I heard a faint reply. When he was satisfied that all was well he approached sheepishly and explained that all lions, this one in particular were most repugnant to him. We called for two or three men to collect the leg and when they came I proceeded with the chase. After following for a couple of hundred yards I heard the lion again and he heard me because he began to growl! It was impossible to see anything in the dense cover he had chosen for a lie-up. If he charged again he would be on top of me before I could shoot and the suspense was almost unbearable, so this time I did not wait for him to work himself into a rage but rushed down the trail towards him, shouting loudly. The sudden attack was too much for him and he bolted leaving the corpse behind. Makochera and his crowd were called in to see a gruesome sight; there was nothing but a skeleton from the shoulders down - all had been licked clean. Heart, liver, lungs, and stomach had gone, and there wasn't any meat left on the limbs or body. Only the foot and two hands were covered with skin and flesh and the head, neck and top of the shoulders were intact. I wanted the relatives to leave the body where it was and to walk away chattering for a mile or so while I offered to remain hidden near the body in the hope that the lion would return to finish off his meal. They would not hear of this but insisted on wrapping the skeleton in a winding sheet to bear it home for burial. Knowing that the quarry would be thirsty by now, I mad for the nearest waterhole as fast as I could, accompanied by one of the guides of yesterday. Those who were not returning with the corpse agreed to beat through the remaining few hundred yards of bush in case the lion was

lying up. The water-hole was about a mile away and the country between bush and water was burned black, with odd clumps of cover here and there. The ground was hard and stony all the way. When we got to the pool we had a quick look round its margin and, seeing no sign of fresh tracks, felt hopeful as we hid ourselves behind some scrub on the farther side where there was a slight rise in the ground. Gradually the beaters closed in, but no lion appeared. The leading tracker reached the pool and pointing to a fresh track called out "Did you not see him? He has drunk right here under your very noses". We were astounded. He must have approached from an unexpected angle, taking advantage of every bit of cover. Perhaps he had seen us on the way, but even then we should have heard him drinking; possibly he did not drink, but may have spotted us and slunk off. My native followers were all of one accord, for them there was a simple explanation. The spokesman said "Uchawi wake Lijonjo simba yule amezuka. Sisi tumilogwa, Bwana". (It is the wizardry of Lijonjo. The lion has changed his form into that of some other animal. As for us, Master, we have been bewitched.)

Until now there had been little enough enthusiasm in the hunt but, after this, the natives became despondent and there was no heart in their work. So, picking up the difficult trail myself, I followed grimly over long miles of hard-baked stony ground, then through a mile or so of dense, dry grass where the paths made by numerous animals confused the tracks and made the going tedious. While fully occupied in this all-absorbing search some instinct caused me to stand up straight and look towards my right. There, through shimmering waves of heat, I saw the brute standing on an antheap beneath some shady trees, barely 300 yards away. What was it that made me look in his direction? Was it telepathy? Or was it the evil eye of Lijonjo? How long he had been contemplating us I do not know. Before I could get a snap shot he disappeared behind the antheap which obstructed further view.

Another couple of miles of the most difficult tracking brought us to an outcrop of rugged granite hills, almost solid rock and studded with many caves. Now it was impossible to follow his spoor, it was after 4 p.m. and we were several miles from camp so, after throwing stones into a few caves, we made for home. It had been a terribly disappointing hunt, all day long the sun had scorched us from above and, reflecting from the ground, had struck us in the face; even our feet were blistered by the sunbaked, stony ground.. We were torn and scratched by thorns and splintered grass, and now we had lost our lion. Hot and tired and thirsty, we returned to camp just as the burning sun slid away behind Sengwa's granite peak.

Makochera greeted me in the morning and then went off to meet the village elders under the large, shady tamarind tree. In the afternoon he came again to thank me for my assistance and to beg me to leave his village because, he said, this man-eating lion was no business of mine. Admitting that there was sorcery at the root of the evil he took full responsibility, saying that they would deal with the menace themselves. I was annoyed and loath to let that lion get the better of me, but came to the conclusion that, as they did not want me, there would be no co-operation and it would be better to leave them alone.

That night I slept at Lukwika Mission. Some lions, coming up a road from the Ruvuma, roared throughout the night. The Archdeacon told me that often they walked right through the station and between the huts. In fact this spot appeared to be a general meeting place for all the lions in the district because so many paths and tracks came in from all around. In the morning I was home again at Chumula and glad to find that there were many jobs to be done; the work would keep me occupied and free from worry as to whether I had done the right thing in leaving those people to their fate.

I was away from the district for a week and when I returned I found a letter from Makochera asking for the assistance of two of my local Game Scouts. From his note it appeared that in the evening of the second day after I left them the lion had taken a man in the dusk, from just outside his hut. About twenty natives had tracked him up in the morning and found him lying up in a small patch of cover near the caves where he had baffled us previously. When they were nearing this cover, the lion roared and made a determined charge. All fled in confusion but one, slower than the rest, was killed and dragged away to be eaten. Neither of these two bodies was ever recovered. I chose two Game Scouts for the job – Msham and Gallus – both crack shots, and sent them off on their bicycles the following day. Msham was an old and experienced hunter; Gallus was young but very keen. During the following week several more people were killed. One was a young woman; she was taken in the tapioca field while on her way to draw water in the late afternoon. Her uncle was on the verandah of his hut and saw the tragedy. In hot blood he rushed after the lion and leaped on to its back. Seizing its mane in his hands, and mad with rage, he fastened his teeth into its neck trying to hinder its progress. The lion shook him off and smashed his skull with one swift blow from its paw. The man was found lying dead with his hands and teeth clenched and full of hair. The girl was never seen again.

Although the two Game Scouts worked hard and did not fail to follow up every kill, they met with no success. After this last performance the lion did

not put in an appearance for several days, so the Game Scouts decided to return to other duties. They had spent the night at Lukwika and were about to continue their journey when a runner came to call them back again, another man had been killed. That day they had no more luck than usual but while they were out on the hunt, the old Mchawi, Lijonjo, came to the village to find out whether Makochera wished to change his mind. The latter visited his MGANGA (Witchdoctor) and, after consultation made up his mind to give the old scoundrel Lijonjo more than he had bargained for. So, calling together the village elders, he proposed that Lijonjo should be caught and tortured until he would agree to remove the curse. To a man they all agreed: because they looked upon that lion as an evil spirit while it was under the sorcerer's control. Forthwith Lijonjo was caught and tied up and an ultimatum delivered. He was a very stubborn old man but, at last, writhing in agony, he shouted "Hold off, it is enough! untie my fetters and I will remove the spell." Thereupon he was released and bluntly told to fulfil the promise. Squatting on the ground he opened up his goat-skin bag of trickery and mumbling to himself went through the antics of his trade. Suddenly he stood up straight, quivering with emotion, his bloodshot eyes staring wildly in the direction of Sengwa and shouted to the lion by name. "Kipanga-pori (cave dweller)! Come forth tonight and kill a man. After you have filled your belly, the spirit of my father, the great Mchawi, will leave you; then you will be at the mercy of the people who will follow you and slay you". So saying, he collapsed, panting for breath and in a trance.

That night all went to bed early and barricaded their doors. Some time after midnight the killer came and broke through the wall of a hut by tearing off the mud plaster with his powerful claws, and ripping through the rotten, ant eaten poles and bindings. Before dawn the drum beat out the dreaded call "Ngula m'tu, ngula m'tu, ngula m'tu" this was followed by notes of good cheer.

The trail was easy to follow as the victim was a heavy man and everyone was optimistic as to the outcome of the hunt. About an hour later they came to a thorny thicket. Gallus entered while Msham climbed into the fork of a tree to look over some long grass which obstructed their view. There was an ominous growl, then the lion roared and leaped at Gallus through the grass. Gallus, realising that he was in a hopeless position flung himself flat-out sideways; Msham was in a perfect position and fired. The 404 bullet hit the lion in the chest and ripped right through, breaking his back and putting an end to his evil career. Muzzle-loaders barked into the air and half a dozen spears were thrust into his body before the Scouts could prevent it. A stout

pole was cut, the body lashed to it and carried home by relays of eight men. The lion was a full grown yellow maned male in the prime of life, his claws and teeth were perfect. The body was thrown down on a small path outside the village. Men, women and children went out to see it and to throw clods of earth and bunches of green grass on to it, to propitiate its spirit. Later, after its skin and skull had been removed, its body was burned in a big log fire.

When the Game Scouts brought the skull to me for inspection, and to tell the story, I asked them if they really thought they would kill the lion after Lijonjo's spell had been lifted. They replied "We did not think, we KNEW that it would die". Gallus, then pulled out his purse, opened it and drew out a piece of paper which he unfolded carefully to show me half a dozen pellets from a No. 6 cartridge, which he had found embedded just under the skin on the lion's face. This was proof that they had killed the right lion as it was No. 6 shot which I fired at the lion the night he got my gun-bearer.

Game animals were plentiful in the area concerned and at that time of the year it was not difficult for lions to obtain their natural food. I have told you somewhat of Mchawi's make-up, of the people's faith in his powers, ancestor worship, superstitions, respect and fear of departed spirits. How do these wizards do their stuff? It is one thing for a man or for a spirit to be blamed after the event, but it is a different matter for a person to pronounce a curse beforehand. It is common knowledge that dogs and horses know when people are afraid of them; so do lions and elephants and other animals. They "sense" fear very quickly. Excepting when they are absorbed in feeding or sleeping, animals often appear to sense danger but seem to be little concerned when one's intentions are not unfriendly. How often do we sense any undue interest taken in ourselves by man or beast! I am convinced that there is a definite smell attached to fear. Why did the lions depart from their natural means of living and take to man-eating when required to do so? Is there anything in telepathy or the smell of fear? Is there anything in "Black Magic"?

CHAPTER THREE

ELEPHANT

At the beginning of 1928 when I joined the staff of the Tanganyika Game Department as an elephant control officer there were in the region of twenty-five thousand elephants in the south-eastern provinces.

These were scattered about all over the country in many hundreds of different herds. Each herd contained anything from fifteen to fifty or more individuals the biggest heard I came across numbered about one hundred and fifty including many, young animals and small calves – undoubtedly a gathering of several family groups. In each family group the individuals have certain common characteristics peculiar to their family – such as long legs or tails, long or short bodies, big ears or small ears and so on. Some families are very sturdily built and have fine big heads with heavy trunks; others have mean looking narrow heads with long thin trunks and ears out of all proportion.

Particularly noticeable are their feet and tusks. In one group you will find five very distinct toe nails on each front foot and four of these on each of the hind feet. Another group will have but four and three nails respectively.

In the Matumbi hills of Mahenge the bulls in certain herds all carried short thick heavy tusks. Those of other herds in the surrounding areas had long thin tusks. All of which goes to suggest that the peculiar characteristics are inherited.

Old cows lead their respective herds about their feeding grounds. These herds are comprised of cows and calves and young bulls, generally there are more cows than bulls. The father of the calves follows the family group about wherever they go. Sometimes he mixes up with them, at other times he wanders about in their vicinity, never very far away. These herd-bulls were generally forty or fifty pounders, that is to say their tusks would weigh forty or fifty pounds each. (I say “were” because since the decimation of the elephant population under the control scheme many younger bulls have joined the herds).

Some of the older and bigger bulls join the herd from time to time but never stay for long. They seem to know the routine of their respective groups and so are able to travel much further afield yet keep in touch and make contact on the longer migrations. These are the bulls to hunt if your time and locality are limited because on account of their numbers they are easier to locate.

But the really big old tuskers, those carrying over eighty pounds to a tusk, should be the sportsmans' quest. These old fellows are confirmed old bachelors and lead a solitary life though sometimes they join company with others of their sex – two or three or more occasionally consort together, Even such crusty old hermits look in on the family at rare intervals for old times sake or when they go on long periodical migrations.

In the Southern provinces elephants often travel great distances in search of food and can negotiate almost any type of country with comparative ease, climbing and descending the steepest hills and valleys. When descending very precipitous hillsides, especially when in a hurry, they push their forefeet out in front sliding down on the heels of these and resting on their hind knees. They cannot jump a yard owing to their build but can walk over any ditch which is not too wide to be taken in their stride (6 or 7 feet for a big elephant). Being very sure-footed they seldom slip or fall accidentally; invariably with trunk and feet, they test out dangerous ground by feel before putting a foot down firmly. They are strong swimmers, often I have seen them swimming over deep wide swollen rivers but they prefer their own chosen crossing places where they know the nature of the ground. They generally swim with the greater part of their bodies submerged – many times I have seen them entirely submerged excepting for a short portion of their trunk tips. When crossing deep swiftly running water calves keep upstream above their mothers, the babies resting against their dams necks for safety, the latter often hold them in position with their trunks.

Ten to fifteen miles a day is the usual distance for a feeding herd to travel but if there are no very young calves greater distances are not unusual, all depends upon the amount of food available.

When the babies are very small their mothers separate from the herd which wanders about in the vicinity until the youngsters are strong enough to take part in longer rambles. At birth the babies' trunks are very short and feeble. They use their mouth for sucking milk and have to curl their little trunks out of the way. After a month or two their trunks assume more regular proportions.

Elephants feed throughout the night and during the cooler hours of daylight. Their food consists of a hundred and one different kinds of vegetable matter – the leaves of various trees and creepers, many varieties of young and juicy reeds and grass, the fruit and bark of trees, roots and tubers. Small branches and twigs are broken off and eaten too. Saplings are pulled and chewed to extract their contents.

They use their tusks for digging up bushes and roots many of which have medicinal properties, and for splitting the bark from the bigger trees. Bulbs and tubers which do not grow too deep are dug out by the fore feet; their big hard toenails come in handy for this purpose. The end of the trunk is used for conveying all food to the mouth – this is done by coiling the extremity of the trunk round the morsel and gripping it with the finger-like appendages at the tip. When earth or mud or other objectionable matter adheres to the food the clean portion is gripped in the trunk while the contaminated parts are bashed against an upraised foot or tree trunk. Elephants are fond of salt too and where this is scarce they eat a certain amount of woodash and mud from salt licks which also contain other medicinal properties.

Unfortunately elephants have learned to eat nearly all the different kinds of cultivated crops – banana stems and fruit, the young juicy stalks of maize, millet, rice and their ripened grain; cassava, sweet potatoes, melons and a host of other foods. Even grain-bins are pushed over and their contents looted.

Usually elephants drink and bathe in the cool of evening or at night but this is not quite a hard and fast law mud baths and wallows are often frequented in the mornings and occasionally during, the heat of day and in the afternoons.

During the hot dry season elephant spend much of their' time standing about under shady trees resting and dozing, sometimes leaning languidly against a tree-trunk. Always fidgety they must move some part of their anatomy even when dozing – they flap their big ears continually and whisk their tails to frighten flies. They test the air regularly with their powerful and perceptive trunks. They keep on changing the position of their feet, resting each in turn.

On approaching a feeding herd one is almost bound to hear the rending of branches or splitting of bamboo. Every now and then one of them may trumpet, but they can be very silent. When close up to a herd there are many sounds of feeding, chewing, sighing, flapping of ears and whisking of tails, Intestinal rumblings and a peculiar vibrating rumble like distant thunder which seems to come from deep down in their throats. Odd noises come from their trunks at times – apart from their usual trumpeting – flute like sounds, squeaks and gurgles of satisfaction and successions of sharp yelps resembling those of whimpering pups.

A small proportion of both bulls and cows are quite tusk less (buddi) and there is a still smaller number of single tusked animals (msenda). From examination of the skulls of many of the latter it would appear that these

animals are born with the makings of two tusks but have lost one owing to some mishap, often early on in life. The tusk less animals show no sign of having been provided with tusks in their early days.

But as a rule both sexes are provided with a pair of tusks which are of great value to their owners and indispensable for obtaining certain kinds of foods. Tusks are also used for prodding one another when squabbling over favourite foods. Almost invariably they use their tusks when killing human beings. It is very noticeable that the tusk less animals of both sexes are more irritable than their luckier companions – this probably owing to the fact that they have been at a considerable disadvantage all their lives, having had to depend on their friends for titbits and much prodding from their enemies when trying to steal something they could not obtain otherwise.

The cows are zealous mothers and take care that their calves do not wander too far away. It is inadvisable to approach too closely to animals with small calves as they are liable to charge if caught by surprise. If a mother scents danger at a reasonable distance, say fifty yards or so, she will push her young away from the danger zone, by means of her trunk, to set it on the right course. As soon as they are well started in the right direction or if the route lies through heavy rough growth the calf follows close behind its mother.

Elephants are extraordinarily clever at moving away from danger and not towards it, but if they depend on sound alone, their ears do not appear to be very accurate detectors. Sometimes, of course, they are bewildered by echoes. Then there is the possibility that they, may come in your direction. Fortunately this happens seldom otherwise there would be many more casualties. Should a large herd of elephant stampede towards you it is advisable to give them your wind as quickly as possible by streaking to the windward side. But if they are too close for such an attempt to be made, make for an anthep or get behind a stout tree trunk if either of these is available. Shout loudly or blow a shrill whistle. If you happen to be in a more awkward position where there is no such refuge it is advisable to fire a shot or two into the air. Sometimes it is impossible to escape being surrounded by elephants on all sides and occasionally a frightened or pestered herd may mill around for some time – such a position is extremely dangerous and one must keep cool and fire only at point blank range when it is certain that the animal is intent on getting at you. It is quite unnecessary for the ordinary hunter to get himself into such a fix; it can be avoided easily by keeping away from herds in thick bush or long dense grass. But it is just possible for a trophy hunter to find himself unwittingly in an awkward position because

his quarry has mingled with a herd. So I have mentioned the above in the hope that it may be of some value to the tyro. When approaching a solitary elephant or a herd of these animals in order to get a closer view (from leeward of course) watch their movements carefully. If one or more begin to get fidgety it is advisable to move away as quickly and quietly as possible. Because if an elephant is aware of a danger that he cannot identify or properly locate, he is liable to charge towards the offending cause. Often a charge of this kind is merely a bluff but is liable to turn into the real thing and it is difficult to tell the animals' intention. The fidgety movements to watch for are the cocking of ears, trunk extended for a prolonged period to test the air, raising of the tail, turning to look hard in one direction and sideways body movements caused by shifting the weight of the body from one foot to another.

It must be remembered that elephants even when at rest, do not keep very still – they shuffle their feet continually, ears and tails are always flapping and swishing, to keep away flies, bees and mosquitoes. They use their trunks too for getting at pests they cannot reach with their tails and I have seen them swinging leafy branches with their trunks, using them as fly-swishes. Even when lying down asleep they keep on raising their trunk-tips to test the air.

Once when hunting two bull elephants near Matapwa on the Mchinjidi stream I came across them lying down fast asleep in long grass under shady trees. They had gorged themselves on mtama millet during the night and must have been suffering from indigestion. They were less than a mile from the fields. Both were flat on their sides and snoring loudly. The grass had been much trampled down by many elephants and so I had a clear view of them they were only about ten yards apart. I shot one through the back of the head killing him instantaneously. The other was on his feet before I could get a shot but gave me an easy heart shot as he shuffled off. Both were full grown bulls, one was a fifty pounder and the other a thirty five pounder.

On another occasion near the source of the Luhombero River on the Mahenge mountains I came across the forms where seven elephant had been lying down asleep within a few yards of one another, two calves amongst them.

In the Masasi district near the source of the Lukulédi River I shot an old seventy five pounder who had been living in the mtama fields for a fortnight. He had become so fat and lazy that he would not leave the fields, even during day. He slept regularly in different parts of the fields and used antheps for his pillows. I have seen elephants lying down on scores of occasions and have often heard them snoring. Sometimes they use antheps

for pillows, at other times they lie on sloping hillsides with their heads on the higher ground. Occasionally they sleep on the level. So it is evident that it is not at all unusual for elephants to lie down to sleep, young and old alike. When disturbed in such a position they rise to their feet with ease and surprising speed.

Elephants rely for their safety almost entirely on their trunks, excepting at close range when they use their ears and eyes in a subsidiary sense. But when charging at very close range they take full advantage of their good short distance vision. Their eyesight and memory, the former for nearby objects only, must be excellent to enable them to remember and to be able to follow their numerous branching paths over wide stretches of country. They always know which branch to take in spite of numerous side tracks.

Although elephants appear to have what is commonly called an instinctive fear of man, especially Europeans, it is extremely doubtful whether they have always had much fear of the natives of the country (I refer to the natives of the Southern Provinces of Tanganyika because in some parts of Africa natives have hunted elephants for many generations with spears, bows and arrows, axes, etc). In fact, my experiences lead me to the conclusion that it is only since the advent of firearms that they have learned to have any respect for the local population.

In the days of muzzle loading guns the bigger bulls and a limited number of herds would have learned to associate death with man and the discharge of firearms. Before we were forced, on account of the deplorable damage done to crops, to decimate countless herds, the elephants had little respect for the local population or their property. Not only did they destroy their crops but pulled down grain bins and houses which were occupied – and this is happening even at the present day. They were not at all afraid of the inmates (who would smell very strongly at such quarters), and probably looked upon them as interlopers. Naturally they would be suspicious of Europeans who would smell strange and it would not take them long to associate this smell with that of firearms and death (many more firearms are used by the small population of Europeans than were ever owned by the natives). After we had armed scores of native scouts the elephants soon began to realise the danger of man. In the old days they raided at almost anytime of the day and by moonlight as well as on dark nights. Gradually they found out that only dark nights were comparatively safe. From the foregoing it would seem that their sense of fear has been acquired from contact and experience gained there from in recent years, and not from instinct. Elephants may not be very clever but once they learn they do not forget.

Much about their behaviour and habits appears in the various tales in this book so I will say no more about them in this chapter.

THE RUVUMA GIANT

Once when hunting in the Vicinity of Mperembé's village, high up on top of the watershed dividing the sources of the Mbarangandu from those of the Nampungu River, I sat down beside old Chuma's trail.

Chuma, the Ruvuma giant, was by far the most famous of all the great bull elephants who roamed the many thousand square miles of country lying between Lake Nyasa and the Indian Ocean.

Chuma means Iron and he was so called because of the many lumps of lead and iron pumped into him by the old Yao and Makua hunters in muzzle-loading days, (native tribes).

Most of the old hunting songs and tales of those regions have some reference to Chuma and on the many occasions when we sat round our camp fires at night, listening to stories of the chase, always it was Chuma, the wizard elephant, who took the palm.

Here we were on one of the grandest animal highways in the world. Sitting on the flat cross-section of a huge fossilised tree-trunk Rashidi and I filled our pipes and, after we had lit them contemplated the broad well-trodden way of the pathfinder of bygone days – they were the pioneers of wildest Africa who roamed the continent from North to South and East to West. These mighty mammals with long strong legs explored the great mountain ranges and the valleys, the dense forests and the bushveld, arid thorn scrub wastes, the open plains and almost impenetrable seas of tall matted grass and reeds. Being strong swimmers they were not afraid to cross wide deep rivers but they took great care to find safe fording places for the cows with calves. Because of their adaptability there were few regions which they did not penetrate. With the exception of bush-fires they feared nothing until the advent of modern man. When they wished to do so they climbed the steepest hills and mountains to find their favourite foods. But on their longer journeys and migrations they were able to grade their paths as well as any engineer – these paths are well defined and half a yard or more in width. Always, because of their wonderful memories and photographic brains they remembered the highways they had made and the many deviations to their favourite foods and watering places. Many of their old highways are still in existence and may be followed for hundreds of miles, but they are fading.

With the exception of civilised man what other animal, living or extinct, has left such well defined roads to posterity?

For nearly a century, perhaps, Chuma had trodden this way which ran from the Luchulingo River in Portuguese East Africa, across the Ruvuma and so on to the coasts of Kilwa several hundred miles away. Relentlessly dogging his footsteps were the intrepid native hunters. But in spite of all Chuma is reputed to have led the way on regular periodical excursions to the sea. Many times and at many different places I had crossed his well-worn trail. Once, many years ago, far away up the Luchulingo valley in P.E.A. the path was pointed out to me. Here Chuma spent his early days in dense bamboo thickets and primeval forests where there was abundant food and cover. Again at the Ruvuma crossing where an old Yao hunter, Kipanga Pori, told me this gruesome tale: ~ four seasoned hunters decided to lie in ambush near the crossing – the elephants were on migration and Chuma would be bound to pass this way. Lions were troublesome at the time so they built themselves platforms high up in the branches of a big mgongo (wild plum) tree where they slept at night. One night when the moon was full the elephants began to make the crossing. Immediately below the tree they saw the great bull standing, his long thick tusks gleaming in the moonlight. The muzzle-loaders were ready-primed and several explosions rent the air. For a second or two the giant reeled and staggered under the weight of the missiles. Then giving vent to a long deep angry roar he charged the tree, driving one of his tusks deep in to the soft wood. Changing his tactics he pressed the boss of his massive trunk against the tree and pushed with all his might. Finding that this was of no avail he did not waste his time but stood up on his hind legs reaching for the boughs with his trunk. One by one he tore the branches down. The men were terrified and dared not move about because of the violent shaking of the boughs. In the end three of the hunters were pulled down in their turn to be killed by the enraged bull who rammed a tusk through each of them before trampling their bodies to a pulp. The fourth man escaped but never hunted elephants again. I cannot vouch for the truth of this story, it is Kipanga Pori's and I have no reason to doubt his word.

Chuma killed many hunters but it cannot be said that he was a rogue. He had been pursued and tormented for half a century or more and had become very sagacious and cunning in his ways. He knew all the tricks of the hunters and evaded them as best he could but when they became too insistent he would lead them into impenetrable thickets to their doom. He was not a raider and always kept far away from native villages and fields.

As we sat there amongst the fossilised tree trunks recalling many memories of the tales we had been told I thought of that stately old bull and his long journeys to the Indian Ocean. My mind took me back to the time of his youth, perhaps a hundred years ago, and so back to his ancestors who trod this road before him. And further still to prehistoric times. On the Mbwemkuru River, a hundred miles to the East, this highway forks – one way leads straight on to the beaches near Kiswera Bay, the other crosses the river and passes close to Tendaguru hill where many fossil animals have been unearthed, amongst them GIGANTOSAURUS the biggest fossil found. Perhaps, during the glacial period, half a million years ago, Chuma's ancestors lived side by side with their cousins the hairy mammoths, who knows?

Not many miles from where we sat are great fields, as yet but barely scraped, where there are abundant fossil remains of reptiles in the various stages of their transition into birds and mammals.

This great elephants' highway is still in use but the numbers that tread it are dwindling rapidly – it will not be long before the ancient path is lost for ever. Chuma evaded his tormentors to the end. About fifty years ago he disappeared into some secluded spot, never to return, but his offspring still wanders over the mountains and the valleys down the long trail to the coast. As we turned away from the ancient path I thought of the thousands of elephants we had destroyed and all the way back to my camp I turned over in my mind the rights and wrongs of our decision to decimate the finest of the pachyderms. It made me sad to think that I had been to a great extent responsible for the slaughter of the elephant in the Southern Provinces.

The proposition had been thought over very carefully for months and even years till finally, not without misgivings, the Control scheme had been proposed and passed by the authorities in charge.

The amount of damage done to crops had been enormous and, owing to the widely scattered native population, there seemed to be no other way of dealing with the problem. But, although the killing of many thousands of the biggest mammals on our earth may have been justified, the decision cannot be vindicated unless wide and adequate areas are set aside inviolate for ever as sanctuaries –for the great fauna which belongs to Africa.

THE THRILLS OF THE HUNT

Perhaps the tracking and hunting of rogue elephant and the big old bulls is the most strenuous and thrilling of all sport. It is almost certain that the chase will be long and arduous, requiring the utmost powers of physical endurance and a stout heart. The will to get there is no less important than the bushcraft of the tracker. One should be physically fit and in hard training. All one's senses should be acute and centred on the hunt. There should be no distraction from the job in hand from the beginning to the end. It is an "all in" game. When the footprints have been found they must be examined carefully, bearing in mind their size and peculiarities. To the beginner all imprints of a similar shape and size look alike but there are many distinguishing features. Measure the hind foot accurately, a piece of bamboo will suffice. (This is important when following a rogue that has become mixed up with other elephants on his way). Be careful to select a clean-cut print, remembering that in walking the hind foot overlaps the front. The soles of their feet differ considerably; young animals have deep corrugations and outstanding studs; as they get older these wear down and become smoother. No animal has exactly the same marks on its feet. Look at the marks made by the toe-nails too – often one or more of these have a distinction of their own.

Examine the droppings, take note of their size, colour, contents and degree of moisture inside and out – from these can be deducted the approximate size of the elephant, its age and the time that has elapsed since the animal passed that way.

An old elephant's teeth are worn down and much of his food is left unbruised to pass out intact.

When very fresh the droppings are paler and moist on the outside, afterwards they become darker and dry up gradually. If fresh, break them open and feel whether they are warm or cold. After a while insects get busy on the droppings – scarab-beetles, flies, termites and many others, these also give one a good idea of the time that has elapsed. There are many other signs to be taken into account such as the marks of tusks on trees, on the ground or perhaps where they have jabbed into clay banks at a salt-lick. Watch the state of the bruised grasses, shrubs and trees trodden on or broken off for eating. The presence or absence of dew, spider webs, worm's castings should be noted on the tracks.

Once on the trail go ahead as fast as your legs can carry you, do not stop to eat or drink or smoke – carry some iron rations in your pocket and chew

these as, you go along, stoke up your pipe or light a cigarette as you hurry on your way.

On coming to cross-tracks or hard worn elephant paths make certain that you follow the right one or you may lose time or even lose your animal.

When you begin to close in on your quarry, within half a mile or so, watch the smoke from your pipe or cigarette, or pull out your waterproof powder bag which should contain dry powdered chalk or fine wood-ash and holding your hand high, shake a little out. Watch which way the breeze takes it. Half mile & more is not too far away for an elephant to scent you if there is a steady breeze blowing towards him from your direction. Keep on testing the wind from time to time. If the breeze is wrong for you and you are certain of your quarry's proximity and whereabouts you must work your way round as quickly as possible and come up from the right direction. If the wind is very treacherous and changeable as it often is, your best chances are to hurry forward as quickly as possible and hope for the best – never lingers as this gives the elephant a better chance.

You may hear the elephant breaking branches or snapping bamboos some distance away. When getting near an elephant you should be able to hear a deep internal rumbling and other vibrating noises from low down in his throat, or flapping ears, or swishing tail, or even the sound of chewing.

If you are not expert enough at bushcraft you must have a reliable tracker chosen by one who knows, otherwise you are liable to come to grief one way or another – you may give the animal your wind and frighten him away for many a weary mile or you might walk right on top of him causing him to bolt, or charge unexpectedly with fatal results to yourself or gun bearer. Your gun bearer should carry your second rifle and you should never part with the rifle you are going to use – this lazy practice has lost many a lazy man his quest.

No matter how tired you are, always carry your own rifle, preferably a double-barrel high velocity weapon with a calibre certainly not smaller than .400. Keep the safety-catch on until you are ready to fire and then do not forget to slip it off. Do not fire until you are in a favourable position for one of the vital shots and then shoot quickly, waste no time in your aiming. Never take a “flying” chance shot unless the animal is wounded and about to disappear into dense cover.

For a heart shot fifteen to forty yards is close enough in open country but in bush or long grass you should not attempt a longer range than twenty yards because of the chances of deflection of the bullet by twigs or grass.

If using a brain-shot it should be taken at five to twenty-five paces, according to the circumstances. Remember that a twig or sapling, vine or

even a stiff grass stem may deflect your high velocity bullet and cause you to miss your mark. Of course it is possible to shoot elephants at a far greater range but experience has proved that long distance shooting at elephants is almost a crime this owing to the fact that there are so many chances of wounding the animal and of its eventual escape to die a lingering and painful death or to recover and perhaps become a rogue.

An elephant has good hearing and sight at close range only, therefore one should move quickly but cautiously when making the final approach. If he is looking in your direction take whatever cover comes your way.

Big old bulls are very wily and most rogues are nervy, cunning and vicious. All will lead you into the most impenetrable thickets where they may go round in circles or take you many miles up hill and down dale through the most difficult terrain they can find.

Often they will double back on their own tracks to go off in quite a different direction. Always they will take advantage of the wind. In spite of their size they can move about almost as quietly as a cat.

When he becomes aware of your presence, an elephant will stand dead still and concentrate on finding out your exact position. During this period he makes up his mind as to whether he will retreat or charge. If you do not spot him before he moves you are likely to be startled by a sudden crashing of the bush or grass. These are anxious moments because for a second or two it is impossible to tell whether he is coming or going. Keep stock still and ready for action unless your position is hopeless He may be breaking away or charging or perhaps he may be wheeling about before doing either. He may do these things in silence or he may, especially if he has been wounded previously, trumpet shrilly in rage or fright. If you have a clear view for five yards stand your ground, otherwise move swiftly to a better position, but never turn your back on him. Always keep a weather eye in his direction.

If charging at very close range he is likely to keep his trunk curled up between his forelegs, his head lowered with tusks ready for stabbing. If you can, get a shot in before he gets into action. Fire straight at his head between and just above the level of his eyes – of course everything depends on the angle of his head and this part of an elephant's anatomy should be studied beforehand in a museum by any tyro before he ventures into the field. If the elephant does not collapse immediately fire the second barrel almost simultaneously with your first shot and then streak off to either side (to leeward if possible), taking your rifle with you. Reload as quickly as possible. Often an elephant is merely stunned temporarily If he drops in an upright position on receiving your first or second. shot lose no time in

getting round to right angles to his head. If he rolls on his side get into position behind his head and put a bullet into his brain or spine. But should he begin to rise to his feet before you can shoot he will do so quickly – then you must fire at his slit-like ear hole, this is the easiest and safest shot of all.

Should an elephant charge from a longer distance with his trunk held high and covering the vital frontal head shot it is advisable to fire straight into the hollow in his chest (here a heavy double barrel rifle is invaluable). If you cannot see his chest you should fire through the upraised trunk in a line above the eyes, this should cause him to take his trunk out of the way, giving you a clear shot at the brain with your second barrel. This frontal shot is by no means easy but although it may not get home it is more than likely (if you hit him square and not too high) to turn an elephant off his course. But the chest shot is the safest if taken with a heavy rifle.

I do not wish it to be inferred –from the above that elephant hunting is extremely dangerous nor do I want to give the impression that the odds are in favour of an attack by a hunted elephant. On the contrary a hunted animal will nearly always endeavour to escape its pursuers but the danger is always present and there is a limit to the amount of annoyance that an elephant will stand. Animals as well as men have their individual temperaments. One should always hope for the best but be prepared for the worst.

When the hunter is following two or more elephants and intent on getting one animal in particular he should be very cautious when coming up with his quarry, especially he should use his ears. Many a hunter has been killed by an unexpected charge from the flank or rear by an elephant other than the one he was intent on shooting. Greater precautions are needed when there are cows and calves mixed up with the quarry.

Generally speaking the hunting of raiders or herd bulls is a very tame affair compared with the thrills of locating and cracking a grand old tusker or a wily rogue. But do not come to the conclusion that the shooting of these smaller fry is as simple as picking berries off a tree. There is nearly always a certain amount of danger in the chase, especially when following a herd accompanied by small calves. One must be on the alert from the beginning to the end. This is the more necessary in areas where thousands of marauders have been killed under the Elephant Control scheme. Here the elephants have learned to fear and hate mankind and when hunted they often look for trouble.

To go out and kill an unsuspecting animal that has been located by a guide can be just as easy as shooting a bullock in a pen. If you have been lucky

or rather unlucky enough to secure a few unearned trophies with comparative ease be all the more careful not to under-estimate your quarry. The chase may last several hours or a day or two it may even last a week or more. The longer the hunt the more necessary it is to keep a grip on yourself. Do not let disappointments and irritating circumstances get the upper hand. Anyone who has been led under a canopy of creepers covered with ripe hairy buffalo beans will understand more fully the import of these words, especially if he has been covered in a golden shower of those vile and irritating hairs when tired out walking on a scorching day.

Do not slack off or give in unless you are absolutely certain that your trail is lost.

In hunting there are so many signs to be observed and noted that it is impossible to attempt to give them all. The hunter must learn these gradually by careful observation and experience. He must gain wisdom by failure and its consequences, sometimes dangerous.

A little more may be gleaned about the hunting of elephant, their habits and behaviour, from the various stories in this book.

The above account has been written in the hope that it may give the reader a clearer understanding of the tales that follow and so enable him to derive more pleasure from the reading.

THE GREAT BULLS OF MAHENGE

"BWANA MGANGA" (the doctor), so called because he killed a German doctor many years ago lived in Mponda's country in the area between the Luwegu, Mbarangaudu, Njenje and Humbaliro rivers.

For many years he had been known to the Wangindu hunters as the bull with the long white tusks. But in 1912 or thereabouts he distinguished himself by killing a German doctor and so made his name.

Bwana Mganga was a great wanderer and inveterate raider of shambas (cultivated fields). All his life he roamed ceaselessly, as is the custom of all big bull elephants, never stopping for very long in any one locality. The roaming instinct has been engendered by the desire to obtain the multitude of various fruits and forage that prevail in different localities through the changing seasons of the year. Restlessness had been intensified because of the many attempts made on his life by ivory hunters and embittered peasant farmers He remembered well all the old paths followed by his Mother. Later

he followed in the footsteps of his fathers going far afield in search of food and peace.

The whole of that wide area which he had inherited from his forbears was intersected by innumerable paths made by his ancestors and kept open by the numerous herds of elephant which still roamed the country. Certain paths belonged, by precedent, to individual herds, others had become great highways for the common cause, and used on local migrations according to the seasons. Bwana Mganga had his own pet trails leading to and from his favourite feeding grounds. It is wonderful how elephants find their way amongst the maze of paths, the ways that lead to ripening fruits and fodder in widely scattered areas. They remember where to go, the times of ripening and the roads to follow, the many side tracks to their drinking pools, their salt-licks and their muddy wallows. The big bulls in particular, because, of the great distances they travel have earned well that proverbial saying "the elephant never forgets".

During the hot dry season when most of the trees were leafless and the parched land scorched by the sun Bwana Mganga would repair to the extensive and dense green reed-beds of the Mbarangaudu and Njenje rivers where he escaped the torments and heat of the relentless sun and of the grass fires which would soon sweep the bush. Here in the ever-green grasses he found ample food and water. During the long hot hours of daylight he rested and dozed under big shady trees buried deep in the tangled growth of reeds and rushes where it would be hard for men to follow. Sometimes he leaned against a tree trunk for support, resting the points of his long tusks on the ground; sometimes he rested them on a low lying branch. Occasionally in his sanctuary he lay down on his side to sleep contentedly under a dense canopy of leaves, using an anthep for his pillow. When he rose from his rough bed he left unmistakable imprints of one of his mighty tusks which had dug deep into the soil; there also were the marks of his creased and baggy hide and the scars made by his feet and toenails when he stretched his legs for ease.

Later when the bushfires were over and the first showers of the fire-quenching rains had fallen, Bwana Mganga, tired of his monotonous diet, moved off to pastures new. Leaving the valleys of the Mbarangandu and Njenje he wended his way slowly up the banks of the Humbaliro River. On this journey he wandered in and out amongst steep hills and ravines where he found fresh young leaves abundant and the bark of trees juicy with rising sap. Late in the evenings and at night he strolled along the sandy river bed using his sensitive trunk to smell out water lying underground. With his

forefeet he scooped out the sand with a forward motion, afterwards he bored his trunk-tip into the damp sand until he had made a reservoir of cool refreshing water. After satisfying his thirst he sprayed water over his body to slake his dried out skin. By the time that he had reached the sources of the Humbaliro river heavy rains had fallen, trees were in full leaf and young grass green and lush. He spent the next few months between the Humbaliro and Luwegu rivers.

Later, when the crops were ripening and the whole country covered in dense long grass he began to raid the native-fields. Before the crops were reaped he was as fat as any pig.

In 1929, after I had seen the German doctors' grave, Sultan Mponda took me down to see the spot where the doctor met his death. The scene of the tragedy was in an open forest where the tall trees were of great girth and growing far apart, moreover there was no undergrowth to obstruct the hunter's view. No safer or more advantageous ground could have been chosen for a beginner's first shot at an elephant.

Bwana Mganga had gorged himself on mtama (millet) for many days and was fat and lazy. Apparently he was unafraid of the local population because he took no trouble to conceal himself on this occasion. A native guide had led the doctor down from the village and they were accompanied by a military officer who was camped there at the time.

When they were within some thirty yards of the elephant, who turned to face them, the doctor took a frontal shot for the brain. The bullet flew high and passing through the top of Bwana Mganga's head lodged in a tree-trunk at his back. He charged trumpeting shrilly. The doctor lost his head and ran towards the infuriated elephant who drove one of his long white tusks through his victim's chest before trampling him to a pulp. Meanwhile the officer and guide ran all the way back to camp. Later they sent stretcher bearers down to collect the mangled corpse.

After this narrow escape Bwana Mganga became very wily but never turned into a rogue. When I saw him last in 1929 he was still an inveterate raider but travelled great distances – thirty or forty miles in a day if he scented trouble. He was often hunted for his tusks, by good men too, but always managed to baffle his pursuers.

Once I saw him sucking water from a hole we had made at the edge of the dry sandy river bed of the Humbaliro river less than fifty yards from where I stood. As I watched him squirting water down his parched throat (it was the hottest and driest month in the year) he raised his trunk to test the air. A tainted breeze warned him of my presence and he backed away from the

steep bank with a loud sigh and turned to face me against the setting sun. Never will I forget the gleam of his long white ivory. A second or two later he wheeled about to shuffle off round a sharp bend in the river. He was not a heavily built animal but he had a fine head. His body was lean and baggy and his back-bone stood out in a high ridge – he was getting on in years. The imprints of his narrow shrivelled hind-feet were just under twenty-two inches long. The hairs of his tail were short and sparse.

Before I left Mahenge a broken tusk was brought in from Mponda's area, it had been broken off outside the lip. It was just over six feet long and weighed seventy six pounds. The break was long and diagonal and no portion of the nerve hollow was visible. From this evidence I judged that the original tusk would have been not less than eight feet six inches long (including the portion left buried in the in the elephant's head), and, the weight of each at least one hundred pounds. The native who brought it in told me that he found the tusk wedged into a cracked rock. It was beautiful white ivory of a fine texture and was found in Mponda's country. Previously I had heard that someone had wounded Bwana Mganga in the head and I was convinced that this was one of his tusks which he had broken off on account of the agony of a wounded nerve.

As far as I know Bwana Mganga still roams about his old haunts but it is more than likely that he carries only one tusk in his head. I feel too strongly on the subject to write down what I think of the careless hunter who fired that shot.

LIGANDUKA

Liganduka was named after a deceased native sultan who lived across the Luwegu River from Mponda's. His champing ground lay round about Mageya's village on the middle Luwegu and part of his country overlapped that of Bwana Mganga – it is possible that the two met from time to time. He spent half his time in the mountains and the rest in the lower country. Being a particularly wily old elephant he was very seldom seen. I never saw him myself nor can I be sure that I ever saw his tracks. According to Game Scout Rashidi Motomihako, who knew more about the elephants of Mahenge than any other living person, he was a bigger and taller elephant than Bwana Mganga and his tusks were considerably thicker and of a reddish hue. Long after I had left Mahenge Rashidi wrote to tell me that Liganduka had been shot by one of the native scouts working on the Elephant Control scheme. His tusks weighed well over one hundred pounds each.

LIHAGOYA

Lihagoya was one of the big mountain bulls. He was a fair sized animal, long and lanky, unmistakable because the lower half of his tail was missing – what was left of that appendage was a pink and hairless stump. Once I passed him on the Ligombé River high up on the Mahenge plateaux. He was busily engaged at one of his favourite wallows. This bathing place was of his own making, he had dug it out with his tusks from a wet and oozy clay bank. He was some three hundred yards away across the stream and I watched him for some time through my field-glasses. Enjoying himself thoroughly he rubbed his body backwards and forwards against the bank. His thick tusks had a bold curve outwards, then in and upwards. Catching a stray eddy of wind from our direction he backed out from his bath, put his trunk out high in the air towards us and curled the tip about to make sure of our direction then made off at great speed. He looked a comical sight with a big yellow patch of clay covering half his face and with his body blotched all over.

He was not to live much longer, Ionides, a keen and tireless hunter, got on his trail and shot him after several days strenuous tracking. His tusks weighed ninety-eight and ninety-five pounds respectively.

THE CROWN PRINCE

The Crown Prince, or Kron Prinz, as he was known to the Germans lived on the upper reaches of the Ulanga River where he hid himself away in tall grass and reeds in the most difficult and swampy terrain imaginable. The tough "Swago" grass grows to twelve or fifteen feet high, it is unyielding and impenetrable by man excepting along hippo-runnel (where one has to crawl on hands and knees), or along well used paths which have been opened up by cutting and hoeing. His tusks were reputed to be enormous. His footprints were quite the biggest I have ever seen – very nearly twenty-four inches long. His hind feet were long and thin. As far as I knew he has not been hunted since about the year 1913 and there is every possibility that he is still alive.

MCHONGO, THE ONE-EYED

Mchongo, the one-eyed, lived on the plains and in the foothills of the middle Ulanga River, on the Southern side. I came across him once when I was

hunting hippos in a lake much overgrown with reed and rush. We were in a canoe paddling very quietly through deep narrow channels between islands covered with tall reeds rushes and sedge. Coming round a corner we saw him feeding on a sand spit. He was scarcely twenty –yards away and looked up in surprise when he heard our boat. His single eye was big and bright but the one that was closed gave him a melancholy appearance. As he turned and slid away into the reeds I wished him luck. His thick and longish tusks were of a blackish hue and would have weighed about eighty pounds apiece.

MSEJA

Mseja carried over a hundredweight of ivory in his single tusk. He spent most of his time between the Kilombero and Ruaha rivers in Selous Reserve where I came across him on one of my patrols. He was a big heavily built elephant, his tusk was long and thick and beautifully curved. Unfortunately I did not get a very good view of him but it was enough to convince me as to the size of his one great tusk. Msenda is the usual native name for a single tusked elephant but to distinguish him from the common rut he was called Mseja (bachelor) because of his bachelor tusk.

MGOGO

Mgogo, an elephant with great logs of tusks was Mseja's lifelong friend. For many years they had been inseparable. Rashidi Motomihako, the most trustworthy native I have ever met, told me how Mgogo met his end. A few years previous to my arrival a well known European got word of Mgogo who had crossed the Kilombero to the southern side. Two native policemen accompanied the hunter and a guide led them to their quarry. So many shots were fired at the great tusker that the natives thought a war had started. Sorely wounded the poor beast made his way up the right bank of the river, past Kalimoto's lands until he reached Semka's village, some twenty miles from where he started. Soon after passing Semka's he plunged into the river and swam across. Before he disappeared into the long grass and swamps many more shots were fired at his stern. He was lost in amongst bogs where it was impossible to follow and his tusks were never recovered. So Msenda lost his old friend. Rashidi who was an expert judge of tusks assured me that Mgogo's tusks would have weighed at least one hundred and twenty pounds apiece. He had seen him many times and thought he was easily the

biggest elephant in Mahenge district, barring the Kron Prinz (perhaps) whom he had not seen.

OTHER GIANTS.

Other big bulls of distinction were Mangula of Mahenge plateau, who was killed by a German planter, and Mwenyimivua of the Masagati forests, who lived on the steep scarps of Lupembe and Iringa in secluded forests and giant bracken.

Every year when the rains were at their height, he grew tired of the interminable dripping of the leaves and spent his time in the ripening cornfields, where he grew fat. A party of three Europeans shot him for his ivory. Then there was Mtama who, as his name implies, was a glutton for mtama (millet) – when I left Mahenge he was still at large. He belonged to the Ruhuje valley.

And Panda Kilima, an enormous bull, who wandered in the hilly country of the Matumbi hills where the bush is dense and bamboo thickets grow to profusion. He was perhaps the best proportioned of all the elephants I saw, his tusks were shortish but very thick. The two first mentioned were killed before my arrival in Mahenge district, the latter I saw once only. All four carried ivory weighing in the region of a hundred pounds a tusk.

Lastly I mention the Luhombero fraud, a great buddi (tuskless one) of Luhombero country. On account of his big feet he led ivory hunters astray until one day, exasperated by the tuskless monster, a hunter shot him because of his malformity. An elephant with heavy tusks digs his toenails of his forefeet deep into the ground; a tuskless bull is noticeably lighter in his tread. Besides the big bulls mentioned by name there were others hidden away in the remoter areas, we came across their tracks from time to time. Younger bulls too should be putting weight on slowly. It is nearly fifteen years since I left Mahenge and I do not know to what extent the elephants have suffered under the Control Scheme. Let us hope that there will be always a few of the great old bulls left to roam their natural haunts and to keep open their highways which are centuries old.

CHAPTER FOUR SOME HUNTING EXPERIENCES

THE VIDUNDA TWINS

The "Kizimamota" or fire quenching rains had fallen and the whole country was clothed in green. The grass was only a foot or so high and, the ground still and dry after the long period of drought.

For several successive years two great bull elephants had wrought havoc in the shambas (native-fields), lying between the Vidunda Mountains and the Usagara range. On these raiding expeditions they were accompanied by a young bull that they had adopted as a scout. (This is quite a common habit for old bulls). They were well known to the local natives and the Game Scout who had been instructed to frighten them away by various means such as firing Chinese crackers and Verrey pistols, beating of drums, shouting and occasional rifle shots over their heads whenever they became too daring.

In spite of all the din they could not resist the temptations of the ripening crops and were becoming bolder every year. At last they became such a nuisance that one had to be proscribed. It had been their custom to leave again for their remoter haunts as soon as the harvesting was over and before the burning of the long grass and dense cover that protected them from prying eyes.

But this year, perhaps because of the excessive drought, they came back early to feed in the fertile valleys and to raid the grain bins. Having taken out a licence to shoot one bull elephant I decided that this was too good an opportunity to miss, so I telegraphed the Game Warden for three days leave which was granted.

At the time we were in Mahenge, a hundred miles away and there was not time to be wasted. My wife and I made a very early start and drove through to Kidodi, where we breakfasted while waiting for three or four porters to carry our loads over the Vidunda mountains to camp out some fifteen miles away.

In the afternoon my wife remained in camp while I went out with a local guide to look for signs of the elephant I wanted. After a couple of hours walking we found fresh tracks of the three bulls. This was most encouraging because so often these animals are apt to disappear before the hunter comes on the scene. Natives who are very superstitious about most things, will never mention the word "elephant" when a big one is to be hunted for they believe that, if the name is mentioned, the elephant will have a premonition and decamp. There was no doubt about the tracks, the footprints of the hind feet of the two big bulls were twenty two inches long and those of the young one

were about seventeen. The feet of the older bull were slightly narrower than those of his companion, his toenails were more worn down and cracked and the soles of his feet were smoother. It was too late to follow so we returned to camp for the night.

In the morning before daylight I set off with my tracker and by dawn we were on the trail. After an hour or so we came to fresher tracks that were scarcely two hours old – there was a light dew on the grass but where the elephants had passed they had brushed it off. The inner bark of broken saplings showed only the slightest discoloration from exposure, spiders had not yet spun their webs across the trail and there were a dozen other tell-tale signs. I was thrilled by the prospects of the hunt. Off we went, at a jog trot when the trail was easy, with light hearts and with a spring in our strides. But sometimes it was not so easy to pick out the most recent tracks. The elephants had been feeding in the vicinity for at least a week, there were many criss-cross routes and often they had over-trodden and followed earlier paths. We could not afford to make any mistakes, especially as my time was limited and moreover we had to keep a good look out all round in case they had moved round to our flanks where they might get our wind.

We passed scores of trees that had been pushed over, some had come out by the roots, others more firmly embedded had been snapped off a few feet from the ground – this the elephants do by placing their foreheads against the trunk and pushing with all their might. They had pushed the trees down in order to get at the top leaves.

Soon I noticed that the older bull's dung was soft and black resembling that of an old buffalo, the other two were normal – a little later the reason for this became apparent. The old fellow had been feeding regularly on the roots of a bulbous plant he dug out with his tusks and forefeet, evidently he was having some digestive trouble and knew the remedy. In damper places where pools of water had formed round the broken bulbs the liquid was quite black. After three hours tracking we heard the crashing of a tree about half a mile away. The wind was changeable so we made a wide detour to come up from the most advantageous angle. As we approached the locality from whence the sound had come we looked round carefully on either side. To our left we saw the young bull standing about a hundred yards away, he was busily engaged in stripping bark from a tree. A few yards beyond him the old bull was busy digging with his offside forefoot, he was facing us and I had a clear view of his long thick tusks. Just then I heard twigs snapping in front us some thirty yards away, then a trunk-tip appeared over the top of a tall tree. A patch of bush obstructed a lower view. The trunk rose higher and

one long dark tusk became visible above a leafy branch. I could see by the movement of the trunk, which now pointed straight at us, that we had been detected. No part of the elephants head or body presented a vital target and I was beginning to run in for a shot when he wheeled off rapidly towards his companions.

Bushes between us ruled out any chance of taking the heart shot which otherwise would have been easy at that range. He was moving half away from us and half across our front – I aimed for the junction of his head and neck and fired. He stumbled and went on for some fifty yards before falling on his side with a tremendous crash that shook the ground. Meanwhile his companions had made off into a narrow valley where there was an "S" bend. I wanted to get a closer view of the big fellow so, very foolishly raced off towards a low ridge round which the stream took its first bend. While beginning the climb to the summit from where I hoped to see him pass, there was a shout from the tracker who informed me that my quarry had regained his feet. Being on the far side of the river bed, which was heavily timbered, it was impossible to see which way the wounded animal would go. Rushing back towards the spot where he had fallen I heard him crashing through the bushes on my left. In hot pursuit I rounded the first bend in time to see him disappearing round the next and went all out. As I was taking the sharp corner I found myself face to face with an elephant standing fifteen yards away. Instinctively I threw up my rifle to take the frontal shot but, in a flash I realised that it was the small bull who confronted me. He trumpeted shrilly and charged. I turned and bolted through the stream and up the steep hillside, shouting a warning to the tracker who was some distance away. It was a short "bluff" charge; he did not follow through but turned back to join his elders.

There had been an unexpected change in the situation. It was impossible to know the nature of the wound inflicted – my intention had been to dislocate the neck vertebrae at the base of the skull or to penetrate the brain case, it was evident that the shot had missed the mark. I had to move quickly and could not take the risk of bumping into the young bull again. (I was on three days leave and my licence permitted the shooting of one bull only).

Wasting no time I raced upstream on the side opposite the retreating elephant but kept an eye on the possibility that they might have crossed over. Some three hundred yards ahead the bush came to an end and the two big bulls were in view. About two hundred yards away their backs and heads stood out above a dense patch of tall rushes, the smaller animal was out of sight. Quickly I advanced towards the quarry but when I had covered half the

distance that separated us, the little bull appeared in a state of great excitement, his ears were cocked and he tested the air all round with quivering trunk. He was very troubled and angry and finally charged down towards me to make a demonstration. The wind blew in all directions and it was unsafe to go forward in the open so I climbed up the precipitous walls of the narrow valley. Half way up I had a clear view of all the elephants. The little fellow was dashing about wildly and trumpeting shrilly, he wanted his friends to move on. The older animal shuffled off into a deep gully. The wounded bull looked very ill, his head was lowered and he stood stock still broadside on. Meanwhile the young companion, who had gone off to make certain that the big bull was safe and sound and not too far away, came back to assist his wounded friend – he was indeed a gallant ally. After walking round he felt him all over with his trunk then smelled his wound and screamed in anger. Then gripping the other's trunk in his own he endeavoured to drag him away from danger. The wounded bull was listless and did not move. Finally in desperation he tried to goad him on his way by charging from behind. As this last effort was of no avail he must have concluded that his companion was past all need of help because he hailed away to join the older bull and returned no more.

By the time I had gained the ridge-top the tracker had joined me and, taking the .333 rifle from him, I fastened to put an end to the suffering beast. Firing two shots into the region of his heart I saw puffs of dust rising from the elephant's thick hide but he seemed to be paralysed and did not move an inch. A few seconds later he fell flat on the ground, stone dead.

Before going down to look at my bag I went on along the ridge to see what the other two were doing and found them standing in a cul-de-sac enclosed by three sheer walls of solid rock their only means of escape was by the entrance and this they did not care to risk. They were about a hundred feet below and gave me an excellent view. Both were facing the entrance. The young bull in front, their ears were cocked and they tested the air incessantly with their trunks. The big fellow's tusks appeared to be at least a foot longer and considerably thicker than those of the one I had shot and they were stained a reddish brown.

Returning to inspect my trophies I was thrilled to see them at close quarters and to feel them in my hands, they looked magnificent in their owner's head and were a perfect pair. Putting fingers of one hand against the elephants lip I could not reach the tip of the tusk with the others. Their biggest girth was nineteen inches.

We walked back to camp quickly and in happy mood – the hunt had been short and exciting and I had my trophies, the guide, would get a good reward and his crops would be safe from further damage. My wife was delighted to hear of our luck but I did not tell her all the details. When the tusks were pulled and brought to Mahenge they weighed just over ninety pounds each, but now they looked dead and cold – they were no longer beautiful.

I have never forgotten the incidents of that hunt, especially the actions of the staunch young bull and my inability to put a quick end to the suffering. Since that unfortunate ending much of the pleasure of elephant hunting has been lost to me.

MKONGOWERI ROGUE ELEPHANT

All night long there had been an incessant din in the ripening cornfields which lay below the giant granite peak, Mkongoweri, whose great bald dome towered high above the heads of his companions.

While beating drums and empty kerosene cans the natives cursed and shouted wildly in their efforts to scare away marauders

For some weeks past all able bodied people in the village had been living in temporary structures in the shambas where they tried all they knew to save their crops from ruin. By day large troops of baboons came down from the surrounding boulders to invade them; parties of destructive monkeys and swarms of greedy birds also took their toll. It was no easy matter to keep their enemies at bay because of the tall grass and dense thickets which adjoined their lands.

At night sounders of bush-pig came regularly to steal fat bunches of mtama (kaffir corn), which grew on top or thick stalks ten or twelve feet high – this was not a very difficult matter for the pigs who merely walked over the heavily laden stalks to bend or break them by –pushing with their chests.

All, these raiders came regularly and took a heavy toll but the most dreaded of all despoilers were the big herds of elephant which, in a single night, were capable of destroying the entire crops of half a dozen families

In those days, before the policy of wholesale destruction of the offending pachyderms – elephant and hippo had, been decided upon; thousands of shambas in the southern provinces were suffering a similar fate. The damage was appalling and that is why the full force of the “elephant and hippopotamus control scheme” was finally brought into action.

While busily engaged, in guarding their fields against the ravages of wild animals, most of the natives lived in "ulingo" which are platforms built high on poles. The floors of these ulingo are some ten or twelve feet above the

level of the ground, the roofs are thatched with grass and the walls are made of bamboo latched together.

During the day one member of the family keeps a look out from the top while the others carry on their chores below. At night they all sleep upstairs owing to the danger of prowling lions and leopards and hyaenas which are numerous in that area.

This night a herd of elephant had defied the shouting and the drum-beats and had entered to gorge themselves for several hours. At dawn they retreated into impenetrable thickets not far from Juma's outpost. Juma's wife being worried by her children who were crying out for food, made up her mind to return to the village, a mile or so distant, to collect a fresh supply of grain. Juma warned her not to go because the elephants were close at hand, but she insisted.

As she climbed down the rickety bamboo ladder, with a baby on her back, shouts came from several neighbouring ulingo advising her to postpone the journey, however, she was determined and set off with her baby and a little girl of seven or eight years old.

The village path passed through a belt of bush at the edge of the field and, as the party were about to enter this they heard a shrill trumpeting from behind – mother and child ran for their lives.

A bull elephant, with longish tusks, who had been standing hidden behind an overgrown anthep in the tall and closely planted corn, came charging down the track. He soon outpaced them and, stretching out his trunk he seized the baby round its neck to wrench it from its trappings – the head was severed from the body. Not content with this, the angry rogue followed on to kill the other two.

A passing motor car took the sad news through to Tunduru. On the way they met scout James at Pucha Pucha village, near the Mubuwezi River. He started off without delay and soon got down to tracking. On the following day he came up with his quarry and killed him with one shot. By then I had heard of the disaster so went up the road from Masasi to see what I could do. Arriving in the evening I found that James had just returned triumphant from the hunt and was glad to hear of his success. Head-scout Rashidi turned up late that night, from Tunduru – some fifty miles by cycle. In the morning he and I went out with James to satisfy ourselves that there had been no mistake about the culprit.

First of all we investigated the scene of the tragedy and found that the killing had been most deliberate – the signs were fresh and clear. After killing the infant, the elephant had tusked the child who was following her mother. This

was done by raising his right foreleg and leaning low down on that side then, propelling himself forward with his hind legs, he jabbed the "off-tusk" through the poor child's body and several inches into the ground. The "near" fore foot slithered along the muddy ground, while the right – after impaling the victim – ploughed a deep furrow through the earth for at least two yards. Then, casting the child aside, the rogue attacked the mother who had been delayed by a big fallen tree trunk which lay across her path. This obstruction was about four feet high and, before the woman could climb over it, the elephant jabbed his tusk through her body with such force that the point ripped a six inch gash through the hard dry timber. Afterwards he trampled on her and covered her with branches before clearing off into the bush. We followed the tracks and, when we came to the carcass, found some of the victim's blood still adhering to the right tusk.

ATTACKED BY A "BUDDI"

In the Kissaki area, a sub-district of Morogoro, elephants caused a great deal of damage to the ripening mtama, especially during the few weeks before the harvesting. At this season of the year hunting was extremely difficult owing to the luxuriant growth of grass and creeping vines.

One morning I was called soon after sunrise to punish a herd which had raided a shamba some three miles away from my camp. Much damage had been done to the crop and I decided to kill one or two of the offenders. There were about seventeen animals in the herd not counting the youngsters. Accompanied by a local guide I set off hot on the trail, the tracking along a well trampled path was easy enough and within an hour or so we heard noises of feeding. A little later, when within about thirty yards of them we heard deep internal rumblings of satisfaction and much pulling about of rubber vines which are one of their favourite foods. Fortunately for us the elephants had spent several days in the vicinity and there were many open spaces where the grass had been trampled flat. I could see the backs and heads of two elephants who were tugging at creepers and backing to pull them free from the bushes. They were quite unaware of my presence so I decided to run into an open glade to take a quick shot at about a dozen paces. Before I could put the rifle up to my shoulder I spotted a tiny calf under its mother and did not have the heart to fire. Both cows got my wind and backed round rapidly to face me, their two babies safely guarded between them. Their ears were cocked and I knew there would be trouble so made off down my tracks as fast as my legs would carry me, then shot off at

right angles from the path to get to leeward. One of the cows trumpeted shrilly as I turned to run and charged a short distance after me. She stopped at the point where I had left the track, tested the air with her trunk and made a peculiar high pitched flute like noise before turning about and shuffling back to collect her baby. Within a few seconds there was a crashing of bushes as the herd decamped.

Whistling to attract the guide, who had made himself scarce by climbing a very thorny acacia tree, I continued the hunt. About an hour later we came up with them again this time in a bamboo thicket where we could hear them snapping canes. When we were within fifty yards or so we climbed a big mgongo (wild plum), tree with the object of locating. one of the bulls, these are easily distinguished because their tusks are always much thicker than those of the other sex. We were in luck's way again as much of the tall rank grass growing between the isolated bamboo clumps had been trodden down. It was not long before I spotted a biggish bull feeding on bamboo shoots some distance on the flank of the rest of the herd.

Leaving the guide in the branches to direct me, by movements of his hands, should the elephant change his position, I slid down and worked round for a shot. Finding him without much trouble I took an easy heart shot at about twenty yards while he was putting a bamboo shoot into his mouth. Turning his back towards me he made off at top speed – I did not fire another shot at his stern as I was certain that he was mortally wounded.

Just then the guide shouted a warning, the only danger could be—from behind so I turned round sharply in time to see a huge tuskless female coming round a dense clump of bamboos behind which she had been hidden. She was moving quickly but putting her feet down gingerly and stalking me as quietly as a cat. There was only one round left in my double barrel rifle and it was too risky to take a quick chance shot at an awkward angle to stop her before the final charge. In a flash she swung head on to charge with her trunk held low between her forelegs I fired for the brain and scored a winner she crashed heavily to the ground within seven or eight yards of me. As she fell there was a loud deep roar from behind, it was the last call of the dying bull.

THE LUHANYANDO FRAUD.

Towards the end of October, the hottest and driest time of the year, I was on safari in Mponda's country and had camped on the Luhanyando stream, a tributary of the Luwegu. We were on our way to Mkangaula village where a

big elephant had been causing considerable damage to the native crops and grain bins. Rashidi had told me of a concentration of elephants in the small valleys and ravines of the Chini springs which lay between our camp and the village we were making for and I had decided to visit them on our way.

The whole country had been burned black and the young shoots of grass which had sprung up after the burning had been shrivelled by drought and heat it was truly a month of famine for those elephant which had remained in this region. Water too was scarce and for these reasons they had congregated in damp watercourses where trees provided fresh young leaves for food and shelter from the scorching sun. Making an early start Rashidi and I went off to look at the elephants while the porters struck camp and made their way by an easier route to await our arrival some fifteen miles along the path to Mkangaula.

When we reached the sandy bed of the Chini stream the red sun rose behind a hazy curtain, it would be a sweltering day. The elephant knew what to expect and already they had selected their favourite trees which would afford the best cover to protect them from the midday sun. There were scores of tracks leading up and down the sands and everywhere there was a strong smell of elephant much like that of horses stables. There was a miserably small trickle of water and many shallow pools all had been polluted by the numerous herds. They themselves did not drink the filthy yellow-brown liquid but dug holes in the sandy clay close up to the banks using their forefeet and trunks for digging where the water was cool and sweet. When we came to the entrance to the hills we climbed slowly along the steep slopes overlooking the valley of the main water-way watching and counting the elephants as we went along. Even at this early hour of the morning they were unrestful, owing to swarms of flying insects of many species, shuffling about from foot to foot, blinking their eyes and occasionally puffing persistent flies out of their ears by blowing down their trunks. Sometimes they would rub a particularly painful bite with the tip of the trunk curled over slightly, much in the same way that human beings use the knuckle of a finger. It was here that I remember very clearly seeing them use small branches of trees as fly-swishes for getting at the more inaccessible parts of their bodies.

Amongst one group of sixteen I saw a mother suckling her young calf scarcely a week old.

In a three mile scramble we counted over a hundred elephants and only once did we disturb them – a young bull was standing a little apart from a small group of nine and I had worked up to within about twenty yards to take a photograph when I noticed him getting uneasy. He must have seen me

moving out of the corner of his eye, there was very little cover available, because he turned round towards me with ears cocked at right angles and trunk stretched straight in my direction to test the wind. I retreated backwards as fast as I could, keeping behind what cover there was. Then he began to sway from side to side shifting his weight –from one foot to the other – I turned and ran. As I did so he made a short bluff charge to scare me, smashing down a tall sapling in his rush. Turning round to see what he was doing I was pleased to see him returning quietly to his family, he had not got our wind.

Two hours later we joined our porters on the path and a little later saw eight bull elephants feeding on green creepers growing amongst the stubble of a harvested mtama field where the ground was still moist underneath. Passing a couple of hundred yards to leeward and keeping silent we did not disturb them.

Soon after 11 a.m. we pitched camp on the outskirts of a small village close to a waterhole and under the ample shade of a big mkwaju (tamarind) tree.

In the evening at about 5 p.m. a runner came in from Mkangaula to tell us that an enormous bull, "the father of all elephants", had destroyed an "ngoko" (a large bin for storing grain). Ali prepared the evening meal while the porters had a feed and struck camp. By 7 p.m. we were on the march and reached camp at about 1 a.m. in the morning.

That night the elephant raided a catch-crop of young maize which was planted in a "mbuga" (low-lying land which becomes water-logged during the wet season).

As soon as it was light enough to see clearly Rashidi and I went off on the trail of the raider, accompanied by a local guide who knew every inch of the country. The spoor was very difficult to follow on account of the hard dry condition of the ground. When we three first saw the foot prints, which were over twenty-three inches long we knew that the owner was not an old bull the soles of his feet were those of a young animal, the studs and creases stood out clearly and there was no deep digging in of the toenails of his front feet. Moreover when we came across his droppings we found that the contents had been thoroughly masticated and digested, showing that his teeth were not worn down as they would be in a very old animal. The tracks led us towards one of the small tributaries of the upper Luhanyando and we managed to get along at fairly good speed by running when we came to easy ground. By three o'clock in the afternoon we came up with our quarry who was resting in the shade of a big fig tree growing in the middle of a dense patch of "magugu" (tall very coarse grass). The grass was still green owing to

the moisture underground in the wide mbuga and had therefore escaped burning. The heat was stifling and there was not the slightest breeze, waves of heat rose shimmering above the grass tops. We entered on his tracks – the guide had ascertained his whereabouts by climbing a tall mkwaju (tamarind) tree growing on a big anthep – fully expecting to take him unawares and drowsed by the heat. Unfortunately an eddying gust gave him our wind before we could close in for a shot and off he went at a fast shuffle. He was on his way back to do some more raiding at Mkangaula and luckily for us he continued in that direction. We followed at the double for a couple of miles but were unable to catch up with him although we had glimpses of his posterior from time to time. Being hot and tired we slackened down to a fast walk, the heat was intense, our clothing was wet through with perspiration and our throats were parched.

At about half past five we were hot on his trail which had fortunately brought us back to within a mile of our camp. The bull had turned to the right when he came to the small scarp below the village and had entered a thicket. Thinking that he would be likely to go right through the small patch of bush I left Rashidi to follow his tracks while I sprinted round the thicket edge in the hope of catching him as he emerged. After running about a quarter of a mile Rashidi shouted to warn me that he had doubled back towards the maize fields in the opposite direction, so back I had to run. I found Rashidi and the guide waiting for me and we followed the fresh tracks without delay. A few minutes later we heard much shouting from the direction of the fields and drums beating from the village.

The sun was just setting when we heard the elephant crashing back towards us. We saw him when he was within about twenty yards of our right flank. He was passing through a light forest of trees and I awaited an opportunity to take a snap shot at his heart as he massed between the tree-trunks. Just as I was about to fire he got our wind and swung round, exasperated. With his trunk curled up and covering his forehead he began to charge. Before he could get going – he had drawn up and exposed his chest – I fired both barrels at his heart. This caused him to fall back on his knees and, as he turned to run away I seized my second rifle and delivered a broadside. He dropped about twenty yards away giving a loud roar before he died. He was an exceptionally big elephant (over 10½ feet high) with small tusks.

Climbing the steep hill to the village with light hearts we found ourselves exhausted at the top, it had been a long and tiring hunt. After a hot bath and light dinner we felt much refreshed. Later, when we went to bed we slept like logs until daybreak.

A LONG DAY

It was nearing sundown when I drove into the delightful little rest camp near Salim Risasi's village, situated at the source of the Mbarangandu river on top of the divide which separates the waters of the Rufiji from those of the Ruvuma river. The surroundings of the camp are clean and sandy and many beautiful and biggish trees have been left standing round about.

It was early in June and there was a bite in the frosty air. After unloading our camp equipment from the box-body of the car, James went off to do the cooking while scout Mbaya Hambajani, aided by a few villagers, collected big logs of wood for the camp fire.

In Salim's area there had been one herd of elephants in particular which had ravaged the crops regularly every year. Originally there had been twenty-two animals in the party but owing to their excessive thieving we had reduced their number to eight by shooting one or two every time we caught them in the act. Now they were at it again; I had seen the damage as we came down the road from Songea that afternoon in response to an appeal for help. After dinner I drove Mbaya three miles to the scene of the recent raiding, leaving him there to sit up in an "ulingo" (raised platform) with the landowners and instructed him to fire a shot over the offenders heads to prevent further damage, should they return at night. Returning to camp I was glad to get near the warm log fire where I spent half an hour or so talking to Salim about game matters in general and then read for an hour or two. The air was cold and crisp and the stars sparkled brightly through the tree-tops. Very clearly came the sound of baboons barking and squealing in a small ravine below the camp then I heard the rasping grunts of a leopard and guessed that he had caught one. Before turning in for the night I heard the report of a rifle and gave instructions to James to bring tea a little earlier than usual.

After two or three cups of tea and a couple of rusks at half past four in the morning I motored out to join Mbaya in the hunt. I had decided to put an end to the raiding once and for all.

Leaving the car beside the road we went off on the tracks as soon as it was light enough to follow them. The country was very rough with many steep hills and ravines, the elephants had travelled straight and fast as if they knew what was coming to them - by now they were well aware of the consequences of raiding. The spoor was easy to follow and often we moved at a jog-trot. The going was difficult at times owing to swampy valley crossings where we sank up to our knees in mud and were severely cut about

on arms and legs by sharp-edged razor-grass. Although we did not stop once to rest we did not sight our quarry until long after midday. We were walking down the slopes of a long barren sandstone hill when we heard them first – a tree crashed in the valley below and its echoes reverberated from hill to hill. The grass was short and the scattered trees were gnarled and stunted so that we had a clear view of the valley. It did not take us long to spot them in spite of the fact that they were almost hidden in long grass and reeds – the incessant flapping of their ears gave them away.

When we reached level ground and before entering the reeds and grass we tested the direction of the wind which was favourable for an approach along the paths made by the elephants – this made the stalking much easier than it would have been had we been forced to push our way through the tangled growth.

When within about thirty yards we heard their peculiar internal rumblings and, as we closed in the flapping ears and swishing tails were distinctly audible. The two nearest to us were a bull and a cow standing in a trampled-down space some twenty yards distant. I took a frontal shot at the one on my side and Mbaya took an ear shot at the other. Both crashed to the ground. The remainder, puzzled by the suddenness of the onslaught and by the many echoes, huddled together. A lanky female buddi fell to my rifle and Mbaya took a heart shot at a youngish cow who rushed off mortally wounded to drop some two hundred yards away. The rest of the herd, four in number, followed the wounded beast. While we were following we heard a heavy thud and then three loud tell-tale trumpeting roars before she expired.

When we had passed the dead animal we found that a blood spoor carried on and soon it became evident that Mbaya's shot must have passed through her body to penetrate the lungs of another standing behind her in the line of fire – the blood was light coloured and frothy and sprayed out by the trunk. We followed quickly and shortly came to a side valley where two had turned to the right. Mbaya followed straight ahead after his wounded animal while I went after the two on my right – we separated because we wanted to get the job over as quickly as possible. After struggling along for a couple of hundred yards I found that the gully narrowed and was filled with bamboo thicket and long matted grass and scrub, so climbed out of it to run along the slope above, hoping to out distance the elephants before they climbed over the top of the ridge. I had not covered a quarter of a mile when I heard a loud crackling of bamboos and saplings as the leader broke cover to advance quickly up the hillside towards me. Apparently his intention was to cut back over the slopes to join the older cows in the main valley and was quite

unaware of my presence. A frontal brain shot killed him instantly. There was some commotion down below, followed by a shrill scream as the younger bull turned to retrace his steps and I raced back along the hillside to keep abreast. Meanwhile, the two local guides who accompanied us were following and had reached the bottom of the gully when they heard the stampeding elephant approaching. Scared out of their wits they rushed up the low slopes in front of me with the elephant almost on top of them. Thinking that he was charging after them they went all out. The sight made me laugh so much that it was all I could do to pull myself together for a shot. However I managed to do so before it was too late and the young bull fell to a heart shot

While all this was going on I had heard the screams of an enraged elephant coming from Mbaya's direction and the reports of four shots. We were on our way to look for him when he shouted to say that all was well he had killed both his animals and had had a narrow escape when the wounded cow had charged him in very long grass just after he had fired two shots at the other cow.

Mbaya is a Yao of powerful build, an excellent tracker and a first class shot. His hard black face is strong and full of character and has the appearance of having been chiselled out of ebony – he does not know the meaning of fear. By now it was after 3 p.m. and after resting for ten minutes or so to smoke a pipe, while Mbaya took snuff, we decided to make for the village of Mkoma which was on our way back to camp and where we would be able to get something to eat. The village was some ten miles distant and it was almost sunset when we got there, tired and hungry. After eating a couple of hard-boiled eggs and a small pot-full of ugali (thick maize porridge) we hit the trail along a narrow path for Salim's camp. Three hours later we reached road where we collected the car and drove back to the rest house, too tired to eat but thoroughly refreshed after a hot bath and several cups of tea. A large cup of tea laced with a strong peg of whisky helped to restore the tissues. Later, after a hot bath and a light meal we slept soundly until dawn.

CHAPTER FIVE

SELOUS RESERVE AND THE RUFJI VALLEY

A safari through Selous Reserve and the Rufiji valley – Selous Reserve East

It was the second week of January, the short rains were over and there had been a spell of dry weather for several days. Summer time was flowing in, the bright tints of spring had gone, trees were full in leaf and the whole countryside was knee-deep in green grasses of many different kinds, I was about to begin a long tour of the Rufiji river valley and my loads had been packed on the lorry the previous evening.

We were in Morogoro, a small town on the central railway of Tanganyika Territory, situated on the Northern slopes of the Uluguru massif.

We left in the dark, long before sunrise, driving eastwards. Soon the lights of the village were lost in the shadows of the hills. Skirting the foothills for some twenty miles we turned sharply southwards near Mikesse railway station and winding tortuously through a jumbled mass of little hills, we gained the summit of a small plateau just as dawn was breaking.

Although we were well wrapped we felt the bite of the cold, morning air. I stopped the car for a few minutes to have a cup of hot tea and to take a last look at the mountains before descending to the hot steaming plains. The light was changing rapidly. Suddenly the first red-gold rays of the sun struck the topmost rocky crags of the Uluguru peaks giving a warm glow to the cold, blue gray heights. The valley between lay buried in a billowy sea of mist with the tops of forest-clad hills rising out of the depths and splashed with foam. On the mountain slopes, ravines and streams were filled with milk white mist and wisps of cloud floated up the cold blue mountainside dissolving slowly as they rose. Now the whole mountain top stood clear in golden silhouette against a deep blue sky. From below and from across the valley came the sound of rushing waters.

Driving on we entered the lovely rain-forest of the upper Ruvu River, where the trees were laden with grey-green beard moss hanging from every bough and often reaching to the ground. Trunks and branches were clothed in lichen of many shades of blue and yellow, green and grey.

Shrouded in a dense damp mist we dropped steeply down a slippery winding road to cross the wide foaming torrent by means of a slender wooden trestle-bridge. We climbed slowly to the top of the bluff on the further side.

As we began the long descent down Shepherds' Pass, which we had helped to build during the East African Campaign, we were met by flying curtains of

rain-drenched cloud. Soon we were buried in dense fog and had to drive slowly round numerous bends along a scarred and rutted road. We could see only a few yards ahead and in spite of every care we slithered dangerously from side to side on the oily red clay surface.

At the foot of the scarp the fog lifted and we came out into the bright sunlight. Once again we crossed the Ruvu, this time on the flats near the native village of Mvuha where many thatched huts lay scattered and half hidden among big shady mango trees, clumps of sugarcane and gardens of cassava.

In the rainy season this river overflows its banks for several hundred yards on either side to fill up hundreds of old hollows, holes and creeks and to cover all the flats with layers of rich alluvial soil. Thus a large strip of land a mile or more wide and several miles in length is covered with rank vegetation, mostly tall grasses reeds and rushes. Amongst this grass are many matted beds of vines and twisted bush.

Once filled with water these creeks and pools soon produce a vegetation of their own: such as sedges, rushes, water-quick and a host of other plants. The large flat leaves of water lilies float on the surface of the ponds and their beautiful blooms of blue and gold exhale a sweet intoxicating scent. Here crocodiles lurk unseen, their bodies hidden by the growth of weed and their eyes and knobby nostrils camouflaged by upturned leaves. Hippopotamuses take refuge in the more inaccessible waters where they spend the daylight hours.

Cultivated fields are scattered about these pestilential flats and while the crops are growing the greater part of the native population desert their homes to live in temporary shacks amongst their lands to protect them from destruction by marauding game. Rice, maize, millet, cassava and sweet potatoes are their staple crops. While these are young, elephant, hippo and buffalo come at night to eat and trample the juicy stems and blades. Later on when the grain is ripening elephant, pig and buffalo feed voraciously at night while baboons, monkeys, warthogs and swarms of weaver-birds take their toll by day. From the planting to the reaping there is little peace for the natives whose shouts and cries can be heard all night.

To assist them in saving their crops from destruction armed native game scouts are posted to definite areas by the game ranger and it is their job to scare away or shoot the more obstinate of the bigger game. It is left to the villagers themselves to deal with the smaller less dangerous animals.

It was my duty to tour these areas regularly to help my scouts and to check up on their work, also to see that the game laws were not being broken.

Yotam the local scout met me on the road and gave me all the local news. Jumbé Sefu had not appeared to give me his reports. On enquiring for him I was told that he was dead. Yotam recounted the grim story: a few weeks previous, Sefu, who was a very keen fisherman, was enjoying an afternoon fishing in the reegrit pools. Having harpooned a giant catfish he was struggling with his catch when the water heaved in front of him as a hippo bull rose with a loud snort of annoyance. Quick as a flash he threw his harpoon at the monsters head and turned to run. Before he could get under way the great jaws closed round his body crushing out his life and almost cutting him in two.

His little son, a boy of eight or nine years old, threw his spear too before rushing off for help. Yotam, accompanied by several of the Jumbé's relations hurried to the spot and found the mangled corpse lying on the ground. The hippo had returned to the water and was hiding in the rushes but Yotam had little trouble in locating and shooting the rogue.

Crocodiles were also troublesome in these parts and a few weeks later another scout, Petro, stationed at Magagoni some seven or eight miles lower down the valley had a nasty experience with one of these reptiles. One night, a little after dark, he was wading through the river on his way to drive off raiding hippo. Half way through the stream which was little over knee deep a crocodile attacked him seizing him from behind, above the knee. He fired a shot into the water and

scared the brute away but not before it tore a wide strip of meat and muscle from his leg. The wound became terribly septic and his life was only saved, by amputation high up the thigh.

During the rainy season the scouts are called out nearly every night to shoot or drive away obstinate marauders.

Leaving the two scouts to carry on their arduous duties we went on to Duthumi, village where I found scout Ramazani waiting for me with seventeen porters. Loads were removed from the lorry and readjusted for the long trip down the Rufiji valley.

In this part of the country the sun was scorching and the bush infested with tsetse fly. Most of these flies, there are several species, are a little bigger than the common house fly and live by sucking the blood of mammals, birds and reptiles. They can fly at great speed, up to thirty miles an hour or more. They hunt by sight as well as by smell and are greatly attracted by any moving object. In daylight they are almost unbearable but on dark nights they do, not appear to move about much. On moonlight nights they are a little troublesome. Sometime their bite is like the piercing of a red-hot

needle but more often it is unnoticed until the insect's body is swollen almost to bursting point with blood. Then reacting to the irritation one is likely to give a quick and vicious clap which bursts the distended fly. Empty, the fly is very wary and tough and even if hit hard it does not die unless rubbed roughly between the surfaces of hand and body. When decapitated it often flies some distance.

Taking the heat and flies into consideration I decided to move off my moonlight, the path was not good enough for travelling in pitch dark. At about ten o'clock that night the moon rose and we started off in single file along a narrow native path. The porters went ahead to make their pace and I followed. Behind me came Ramazani my cook Ibrahim and his help Sudi. The latter was about seventeen years old and was so scared of lions that I had to put him in front of me where he felt safer in the crowd.

The slightly undulating country was covered sparsely with trees and bushes and the green grass was shoulder high. There were many patches of tall dry grass which had escaped the earlier ravages of fire and from time to time we passed through extensive dense thickets of bush and scrub.

When we were in the middle of one of these thickets there was a sudden crashing of branches and small trees on both side of us. This was accompanied by a shrill trumpeting. We had walked into the middle of a herd of feeding elephants. The porters dropped their loads with a crash and we all fled backwards to get out of the way while the animals on our left flank crossed the path to join the main herd retreating to the right. In less than a minute all was quiet and a little later we heard a branch crack several hundred yards away and knew that the elephant were feeding again. After the first few shouts of warning every one had been quiet, listening for the sounds that would give us the direction of the animals. Now there was much talking and laughing while the loads were being picked up little the worse for their rough handling. In a short time we had resumed our journey.

At times the path was dry and rough being deeply pitted by the tracks of elephant and other big game. Now and then we had to slush our way through muddy flats full of pitfalls made by the feet of heavy beasts. Once we startled a herd of waterbuck which galloped across the path a little way ahead. Although we could only see them very dimly, we could tell them by their strong acrid goatly smell.

Towards dawn we heard hippo grunts and knew that the Mgasi River was not far off. The pace had been slow and we had stopped several times for a rest and smoke. It was daylight when we came to the river, wading waist-deep through the cold water to the southern bank.

Following downstream for a mile or so we came to large fields of rice, maize and millet. Here we left the river and turned south towards the eastern corner of Selous' Reserve. On the way I noticed that a great deal of damage had been done by raiding hippo and decided to camp out on the higher ground beyond the fields.

While the camp was being pitched I settled comfortably in a deck-chair under a big shady tree waiting for breakfast. The Headman came to see me and brought two fowls and a basket of eggs. His two wives brought some marrows and a few pounds of their best rice. Complaining bitterly about the hippo he told me that the local scout was over-worked and was unable to give adequate protection from marauding animals so I promised to assist. Scout Amiri and the village elders assured me that it was quite impossible to discover the hippo's hiding places owing to the swampy nature of the country. Quite often the natives are correct in their assertions but more often they take the easiest line of resistance especially when the alternative has an even chance of failure. There was a big school of hippo raiders and the fields were scattered far and wide, shooting raiders at night when they come to feed would have poor results. I insisted on a very thorough search and in the end persuaded the whole village to take part in the hunt. Off they went in twos and threes, armed with long handled cutting knives for slashing through the dense matted tangle of coarse grass, reeds and creepers growing in the fertile swampy soil.

While the parties were out searching I had breakfast and slept in the shade for nearly three hours. When they returned a little after midday I was much refreshed but the sun was overhead and very hot. We decided that the real hunt would not begin until after 3 p.m.

At the appointed hour I set out with my .256 rifle accompanied by Ramazani who carried a heavy "panga", or slashing knife. The guide carried my double barrel 450.400 express. The approach to the river was difficult and covered in mud. The last hundred yards was done on hands and knees along a tunnel made by the hippo through dense undergrowth and bog. Although these beasts are bulky and stand about four feet high they push their way under the heavy vegetation which slides over their backs as they pass. The heat was stifling and fine dust and hairs showered down from the rotting leaves and grass, nearly choking us. We moved as quietly as possible but when I got my first view of the quarry they were looking in our direction. They were in a deep pool barely fifty yards long and only some twenty yards wide.

There was a small sandy beach on my left and I sat down there to do a most unpleasant task, there were eighteen hippo in the pool and they had to be

exterminated. They are easy to kill with modern weapons and with the exception of odd rogues they are timid creatures. I felt like a butcher but the job had to be done. After fifteen had been killed two scrambled out of the water into the thicket on my flank. I had been using the small bore P56 rifle which is very effective for the brain shot as a hippo skull is very easily penetrated. Now I looked round for my heavy rifle but the bearer was not to be seen. There was no time to be lost so we dashed off down the tunnel scrambling along on all fours. We could hear squeals and grunts accompanied by short crashes close at hand when a tremendous bellow and splashing of water made us turn around in time to see our entrance darkened by the massive heaving body of a hippo bull which was moving rapidly towards us from the pool. Ramazani was now in front of me. Telling him to lie down and keep still I took a snap shot through the tangled grass and vines. The huge beast fell to his knees almost on top of Ramazani who smote him on the nose several times with his heavy panga. The small bullet had missed the brain and only stunned him for a few seconds but I managed to get in a vital shot just as he began to stagger to his feet. Both of us were covered from head to foot with blood that spurted from the hippo's nostrils. Just then the two terrified cows squealed behind me and began making short rushes in different directions. We had not long to wait before one appeared lumbering heavily towards us down the passage.

A bullet found her brain and as she fell I caught a glimpse of the other crashing by along a parallel tunnel. Following as quickly as possible I arrived back at the water's edge in time to see her emerge on the farther bank where a shot through the brain put an end to her misery.

Returning to the sandbank I found the guide perched on the top of a small tree and looking very sheepish. When we were back in camp he must have told some good yarns because he kept the villagers in roars of laughter until Ramazani whispered something rude into his ear.

Because of the stifling heat and humidity in the boggy thicket we were tired on our return but a few cups of strong tea soon put me right.

Scout Amiri came to the fireside and we had a long talk about the game in his area. Amiri then brought in his rifles a .404 and an old Service .303, the latter used for shooting hippo and for trapping leopards when necessary. The old .303 was almost a smooth bore and the ammunition green with age: I instructed this scout to use this rifle for trapping only but, some months later, he followed and wounded a raiding buffalo which he followed into very long grass; the buffalo charged Amiri who had two misfires due to the perished cartridges: flinging the useless weapon aside he turned and ran

shouting "Potelea mbale Serkali" (meaning "Go to hell the Government"). The buffalo then struck him in the thigh as he stumbled, the sharp horn penetrated Amiri's thigh from back to front, missing the bone and fortunately for the scout, tossing him some distance away into the long grass. The mortally wounded animal was too far gone to continue the chase and died soon afterwards.

After a light supper and a few pipes of Boer tobacco I went to bed and did not wake up until early in the morning. The camp was astir so, dressing quickly, I sat down near the log fire to drink a cup of tea while the baggage was being packed ready for the next part of our journey.

Dawn was breaking as I went out ahead of the porters, the headman and Amiri came with me. After a short distance we came across the spoor of a solitary giraffe which had been chased across the Mgasi river by two lions – this was interesting because I had never seen giraffe or their spoor between this river and Selous' Reserve although there were quite a number of these animals to the North of the river.

In the distance we heard the deep booming notes of Ground-hornbills calling "Bwana, bwana, nimepata" followed by deeper booms "Leta, le-ta, ni'mle". (In English – the hen calls to her mate "Master, master, I've caught it", and in deeper booming tones the cock replies "Bring it, bring it, let me eat it"). These great vulture-like birds are as big as turkeys and go about in parties of four or five or more.

The path was overgrown by grass which was heavy with dew and soon we were wet to the waist. We were getting near the boundary of the Game Reserve where all animals are protected and as we wanted some fresh meat I shot a fat young bush-buck ram. To me their flesh is the best of all the smaller antelopes

because they browse on tender shoots and various herbs. Amiri, being a Mohammedan, cut its throat according to religious rites and we left the headman to arrange for an extra porter to bring the meat on to our camp. An hour or so later we entered Selous' Reserve and shortly afterwards I saw one of the biggest elephants I have ever come across. The sun was behind him so that I could not get a clear view. Keeping on the right side of the wind I worked round to a better position, coming out within fifty yards or so of the old bull. More than six feet of ivory protruded from below his upper lips on either side. These tusks were very thick, yellowish at the extremity and much stained with black towards the base. The right tusk was somewhat wedge-shaped at its point as this was the one he used for digging roots and stripping trees of their bark. He was stripping bark now from a big tree. First

he pushed the point of his sharp tusk through the rough bark and with a sideways motion, drew a four or five inch strip away from the wood then seizing it with his trunk he pulled the lower portion free from the root. Drawing back a pace or two he tore the bark free to the topmost branches by means of powerful upward jerks of his trunk. Having accomplished this he put the end into his mouth and began to chew it to extract the sap. His ears were fanning backwards and forwards ceaselessly, suddenly they closed with a backward swing hitting him on the neck and shoulder with a loud slap as he moved backwards then sideways to face the path along which the porters were passing. Now he cocked his great ears and extended his trunk high in that direction to test the air. He had heard the porters laughing and talking and he did not trust the sound. A puff of air tainted with the smell of human beings must have reached his nostrils. He spat out the bark making a deep sighing sound as he did so then pivoting round on his hind feet he turned about and shuffled off with tail raised high and in a curve.

Returning to the path I caught up with the porters and told them to take a rest and smoke while I went on ahead. The country was gently undulating and the trees scattered far apart. A few hundred yards to my left I caught sight of a swishing tail and found myself looking at a herd of eight sable antelope, including two young reddish calves about five or six months old. They were walking towards the top of a rise where they would choose to spend the heat of the day under shady trees. They cropped the grass rapidly as they moved along. Every now and then one would stop and look around to see if all was safe. The older cows are almost as black as the bulls but the younger animals are ruddy and the calves still redder. When disturbed they give a loud gruff snort and stamp their forefeet on the ground. In action they are swift and graceful.

Approaching the top of a long sloping piece of ground the violent swishing of long heavy tails drew my attention to a big herd of white bearded gnu. Some were standing under shady trees and others were lying down at rest. Spotting us they snorted loudly and in a few seconds the whole herd was on its feet looking in our direction. Without warning heads went down and tails went up as they made wild leaps and rushes to and fro. Suddenly they tore off madly at the gallop with tossing heads and swishing tails. Then wheeling round in a semi-circle they bore towards our left. When they were within a hundred yards or so they came to an abrupt standstill to look at us with long melancholy bearded faces for a few seconds before beginning their antics over again as if on show. Several of the bulls engaged in mock battle charging head to head. Cows and calves leaped wildly into the air shaking

their shaggy heads. Again they tore round in circles as if their lives depended on their gambols. At last having given their performance they stood in line looking at us with wide inquisitive eyes as if expecting some applause. Then turning about they went off into the bush at the gallop leaving us to continue our journey.

For some miles we had noticed hyaena tracks along our path. At first a solitary animal had joined the track; as we progressed several others had come in at various points. Now these trails began to branch off to the right. Looking in that direction we saw vultures circling at a great height. Taking out my field-glasses I scanned the country carefully and saw odd vultures settling on some tall trees about a mile and a half away. This needed investigating and it would take an hour or two at least so we went on half a mile or so to pitch camp under shady trees near a small stream.

After a quick tub and a light meal I dozed for an hour or two in the coolest spot I could find before setting out towards the settling vultures. After half an hour's walk we came to the carcass of a dead elephant. The air was polluted with the smell of putrid flesh. We moved round to windward and as we drew nearer dozens of gorged vultures hopped awkwardly along the ground flapping their wings clumsily. They were so swollen with meat that they found great difficulty in rising from the ground. The body was that of a young bull elephant. We drew the tusks early from their slimy sockets. Scout Amiri said that he had wounded an elephant in a maize field a few days before. He had followed it to the Reserve boundary but did not like to follow it into the sanctuary without my permission so had abandoned the hunt. It was more than likely that this was the same animal because a poacher would have followed and removed the tusks.

Dozens of hyaenas had been attracted by the smell from miles around. They came to feed at night and returned to their lairs (holes in the ground) before daylight. Lions, leopards and jackals had been here too, so bird and beast had assisted in cleaning up the mess.

A porter took the tusks back to camp while Amiri and I made our way home in a wide detour. On approaching a dense thicket of bamboo, long grass and thorn bush we heard the peculiar harsh grating clicks of a small flock of oxpeckers passing overhead, they settled in the thicket and we knew that some large animal would be their host. These small grey-brown birds have strong red bills and feet and use their strong sharp claws for hanging on to the tough slippery hides of the bigger game animals, crawling all over their bodies to hunt for ticks. Elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, eland and giraffe are their favourite hosts but they follow many different kinds of game. All

animals appreciate the services of their little feathered friends because they remove the ticks from parts of their bodies inaccessible to themselves, getting inside their ears, under their tails and in between their legs. Walking quietly round the thicket we found the tracks of two old bull buffalo leading into the tangled scrub. We passed on and left them to their toilet. Just as we skirted the far side of the thicket a sudden loud whirr of wings startled us as a francolin took to flight with a sharp cackle. This disturbed the buffalo and we heard them rise to their feet with a grunt but as the wind was in our direction they did not leave their cover.

Coming to more open country where the grass was shorter we saw a small flock of a dozen or more Impala, the most graceful of all antelope. Fleet of foot they make the most astounding effortless leaps into the air. Sometimes they congregate in large flocks of fifty or sixty or more. All their eyes were turned towards us and their ears tuned high testing the breezes with their delicate nostrils. An eddy of tainted air confirmed their suspicions and away they leaped lightly, fading imperceptibly into a maze of grass and leafy bough. The sinking sun conspired to obstruct our view with far flung net of beam and shadow.

Approaching the edge of a patch of long grass in a valley I parted the stalks carefully and saw a family of warthog, father, mother and three little ones wallowing in a muddy hollow where the grass had been trampled flat by herds of game. Getting our wind they scrambled off as fast as their short legs could carry them holding their tails high above their backs. The old boar's long curved tusks gleamed in the light of the setting sun. We struck the path soon after sunset and walked briskly back to camp. Soon we saw the warm glow of the log-fire reflected from the tree tops round our camp, then came the hum of happy voices and the pungent smell of smoke from burning ebony.

It had been a very hot day and I was glad to get back to have a refreshing bath. Afterwards I sat down under the stars to write up my diary while Ibrahim prepared the evening meal; hyaenas were already on their way to feed on the remains of the dead elephant and we heard their fiendish calls – long grumbling moans ending in a high pitched scream. A little later we heard the sharp yapping of a jackal as he passed our way. The porters began teasing Sudi, telling him that "mbweha" (the jackal), the lion's forerunner, would be followed soon by "Simba", the mighty one himself. Surely enough it was not long before a tremendous roar vibrated through the camp and Sudi was not the only timid one. After several deep throated roars or rather

bellows there was a gradual weakening in their intensity until they ended in a succession of short grunts.

Excepting for the chatter of porters there was silence in the bush for several minutes and then the lion roared again, this time from a different quarter. Sudi left the kitchen shelter hurriedly to settle down amongst the porters where he felt safer in the crowd near Amiri who had a rifle. As soon as Imbrahim had done his work he followed Sudi sheepishly. Before going to bed I heard the lion several times again, each time farther away and knew that he had satisfied his curiosity as far as we were concerned. I was soothed to sleep by the monotonous croaking of a chorus of frogs. Camp was astir soon after four o'clock in the morning and Sudi called me for tea a little later. The chill morning air belied the great heat of the day to come and I sat by the log-fire while camp was being broken. We heard the unearthly cries of hyaenas returning from their feast. There was a bright moon and the loads were soon packed. We started all together in the gray dawn. After an hour's march the porters stopped for a short rest to adjust their loads and to enjoy a short smoke. Ramazani came ahead with me and Amiri stayed with the porters.

Looking back from the top of a rise we saw the peaks of the Uluguru Mountains standing high above the mists and bathed in gold. To the east an orange sun was rising above the level of the distant trees. A small herd of hartebeest crossed the path about two hundred yards ahead. An old cow saw us and they stopped to look. We walked towards them for about fifty yards before they snorted and made off in their own peculiar clumsy looking canter. These rather silly looking antelope with long narrow faces and twisted horns stand nearly four feet high. In colour they are chestnut yellow above, with white belly and buttocks. In spite of their ungainly motion they are very fleet, progressing in long high bounds that make them look as though their feet have springs.

When we came to the Behobeho depression we found the grass long and lush and there were signs that a large herd of buffalo had been grazing here for several nights. They had passed by this very morning about three hours previous to our arrival. This I gathered from the state of the bruised grasses, the tracks (some of which were covered with freshly woven spider-webs free from dewdrops) and the dung on which the outer skin was very thin and soft. I wanted to see the herd and count the animals so waited for a few minutes for the porters to come up to give them instructions for the pitching of the camp on the far side of the Jhogowari stream some five miles distant. After speaking to Amiri, Ramazani and I set out quickly. The buffalo were making

for the Maji-a-weta hills to the west and were grazing slowly on their way. A gentle breeze was blowing from the east towards them but for the present there was no need to take this into consideration.

After going hard for about an hour and a half the tracks left the narrow valley and it was clear that they were making for the foothills at a jog trot. On the way we had passed sable antelope, greater kudu and eland but had no time to watch them. Now it was necessary to take note of the wind and we made a detour as the buffalo were not far distant and would be circling about looking for a safe and shady spot for their day's rest. Here I must mention that animals' habits vary greatly according to their environment. In areas where there are dense native populations or where there has been a fair amount of shooting, buffalo are seldom found away from dense cover during daylight hours. But here we were in a sanctuary where there was no native population and where no shooting had been allowed for many years. Having arrived on the hill slopes we turned south and very soon afterwards had the luck to see the herd feeding in a valley some three hundred yards below. My field glasses were handy and I was able to make an accurate count. There were five fine old bulls, over fifty cows and young bulls and about a dozen calves some of which were only a few months old. We watched them for several minutes until they turned away to our right and made for the shelter of some big shady trees on top of a small butress of the hills. Not wishing to disturb them we retraced our steps for half a mile and made for camp.

The sun had been up for about two and a half hours and already we felt the heat. We were going along at a good speed when we entered a large patch of long grass under some bigish trees. There was a sudden commotion all around – we had walked into the middle of a large herd of impala. What a wonderful display it was as the beautiful antelopes leaped high into the air above the grass, going in all directions like dry leaves caught up in eddying breezes. Some of them landed almost on top of us, as they did not know our whereabouts. In a few seconds they had located us and bounded away gracefully down the gentle slopes and up the farther side of a rise. We ran through the grass and watched them gain the top of the ridge where they stopped and looked back. We went on down our own ridge and left them bounding further away.

Near the source of the Chogowari stream we heard elephants and a little later we saw several cows and small calves standing about under shady trees, flapping their huge ears to keep away flies and throwing tufts of grassy roots and earth on their backs for the same reason. Their tails also were in constant motion. Every now and then a trunk was raised to test the air to

make sure that all was safe. As the wind was favourable we passed very close to them, within a stone's throw without arousing their suspicions.

By now the sun was getting really hot so we made for a belt of trees along the watercourse where we found it cooler. After passing several game tracks leading down to the water we found ourselves on a well-worn elephant path which had been used for many years, the going was easier on the hard smooth track and we swung along at a good pace for home. When we came to the water we discovered the elephants' bathing place where a deep wide hollow had been dug out high bank by many tusks of different sizes. In these boggy baths they use their trunks to suck up and squirt water over their bodies and to rub themselves with sandy clay. Then they get down to it properly and wallow to their heart's content. When satisfied with this they stand up and rub their sides thoroughly against the bank and go off caked in mud which often gives them a peculiar colour. The bath and scrubbing gets rid of many external parasites and massages their tough wrinkled hides keeping them supple. The mud helps to keep them cool and to a certain extent protects them from the bites of flies.

It was past midday and intensely hot when we found camp on the Chogowari stream. The porters were lying about in twos and threes in the shadiest spots they could find. Many different kinds of birds perched in the trees round about but there was no song. They looked distressed, gaping and panting for breath.

My tent had been pitched under a large and leafy tamarind tree. It was a great relief to get my boots off and to have a cold tub in the canvas bath. The only breezes that stirred were sun scorched, dry and unrefreshing. Life was at its lowest ebb, the whole world dozed or slept. Even the leaves hung limp and withered and drops of perspiration fell from the rain trees' foliage.

Later in the afternoon Ramazani and I walked down to some muddy flats near Lake Tagalala and found three old buffalo bulls wallowing in their mud baths and caked all over in mud. They were so still they might have been dead but every now and then they twitched an ear. We left them in peace. Returning we saw a rhino cow and her calf going down to the mud, also eland, impala, waterbuck, wildebeest, zebra, kudu and a lion.

In the cool of evening the slumbering world began to live again. Chattering monkeys made it clear to one and all that there were strangers in their midst. Birds began to twitter and slake their thirst, taking a long rest between each beakful. From upstream came the sound of cracking branches and then the loud trumpeting of an elephant. Many species of antelope passed by later in the evening grazing contentedly on their way to water, but ever alert, testing

stray winds and taking it in turns to stop and look around. On the hills behind baboons began to bark. In the shimmering hazy distance a large herd of buffalo billowed over the rise beyond the lake, they were coming down to drink. Hippopotamuses grunted and yawned. Flocks of wild fowl were fighting in from many directions circling round before settling on the margins of the lake. First came the duck and whistling teal, then the big spur-winged geese – they would feed all night. A rhinoceros cow and her calf walked out of the scrub and down a steep hill to the flats to wallow in the warm mud and slake their dry hides, later they would drink. From some bushy boulder-strewn hills a leopard grunted harshly making a noise much like a rip-saw cutting through hard wood.

As I looked back over the hills the crimson sun slipped into the smoky grey haze which rested on the horizon and I was glad to see the last of it. Then I strolled across to see the grave of Frederick Courtenay Selous, marked by a plain slab of cement now cracked by the weight of an elephant's foot which had rested there when the ground was wet. What more fitting spot could have been chosen for the last resting place of that tireless wanderer? Here he would have wished to stay among the animals he loved, to guard the great wild-life sanctuary now named after him.

Twilight was short and soon dusk turned to darkness. The stars were brilliant and a cool breeze rustled through the leaves. The shrill trumpeting of an elephant was followed by deep internal rumblings as the herd passed by on their way towards the reed-beds of the lake. Mothers and calves were in happy mood and made funny high-pitched noises like those of yelping pups. Returning to camp I had my meal under the stars, then lay back in a deck-chair a little way from the log-fire recalling many memories of the East African Campaign and of Selous, the great hunter who used to delight us with tales of his adventures. Here he himself was slain by the enemy while leading his men into action. My thoughts were far away when they were interrupted by the roars of lions and suddenly a great black shape loomed into the firelight as an inquisitive rhinoceros came trotting up briskly out of the darkness. I shouted loudly and he stopped, shook his head menacingly then turned about and trotted back into the night. Putting a few more logs on to the fire I lay back and smoked my pipe peacefully, listening to the many voices of the pori. Then to bed, lulled to sleep by the music of the wild. Before dawn we were well on our way towards the great Rufiji River, the Southern boundary of the Reserve. Lions roared and leopards grunted a farewell. Later the wild lonely wail of a fish eagle seemed to lament our departure. Every now and then the clatter of hoofs or a loud snort told us

that we had disturbed herds of feeding animals. As we crossed a sandy flat leading to the Lake a clanking of horns and thundering of hoofs brought us to a standstill while a herd of buffalo lumbered past on their way to the seclusion of the heavily timbered foothills where they would spend the heat of the day, resting under shady trees to regurgitate their food and chew the cud.

As we approached the river dawn was in the sky and soon the sun rose red and swollen from behind a dark low bank of cloud.

On arrival at the river bank opposite Mpanga village I fired a shot across the water to let the natives living on the far side know that we wanted canoes for the crossing. There had been heavy rains up country at the headwaters of the tributaries; the river was muddy and fairly full. We had a quick breakfast on the bank and before we had finished half a dozen canoes were waiting for us. We could see sixty or seventy hippos in the shallow water on the sandbanks at the lower ends of two small islands. Herons, egrets, geese and numerous other water-fowl were flying upstream, keeping low down near the water. Kingfishers were busy everywhere.

We crossed over and were met by the Jumbé of the village who complained of damage done to the rice fields on the river flats above us. The scouts went along with the porters to pitch camp while I proceeded upstream with two canoes and four paddlers. We had to punt against a strong current for several hundred yards until we came to a deep backwater which we entered. The channel was overgrown with overhanging reeds and rushes and a dense mat of waterlily leaves and duckweed checked our progress which was slow and laborious. We disturbed a few crocodiles and many water-fowl, especially night herons and bitterns. At last, rounding a sharp bend in the creek we entered a wide shallow lagoon with rice fields around its fringes. A guide took me ashore through deep stinking mud and duckweed to go over the ground where the rice had been trampled and eaten by a hippo. Having satisfied me as to the amount of damage done, he pointed out the hiding place of the raider and told me that the same rogue had killed a man in the fields a couple of weeks before by biting him through the stomach.

Crossing the lagoon in the canoes we entered a long deep pool which hid our quarry. When he heard us he broke cover at the far end about a hundred yards away, gave several loud grunts and disappeared under the water. The pool was only about twenty yards wide and ended in a cul-de-sac. At our entrance the lake was very shallow so we waited for twenty minutes or so to see what he would do. Not a ripple disturbed the surface of the pool so I decided to go ahead with the two canoes abreast and close together.

Waterlilies and weeds covered the water and were especially thick along the margins.

Although we kept a keen watch we travelled the length of the pool without adventure. Returning very slowly we used the long eighteen foot punting poles to probe the pool thoroughly as we moved along. Suddenly there was a loud shout from the next canoe and a great upheaval of water which nearly swamped us all. The punter had stabbed the hippo and must have given him as big a fright as he had given us. Luckily he made for the cul-de-sac at top speed under water doing a good eight or nine knots an hour. We could see his progress by the waves rising further and further away. We turned to follow and a few minutes later I noticed a ripple coming towards us, he had doubled back. Without further warning he attacked the boat on my left by rising under the bows and heaving it out of the water. Then, as he was about to seize the gunwale in his jaws I fired a shot into his back – I was afraid of a ricochet towards the men so could not attempt a vital shot, all had to be done in a flash. He submerged at once causing a great disturbance in the water and made off in the opposite direction once again. It soon became evident that he intended to make overland for the river across impenetrable boggy marshland. As he emerged splashing and ploughing his way through the mud at the end of the pool a shot through the back of his head found the brain. So ended a thrilling hunt.

By now the two men had righted their canoe and were busy baling out the water. They were grey with fright but none the worse for their ducking. It was midday when the chase ended. In the excitement of the hunt we forgot all else but now we began to feel hot and tired. The sun was overhead and merciless, there was not a breath of air and the glare from the water was blinding. We made tracks for home. Leaving the canoes in a creek in the rice fields we floundered knee-deep through hot oozing mud to the village path. The men from the village had heard our shots and had run to meet us. There was great rejoicing when they heard our news.

My camp was pitched in a delightful, shady spot at the edge of a forest. Later on in the afternoon while having tea I looked out over the wide shimmering river and beheld the hills and trees dancing madly in the waves of heat. The great wild-life sanctuary was asleep and all was quiet in the village.

Towards evening the people began to awaken. Soon the men were busy making and mending fishing nets and traps. The women under shady trees were pounding and sifting grain from husk and the children were playing and helping. While out collecting firewood the porters had seen fresh lion tracks

on sandy bush paths round about the camp. These lions had a bad reputation and it was thought that they were responsible for the killing of three people in the Mkalinzo area a few weeks previously. Mkalinzo was a few miles higher up the river. The porters did not believe in taking any risks as far as lions were concerned so they formed themselves into a circle that evening and kept log-fires burning all night.

Three lions did approach about midnight and walked around our camp several times, keeping up an incessant roaring until the first cocks began to crow at about 4 a.m. The men were so frightened that I left my tent to sleep out in the open amongst them. The lions had been so persistent in their perambulations round our camp that I had begun to suspect that they might be the man-eaters from Mkalinzo, especially as the local natives told me that they had been hanging round this village for several days, parading the paths between the huts and sniffing round their walls. I was annoyed at having been kept awake and in any case I thought it would be just as well to go after them as soon as it was light enough in the morning. However, just as we were about to make a start, two men arrived from Nyakisiku, a village some seven or eight miles further down the river, to tell me that hippos were creating havoc in that area. Three canoes had been attacked and broken up and a man had been drowned. A few nights previously another man had been killed at night while trying to scare the hippo away from his crops. A number of people were stranded on an island and they were afraid to cross the water. It seemed to me that this was a more urgent matter and soon we were on the way to help them. The road was wide and the going easy and we swung along at a good pace.

About two hours later the guides led me down a path to the river where we found several canoes which were used for ferrying the farmers to and from an island opposite. Two rogue hippo had made up their minds that none should cross either way. One commanded the approach to the island and hid in the thick reed-bed near the narrow boat canal which had been cut clear for traffic. Somewhere near us the other rogue lay in wait in some dense reeds. We could see no signs of either, so tried an old ruse – boarding a canoe we beat the sides and splashed the water with paddles hoping that our quarry would come out to investigate but he was too wily. There was nothing else to do but to put out into the stream so we punted up against the strong current laboriously for a couple of hundred yards, keeping close in to the reedy banks. Without any warning the hippo rose within five or six yards in dirty water to take a bearing for an attack. Giving a loud snort and a bellow he opened his huge mouth and came for us. I had just enough time to take a

snap-shot into the roof of his mouth before he could seize the gunwale of our flimsy craft. He sank slowly under the water to disappear downstream. Now there was a loud splashing in the island reeds near the ferry landing and we saw the other rogue making his way to the fringe where he took cover. The current was so strong that we were being carried past our objective so we turned back for the mainland to work our passage slowly upstream for several hundred yards against the bank. Making a streak for the island we were able to draw up in fairly shallow water within about thirty yards of the hiding hippo. Digging the punting poles into the sandy river bottom we steadied up to enable me to take a shot. The rogue thought he was out of sight and remained dead still in shallow water under a canopy of matted reeds. The canoe was very wobbly but I managed to get in a shot for the brain. The hippo did not move but I saw blood trickling from his ear and knew that he was dead. Because he had not moved the paddlers wanted me to fire another shot, this I refused to do. Telling them to push up closer I took a punting pole and pushed the head which was buoyed up on a thick clump of tangled reed-roots, it slipped off into the water. The man who held my rifle was afraid and he pushed it towards me pulling the trigger of the left barrel accidentally as he did so – the bullet went close past my left ear, deafening me for a day or two on that side. This was a good lesson for me to remember to put on the safety catch of my rifle excepting when it was in my own hands and in actual use.

Going ashore we looked over the fields then, accompanied by several canoes we paddled downstream to look for the first hippo and found him stranded on a sandbank at a big bend in the river, the bullet had gone through his brain, killing him instantaneously.

The sun was nearing its zenith and the sand so hot on the sandbank that I found it too painful to walk about in the light tennis shoes I wore. After hauling our beast well away from the waters edge to prevent crocodiles from dragging him away before the tusks were extracted, we pushed over to the mainland and took the first path back to camp. This was pitched in the shade of several magnificent mango trees, the one redeeming feature on the sun-scorched grassy flats. The river flats in these parts are covered with tall grass almost impenetrable and covered with myriads of fine sharp hairs which cause great irritation to the skin. The huts of Nyakisiku village are scattered about at random in small clearings in a desolate sea of grass. Grain fields of rice, maize, and millet are cultivated in the dry season and in the lower-lying areas where the soil is damp in the dry season and covered in water during the heavy rains. In the evening I went out into the fields and shot a few

Egyptian geese and one big spurwing for meat for the camp. Even after sunset the heat was still stifling so I had my stretcher put out under the mango trees several yards away from the tent. Being short of kerosene we put out all lights soon after 9 p.m. A camp fire was out of the question because of the lack of firewood – the natives used coarse grass stems for cooking their food. There was no moon and the camp was in complete darkness when we went to bed. We were on the outskirts of the village and there were only two small huts on the far side of the road opposite my camp and about thirty yards distant from the tent. The scouts were armed with rifles and one, Ramazani, slept on the road with eight porters on either side of him. Sudi slept next to Ramazani. The local scout Saidi Kipende who had joined us in the afternoon and Ibrahim the cook slept on the small verandah of one of the huts. Amiri had returned to his own area on the Mgasi River.

It was past midnight when things began to happen. In my dreams I heard shouts and screams and saw natives pursuing and being pursued by an angry hippo, the former with blazing fire-brands held high above their heads were rushing wildly about the muddy rice fields. I wakened suddenly from a deep sleep and tried to collect my wits. My shot-gun leaned against a tree a yard behind my head but at once I realised that this would be no use against an enraged hippopotamus. Opening my mosquito net carefully I leaped out of bed and rushed into the tent to grab my rifle which lay loaded on the table. As I did so there was a terrific bellow of rage accompanied by increased yells and screams. A shot rang out and in the ensuing silence I shouted, asking where the hippo was – a sarcastic reply came from Saidi informing me that the hippo was a lion! It was pitch dark and I could see only a few yards dimly so I made a record sprint into the crowd having warned them that I was coming. By this time the cook had lit a lantern and agonised groans warned me that someone had been badly mauled. The victim was Sudi, a plump lad of about seventeen years old. I attended to his wounds at once, tied up a severed artery, cleaned the deep gashes and bandaged him carefully to stop too much loss of blood.

When daylight came we put him into a big canoe manned by four stout men and sent him off to Utete hospital fifty or sixty miles down the river. The party arrived the same day and Sudi recovered completely after six weeks. Having despatched Sudi we returned to camp to reconstruct the happenings of the night. We found the tracks of a lion and two lionesses leading up to my bed which was covered, luckily, by a good mosquito net. Their spoor was so close that their noses must have rubbed the net, but, not trusting this flimsy covering, which would have been very strange to them, they passed

between my head and the tree behind, walked into my tent and had a look around, then followed along the fringe of long grass to opposite the porters. The two lionesses hid in the grass while the lion walked on to the edge of the road about five paces beyond the last recumbent form. Lying flat on his belly he surveyed the field. From where he was it would have been an easy jump to the nearest man who was big and fat but, he picked out poor Sudi, (who curiously enough had always been afraid of lions), taking two long bounds to get there. Instead of using his teeth he dug his claws deep into the poor fellow's groin and with a mighty scoop sent him hurtling through the air towards the waiting lionesses, evidently hoping to pick him up on his way back to the long grass. As Sudi shot through the air he screamed "fisi, fisi" (which means hyaena) and Ramazani, not realising that it was a lion he had to deal with left his rifle and rushed out barehanded to the rescue. By chance Sudi had landed in a clump of banana trees and was unhurt by the fall. Ramazani picked him up and was carrying him back when the lion, who had been scared into cover by the shouting mob, gave a tremendous roar and charged back to recover his prey. This was the roar that I had heard when standing in the dark near the tent.

The shot fired by Sudi had hit the lion in the chest and we found him lying dead in the grass about a hundred yards away. The lionesses had hung around their dead companion until dawn, roaring loudly, and had then decamped. It was impossible to follow them through the dense matted grass. That these were the same lions which had annoyed us the previous night at Mpanga there was little doubt because some natives who came down in the morning had seen the spoor all the way along the path.

CHAPTER SIX MAHENGE AND THE KILOMBERO VALLEY

SELOUS RESERVE WEST

Mahenge, land of the mountain and the flood, is to me, the most alluring of all the southern provinces. On the mountains there is an abundance of high grass, many isolated forests, bamboo thickets and bracken beds. Some parts are lightly timbered, others mostly grassy with odd trees here and there. Perennial streams are plentiful. Large herds of elephant and buffalo roam everywhere amongst the valleys and the hills but other big game are scarce. The great river valleys and flats team with game of many kinds. The Ulanga Valley is thirty to forty miles wide and about a hundred miles in length. The river flats are covered almost entirely by the most impenetrable grass in all Africa, twelve to sixteen feet high, dense and tough. In the rainy season the river overflows its banks to cover all the flats and becomes from ten to fifteen miles in width. This vast expanse of running water is much obscured by tall reeds and grass holding their heads above the flood. From the fringes of the water the land rises gently at first to the foothills then abruptly up the steep scarps of the surrounding plateaux.

As the flood rises all living creatures retreat towards the hills where they remain until the dry season is well advanced. When the receding waters have returned to their deeper channels they leave the more elevated regions dry. But there remain many deep muddy backwaters and creeks and much marshy land. By now the heat is intense and towards the end of the dry season great bushfires sweep through the parched land. At this period all wild life seeks sanctuary in the green grass and evergreen thickets of those damper areas where fires never burn.

The lower Luwegu and its smaller tributaries keep more strictly to their channels as the surrounding country is hilly or gently undulating. Here there are no extensive flats; generally these parts are covered with open bush and patches of forest and thicket here and there.

Selous Reserve lies on slightly higher ground above the flood level of the Ulanga River, the rainfall there is lighter and the country better drained. This part of the country is mostly lightly timbered but there are alternate stretches of long and short grass and odd forests and thickets which break the monotony of the landscape; there are also a few rocky hills.

Selous Reserve had to be patrolled regularly; the following safari concerns that section that lies between the Rufiji and the Great Ruaha. As we began

our journey the weather was perfect – fine clear sunny days and cold nights, with a real bite in the air in mornings and evenings. My head scout, Rashidi Motomihako, had left before sunrise with fifteen Wapogoro porters who carried my camp equipment and food for us all. They were to pitch camp the banks of the Luhombero River some fifteen miles along the path to the Mberera hills near the confluence of the Ulanga and Luwegu rivers. I reached camp at 3 p.m. that afternoon and after a bath and tea we talked to the local headman about his crops and the game in his area. Afterwards we walked round the fields on a tour of inspection and on the way back I shot three fat francolin for food.

Long before daybreak in the morning we were on our way, the chief's son came with us to put us on the path and in hope of getting some fresh meat for his village. We were well ahead of the porters when we struck fresh buffalo tracks which we followed at the run. The grass was freshly bruised and there was a strong smell of cattle. They had been grazing slowly through the open bush and before long we found fresh dung that was still steaming. They were just ahead of us in a narrow valley where they were hidden by long grass but we could see the rustle of their movements and hear the sound of grazing. Choosing a small anthill for a better view I waited there for the herd to emerge on the farther slope where the grass was shorter. Out they came, barely a hundred yards away, twenty-five or thirty head. A bigish bull stopped under a tree to rub his horns roughly on the bark, giving me an easy broadside shot. The rest of the herd went off at a lumbering gallop. The chief's son being a good

Mohammedan rushed off to cut it's throat while the blood was still warm. We took a hind leg and a shoulder for the porters and the tongue for myself, the rest we gave to the guide who returned well pleased.

That afternoon we camped at Rupeia's village a short distance from the banks of the Ulanga River. As usual Rupeia wanted meat so we strolled out for a few miles in the evening and shot an old wildebeest for his people and himself. Meanwhile Rashidi had made all arrangements for three canoes to take us down the river in the morning to Gombela's village at the foot of the Mberera hills.

At eleven o'clock that night after the moon had set a herd of elephant swam across the river from the reserve to feed on the ripening mtama – they had done a lot of damage to the crops so I went out with a torch and shot an old cow on the edge of the fields. The herd stampeded towards the river trumpeting loudly and a little later we heard them splashing through the river. Meanwhile there were loud grunts and snorts from both banks of the

Ulanga as scores of disgruntled hippos made for the safety of the river. Very soon we heard more splashes as they precipitated themselves headlong into the water where they began to bellow and hoot loudly in annoyance.

In the morning we waited for the mists to rise before pushing out into the river on the next stage of our journey. There were boulders and rapids on the way and hippos are liable to be dangerous when visibility is limited.

As we paddled quietly downstream we saw waterbuck and Impala feeding near the banks and passed by many schools of hippo resting in the shallow waters of sand banks after their all night feed on land. When they saw us approaching they grunted and snorted loudly sending up columns of spray and steaming breath into the cold atmosphere. The more adventurous amongst them swam out towards us to get a closer view. Others still bolder submerged deeply to reappear much nearer in an astonishingly short time. From time to time we saw crocodiles swimming in the muddy creeks. Once we surprised an old bull elephant feeding in the reeds – he scrambled quickly up the steep bank, with tail held high and twisted, and shuffled off into the bush.

Everywhere the birds were busy on the river and the air was filled with their twittering and song. Pied kingfishers seemed to spend most of their time hovering and diving into the water after small fish. Often they would draw up short of the surface and move off to another spot. But occasionally they went in with a splash – then they were almost certain of their fish which they caught and carried off in their strong beaks to an overhanging bough. After giving the fish a bang or two on the hard wood they swallowed the bigish mouthful endways on. Great spotted kingfishers with dappled back and rufous under parts flew along the banks from perch to perch as we approached, until having strayed too far from home, they took long undulating flights across the river and so returned. Many others of this family were gorgeously attired in greens and blues of many different shades but the most beautiful of them all and the tiniest was the little ispidina, smaller than a sparrow and dressed in brightest blue with breast of orange pink. Along the banks in overhanging trees and in the reeds and long grasses myriads of weaver birds were busy round their well woven retort-shaped nests. They were feeding their fledglings and their loud twitterings were ceaseless. There were many varieties of these birds some were all golden, others gold and black and olive brown. Most of the exposed rocks in the river were occupied by darters either singly or in pairs – ungainly blackish birds with long stiff feathers in their tails and wings. Often they stood upright with their wings expanded wide to dry themselves after their diving, their long snakelike

necks and heads stretched skywards. Now and then we saw or heard the handsome fish eagle (*Haliaeetus vocifer*); his head, neck, breast and tail immaculate white, belly and mantle a deep rich chestnut and remainder black. The waters were deep and running swiftly.

At Gombela's village we found that all was well. Jumbé Swera, whose home was in the reserve, was there to meet us and to act as a guide so we wasted no time in crossing to the farther side. Here we left our canoes and went off several miles on foot to pitch camp at the edge of a small forest on the bank of the Rufiji River.

In the distance we could hear the thundering of Shuguli Falls where the tiger fish are always game. Tigers indeed, lithe and ferocious, the anglers dream as they leap at almost any kind of lure. Strong hooks with wire traces are needed for these fish and care must be taken in removing the hook from a catch. When landed in a boat they must be treated with respect for even then they are game, leaping about and snapping wildly at anything within their reach. They grow to a good size, attaining a weight of twenty pounds or more. I was disappointed that I did not have the time to test my rod and line. At night hippos wandering round the camp kept us awake with their harsh grunts and squeals. Two lions added to the din by roaring defiance at one another from opposite sides of the rivers. In the end we were hushed to sleep by the thundering of the falls.

In the morning we started off well ahead of the porters. Jumbé Swera led the way through a maze of game tracks, here he would pass into a wider elephant path, he knew the country from his boyhood days. He was an old man and his sight and hearing were not at their best but his memory was good. One of his sons kept the porters on our trail which was simple because wherever there were alternative routes on hard worn paths old Swera would pluck a leafy green twig and lay it across the tracks we did not take.

After an hour or so the old man stepped aside to readjust his load while I went on quietly in rubber soles along a well defined elephant path. Topping a rise in undulating country I saw a rhinoceros in the distance to my right. Watching him as I walked along I did not look ahead to see where I was going. A loud deep rattling growl brought me to a standstill – I had disturbed a lion and two lionesses at play, a distance of barely thirty yards separated us. The lion sat on his haunches growling and snarling, I could see his lips quivering. One lioness stood broadside on, glaring at me with murderous intent. The other lioness had her back towards me and watched over her shoulder, her tail twitched ominously and she had an ugly snarl. The situation was most unpleasant and for some long interminable seconds I

faced the three and did not dare to move, hoping that Swera would turn up to relieve the situation by pushing the shot-gun into my hands. At last the nearer lioness gave a "woof" and bounded away behind some small bushes to be followed by the other two. Retracing my steps to the top of the rise I saw Jumbé strolling along leisurely some hundred yards away.

Soon after midday we camped in the shade of a huge baobab tree close by the river bank. The fifteen or sixteen mile walk had been cool and pleasant and as I had come to look over the reserve there was no need for any hurry.

During the walk we had seen quite a lot of game. In the dusk just before dawn we walked into a herd of feeding hippo. Here in the sanctuary they had been undisturbed by any shooting and during the cool months of the year I often found them away from water after dawn had broken – (They stampeded).

Once looking down over a depression where the grass was long we saw about twenty pairs of horns which belonged to a herd of eland – every now and then the heads of the bigger bulls topped the cover. In shorter grass we saw a herd of sable antelope which also betrayed their presence by their horns. In a patch of bush where the grass was scant we saw several Kudu browsing on the tender tips of mimosa trees; the handsome bull, dark fawny-gray with narrow white stripes down his sides was nearest to us. His big keen ears detected us and he gave a deep gruff bark and bounded away; his long spiral horns were laid flat along his back to keep them from becoming entangled in low-lying branches and to break the jar of those he dived under. The does had joined him and the last glimpses that we had were the white undersides of their short bob-tails which were held erect.

Where the country was more open and the grass shorter we came across several herds of wildebeest, hartebeest, zebra and impala. Nearer the river waterbuck were plentiful; they are sturdy well proportioned antelopes with rather shaggy hair. In colour of the males are dark grey roan, the females are a grisly brown. The bulls have shapely forward bending horns much ringed with corrugations for over half their length; they are very handsome but the does looked shaggy and unkempt. Both sexes have a white rings round their buttocks (*Cobus elxpsiprimnus*).

We saw scores of warthogs too in families of fours and fives and many fresh tracks of elephant and buffalo.

In the evening a herd of over twenty elephant passed within a half-mile of our camp, they were on their way to drink and bathe and soon we heard loud shrill trumpeting of delight.

Leaving the Rufiji before dawn we made for the Ruaha, one its major tributaries, where we intended to camp out at Mkamba's village. Old Jumbé Swera led the way again. An hour or so later we entered a big patch of long grass where the narrow path twisted in and out. Swera was continually stopping to peer round the next corner but said nothing so I tapped him on the shoulder to question him regarding his peculiar behaviour. He said that he thought there was an animal walking along the hard path in front of us and as I did not want to be delayed I told him to get a move on. The words were scarcely out of my mouth when there was a loud snort and the animal, which turned out to be a rhinoceros, came charging towards us – there was no need to tell the old bushman what do. Shouting "faru" (rhinoceros) to warn the porters who were close at hand, I wasted no time in getting to the nearest sizable tree and climbed it with surprising ease. The path was deserted as if by magic and all loads, irrespective of their contents, had been dropped with a bang. The rhinoceros cow had a small calf behind her and she passed along snorting loudly. She was all out to make a demonstration to protect her offspring and she set to work on my rolled up tent which she tossed away with a savage sweep of her long front horn. I had visions of shattered chop-boxes and no food so shouted at the top of my voice – this caused her to turn around sharply. Being somewhat mystified she advanced towards my tree tossing her ugly head

to right and left to show what she would like to do. Then shepherding her young along the path in front of her she retired snorting defiance and out of breath with rage. Old Swera, perched on a higher tree than mine, broke off a dry branch and flung it at the unwanted guest – this all but started a renewed attack. Looking round about me I saw the porters roosting in several different trees – they are expert at making themselves scarce when danger threatens and instinct invariably puts them in the right direction; they do not have to think first as we do. When the old cow was well out of sight and hearing we resumed our journey and roars of laughter sped us on our way.

At about ten o'clock we stopped beside a small clear spring of water at the foot of a rocky kopje where we had breakfast and several hours rest – we had been going for five hours with two short halts. The morning was cool and there was still a tang in the air.

After a short rest Rashidi and I left the porters lolling about under trees while we strolled round the foot of the kopje to look at some drinking pools in a swampy stretch of ground and to see if the animals were drinking there regularly. We found everything as it should be – game had been watering here undisturbed and there were no signs of poaching. Poachers leave their

mark, footprints, camping sites, trails to water, fireplaces, "hides" on the ground or in a tree, lopped off branches, discarded horn and hide and such like tell tale evidence.

As it was round about midday in the coolest season of the year there were no thirsty animals about but there was a good chance of seeing a rhinoceros or buffalo wallowing in a warm mud bath. I did see a few warthog covered in mud and trotting away with their tufted tails at full cock.

Returning to camp I had a cup or two of tea and a short rest before resuming the journey. Two hours easy walking brought us to Mkamba's village on the Ruaha River. Here we were met by Sultan Mkamba, who neatly dressed in Kanza and turban, and the two local game scouts who showed us to our camping place where they had prepared things for our comfort – newly built rectangular huts with thatched roofs and bamboo walls, a kitchen, firewood and water in big earthenware jars; all under shady trees overlooking the river. After I bathed and had a drink the Sultan brought his wives and other women, carrying eggs and fowls and selected rice for myself; freshly ground maize-meal, pumpkins and a variety of vegetables for my native followers.

Jumbé Swera and his son had gone ahead of us on the last lap of our journey to warn Mkamba of our arrival and to pay their respects to their chief – they were accommodated in the village.

Meanwhile the porters had stacked my baggage on pole and bamboo racks and Ali had taken the kitchen loads. It was sunset when Mkamba and his retinue filed towards their homes and we settled down for the evening. Rashidi reported all correct before going off to have a yarn with Selemani and Halifa, the local scouts. Rashidi was one of Africa's most efficient sons, intelligent and conscientious; he was a good shot and could track with the best. He came with me on most of my Mahenge trips because of his unrivalled knowledge of the country and his ability to gather and sort out information. Above all he was a fearless hunter who always followed through to the end. Some years after I had left Mahenge he was killed by a elephant after he had shot several hundred.

It was still dark in the morning when Rashidi came to sit by the log fire while I had early tea. He told me that a pack of wild dogs had been ranging in some open short grass country, on the far side of the river, for some days. We went off to try our luck and to inspect some salt licks in that area. Two local guides came with us while Selemani and Halifa went off down the river to see if they could locate a big bull elephant I wished to see.

Leaving the Game Reserve, we crossed the river in two small canoes and followed a narrow path northwards through tall wet grass. It was a cold misty

morning and in a short time we were wet through. After we had passed a boundary beacon denoting the line of the reserve we came to higher undulating country where the grass was short and the ground stony. There was no game about and it was evident that wild dogs had frightened the animals away. A little later we left the path and branched off eastwards towards the Majiaweta hills. By a stroke of luck we spotted a pack of seven dogs resting in an open glade where they had made a kill (brought to earth). Taking cover and creeping forward with my small .256 rifle I stalked to within about sixty yards and sat down behind a small bush. Soon the leader of the pack, an old bitch, got up to walk slowly across my front, the others began to follow. A shot dropped the leader and the rest, bewildered, ran round in circles jumping into the air from time to time to get a better view – they did not attempt to get away and this enabled me to kill them all. My actions may seem cruel and wanton, but as often happens in nature when man intervenes, certain species of the fauna – especially the carnivores – are liable to multiply too rapidly. *Lycaon pictus* (the African hunting dog) had become a pest in this area. Recently I had seen a pack of over thirty of these blood thirsty dogs. They are strong dogs, about the size of a long legged fox hound. In general appearance they are spotted irregularly with black, yellow, grey and white; there is little uniformity in the pattern of their colouring but all have blackish muzzles and the tips of their long bushy tails are white. Their heads are broad and short and flat, the ears are large and rounded. They differ from true dogs in that the small dewclaw on the front foot is missing. Their massive jaws are armed with powerful teeth. They have a good turn of speed and great staying power and hunt mostly by sight but use their noses too. When they have singled out their victim (which may be a small antelope or one of the bigger animals such as a sable antelope or kudu weighing several hundred pounds) the leader keeps on the trail, the others run on the flanks. They keep in touch with one another when necessary by means of a soft “cooing” noise which would be more easily mistaken for that of a bird than that of a wild savage dog. When the poor beast is tired and terror stricken they close in and take it in turns to bite lumps of flesh from its flank until it falls exhausted. Then the whole pack sets to ravenously – within an amazingly short time there is nothing left but a few bones. Soon after a pack of hunting dogs arrives in an area all game scatters far and wide and becomes very nervous. They seldom eat carrion of any kind but Rashidi Motomihako told me that he had once seen them feeding on the carcass of an elephant which had been shot.

I have shot dozens of these dogs and have had them running round me in circles, bewildered, but on no occasion have they made the slightest attempt to attack me – it would go hard with the hunter if they chose to do so.

Moving on we came to a thorny thicket an hour or so later. Rashidi spotted a buffalo and handed me the double barrel rifle – we were outside the reserve and wanted meat so I shot two of the herd for ourselves and for Mkamba's village. Rashidi remained to look after the meat in case a hungry lion or vultures should appear. One of the guides took a short cut back to camp to collect carriers and I continued my tour with the other guide who carried my heavy rifle. We found the salt licks we were looking for without any trouble; they had been frequented regularly by different kinds of game – elephants, rhinoceros, buffalo and eland amongst them. Below the first lick, in a swampy hollow, we saw two old buffalo bulls dozing in their warm muddy wallows. They were covered from head to tail in liquid yellowish clay. It was easy to approach within a few yards of these stupid fellows who were drunk with drowsiness in their warm muddy baths. At the next lick we found a young elephant bull busy with his tusks digging out lumps of mineralised clay which he ate with apparent satisfaction.

On the way back to Mkamba's village I was walking through some long grass along a game track leading down to a small stream in a narrow valley when I found myself looking down on an old buffalo bull who was dozing in his wallow less than three yards in front of me. He leaped to his feet with a harsh grunt and glared at me in anger. The wrinkled face, big ragged ears and glowering eyes backed by a four foot spread of massive horn were a most unpleasant sight at that close range. Instinctively I put a hand behind my back in the vain hope that my guide would push the rifle into the waiting hand. Otherwise I was frozen to the spot and we faced one another for a few long seconds until, with a loud snort, the old bull turned about to gallop up the opposing incline. I was more than pleased to see his tail. Looking back for the gun bearer I saw him still in the act of scrambling up a tree some fifteen yards away!

So back to camp after a long and interesting day – in the evening Rashidi and I had a long talk with the local scouts who told us all they knew about the game at large, where the wild dogs whelped in disused antbear holes and many other interesting details. The big bull elephant they had looked for had gone off towards the Rufiji river, the tracks were some days old. Throughout the night the porters filled themselves with meat, what they could not swallow they smoked and dried on wooden racks over red hot coals.

In the morning we began the return journey. Selemani and Halifa led us back by a different route to the Rufiji. It was a clear and sparkling day. We passed quite a lot of game on the way including an old rhinoceros bull and a herd of buffalo forty or fifty strong.

When we came to the river we heard elephant trumpeting a few hundred yards away. Selemani ran back to tell the porters to keep quiet as I wanted to watch them. When the loads caught up to us the elephant, an old bull, with tusks weighing about sixty pounds each, and two cows were in sight and coming towards us slowly. The porters unloaded quietly and moved away. When they were within thirty yards or so they stopped and played about, the bull was in an amorous mood. Gradually they drew nearer to our loads and I retired a little. One of the cows began to get suspicious, cocked her ears at right angles and raised her trunk to test the air. Then she wheeled round suddenly and made off followed by the other cow. This annoyed the bull who came forward with his huge ears outstretched and trunk extended forwards. He gave me a hard look, or so it seemed and began to pull my baggage about. I shouted at him but he advanced towards me quickly so I fired a charge of buckshot into the air to save my baggage from destruction. This was the only time that I found it necessary to fire a shot in the reserve – and was glad to see him turn round and shuffle away slowly. The shot disturbed a young bull feeding among some reeds on an island, he trumpeted shrilly and plunged into the river which was full and deep. I ran down to the bank, which was a few yards away, to watch him make the crossing – he was submerged completely with the exception of his trunk tip. On reaching land he made off onto the bust at top speed.

Later in the evening the scouts and I strolled upstream to where a small herd of elephant was feeding. We watched them for some time and then they went down to the river to drink and bathe. Two babies were in the party and the smaller one was reluctant to wet its feet so the mother pushed it in from behind and rolled it over on its side. It was well covered by water and she rubbed it all over roughly with her trunk.

Next day found us back near Jumbé Swera's village. We had no excitements on the way but saw several herds of waterbuck and hundreds of hippos in the river.

In the afternoon I crossed the river by canoe to get some meat for the old man as a parting gift. We had some trouble with an old hippo who followed us across the river, and took a menacing attitude on the return crossing, when we were so laden with the carcass of a waterbuck bull that there was little freeboard, the rogue chased us. We raced downstream for the landing

place. When we were getting into shallow water a few yards off the shore he surfaced close to our stern with gaping jaws (the water was muddy and he misjudged), this swamped our craft. Jumping out quickly into waist-deep water I put an end to his life. Afterwards old Swera told me that this particular hippo had broken up several canoes in his time, he was a bad tempered old bull.

It was still dark when we said goodbye to Jumbé Swera in the morning. I gave him an old jacket and the empty cartridge case of the bullet that killed the hippo, he would use the latter as a snuff box and when he pulled it out to take snuff it would remind him of our trip for many days to come. He presented me with a cockerel, some eggs and a gourd-full of honey.

While pushing our way through some long wet grass we got between a herd of hippo and the river. Fortunately they scented us before we got into their direct line of retreat because when disturbed on land they invariably make a bee-line for water. We heard them crashing towards us so doubled back a few yards to let them cross our path.

I sat down on the river bank waiting for Ali to prepare breakfast while the porters and their loads were being ferried across the Ulanga to Gombela's village. The sun was rising and the heavy mists had cleared but a filmy vapour rose from the water magnifying all objects; the hills opposite looked like mountains, men crossing the river appeared like giants and hippopotamuses loomed up like huge monsters of a bygone age: Sitting there lost in reverie in this strange land my mind became detached from the realities of life. The wild melancholy wail of a fish eagle coming from high above sounded like that of some fantastic harpy calling to her mate. Just then a hoarse squealing grunt brought me back to earth – a frightened hippo coming up to breathe had looked into Ali's kitchen fire.

When it was time to cross over we bid the scouts, farewell and gave them some strong fish hooks to be used for catching catfish in the rivers. They returned to their station by a longer route, to patrol their area.

In the afternoon Gombela took me through his mtama (millet) fields to show me where the baboons came down from the Mberera hills to steal the grain, we could hear the owners shouting to frighten them away. When we were near the far edge of the fields and hidden amongst the tall stalks of the corn I slipped away quietly with my rifle to a small hut on an anthill while Gombela went on a little to warn the people that I had come to do some shooting. Taking cover behind the hut I waited for the raiders to come within easy range and shot four of them, the rest scampered off to the hills squealing

and barking furiously. We hung the dead bodies on high tree stumps as scarecrows to warn their friends against raiding.

That evening I arranged for a runner to go ahead very early in the morning to warn the headman on the Luhombero river to prepare food for the porters. The runner started off at about 4 a.m.; we followed an hour or so later.

There was a wide deep crocodile-infested backwater a few miles out along our path and Headman Rupeia had been instructed to leave a canoe there for our crossing. The approach was muddy and the long overhanging grass heavy with dew. As we drew near we noticed the fresh spoor of a lion leading towards the river almost as fresh as the footprints of our runner. We could tell this because the latter had trodden on and partly covered some of the lion's spoor. When we came to the river the runner's track's had disappeared, those of the lion stopped short at the water's edge. There was no sign of the canoe and jestingly I remarked that the lion must have gone off with it. I was beginning to think that Rupeia had failed us when Rashidi shouted out to say that he had found the canoe amongst the reeds some twenty yards away downstream. He climbed into it and brought it to the landing stage. Surely enough the lion had used our dugout for the crossing! We found his muddy footprints along its bottom and on the opposite side of the creek where he had slipped and sprawled on landing after his jump from the prow. The canoe was a long one and almost spanned the river at this point; it was lightly tethered to a stake on either side. When the lion came along he saw an easy way of crossing. When he jumped out the canoe shot away under his feet and dislodged the light tethering poles.

Owing to the long grass we saw little game on our path but tracks were plentiful. It was well after midday when we reached the Luhombero. The headman was surprised to see us as the runner had not arrived to warn him. I was beginning to get anxious when he turned up an hour or so later and told us his story. He had seen the lion in the canoe and had made a long detour to get away from it and to cross the river higher up where it was shallow so this accounted for his delay.

There were no complaints of raiding here and so we made tracks for home in the morning.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FLOOD TIME IN THE ULANGA VALLEY

The mighty Ulanga River was in spate carrying away the flood-waters from the heavy rains which had fallen in the Southern Highlands. On the main road from Kilosa to Mahenge the river was 10 to 12 miles wide Ifakara was under water; higher up the river was almost double that width.

We had been hunting raiding hippo in the rice-fields at Kalimoto's village we moved on towards Mtembiras; roads and paths were overgrown, all the way we floundered through mud and swollen rivers and were wet through from early morning until the evenings when our day's work was over; but we were still called out at night to hunt raiding elephant, hippo and buffalo.

Now we were on our way to Kimuli~muli (the place of fireflies), to cross the swollen Ulanga River. Game scout Rashidi and I were walking ahead of the porters through tall grass which was heavy with dew and we were all wet through from head to foot The grass met above our heads And on the narrow footpath the visibility was only a few yards Suddenly and unexpectedly a shot rang out from a short distance to our left. Immediately there was a heavy thundering of hooves and the ground trembled from the pounding of a large herd of buffalo – they were on top of us before we could do anything, it was too late to fire into the air or to shout as this would have increased the pandemonium and, might have caused the panicking animals to rush round in circles on top of us. There were no trees and so Rashidi and I threw ourselves flat and waited for the animals to pass. Horns clashed and clanked and the grass swished as though a gale were blowing. The porters dropped their loads and fled in all directions. Buffalo crashed past on all sides and we remained prone for a few long seconds. In half a minute or less all was over and, the animals which had now got our scent lumbered heavily on their course. I shouted to the porters and Rashidi blew the whistle to call them together. We were more than pleased to find that no one had been injured badly but, several had bruised themselves in their wild rush for safety. Only one or two of the loads had been kicked over and, in a few minutes we were on our way again, the porters laughing and telling one another of their narrow escapes. We struggled through streams in spate and wide flooded mbugas (vleis) where muddy water was often waist deep, the bottom slippery and full of deep potholes caused by elephants' feet.

Smoke rising from the sandy ridge at Kimuli muli informed us that our Wandamba (Ndamba) boatmen were waiting to ferry us across the water (there were no people living there).

It was now 4pm and we had been on the move since 6.30am, wet through from the beginning to the end. Half a dozen men pitched camp while the remainder collected firewood. Long before sunset all of us were dry and warm, fires were blazing and the porters were very busy cutting up and roasting waterbuck which I had shot within a mile of camp.

That night was bright and starry and the porters, happy with their meat, talked and laughed loudly until nearly midnight: each one had a good yarn to tell, for

the benefit of the boatmen, about his encounter with the buffalo: I overheard many of their stories and can assure the reader that they were as good as the best of fishing yarns. The boatmen retaliated with tales of crocodile and hippo. Fireflies were in their glory and mosquitos in their millions.

Frogs croaked in chorus while the bull frogs guffawed like drunken men. So I sat up late in my deck chair under the ample mosquito net which hung from the verandah of my big tent, smoking my pipe, reading, writing my diary and listening to the stories. Occasionally hyaenas, attracted by the smell of meat, howled dismally in a deep throated grumbling "hooo" followed by a piercing shriek "wee eeh".

At about 4am a lion began to roar low deep roars of satisfaction and defiance, regular intervals between each roar to begin with, the intervals and roars gradually diminishing until they ended in a series of quickening grunts. This roaring continued until the dawn.

While having a snack and early morning tea the porters struck camp and moved the baggage to the river margin where the Wandamba boatmen packed it into the two beautiful dugouts carved from solid trunks of the hard mvule tree. My deck chair, fishing tackle and firearms were placed near the stern of the leading dugout. After tea I walked round for a while and saw a herd of over 60 puku grazing on short green grass growing in a depression near the margin of the river, almost surrounded by tall "swago" grass standing 12 – 15 feet high. Puku are sturdily built for antelope and belong to the waterbuck group: they are of a ruddy chestnut above and white below. Their warning call is a deepish whistle.

By 7am we were on our way, travelling through half submerged grass and a wild edible rice with very small grain. I cannot say whether the rice is indigenous, more than likely it has derived from cultivated rice and had gradually deteriorated: the natives sometimes use it for food in times of famine There were four paddlers standing up and using long broad bladed paddles: they were powerfully built above the waist, with exceptionally powerful shoulders and biceps. They sang boating songs as they paddled

diagonally against the current which grew stronger as we proceeded. I fished until the main stream where the current was very swift and rough and, using a 2 inch spoon with wire trace I caught 3 Tiger fish the largest weighing exactly 13 lbs.

Now the water became very rough and we had to avoid trees and logs of wood which were being carried away swiftly by the river. With scarcely a pause these expert boatmen paddled diagonally against the current until after 4pm. Occasionally they took it in turns to rest for a minute or two, their stamina was amazing. On the way we saw the bodies of 3 puku which had been drowned by the floods. Soon after 4pm we came to a small hillock standing a little above flood level and as we could not see the margin of the river we decided to spend the night there: there was only just space enough for our party but we considered ourselves extremely lucky to discover, by chance, a resting-place for the night. Not far from our refuge we saw seven marooned elephants feeding on a reed bed which grew as a submerged sandbank. The elephants themselves were more than half submerged in the water and I wondered how they managed to rest during their long sojourn in deep water. I can only conjecture that they rested their trunks on one another when they were tired. The river had been in flood for over two months and they were unable to gain terra firma until over a month later. Elephants are very strong swimmers but it seems that they were afraid of attempting a swim of several miles in strong currents when dry land was out of our sight, and their own sight is limited to a hundred yards or so. About six weeks later I saw them again on dry land, their skins and feet were in a very bad condition.

The water did not rise during the night and so we were reasonably comfortable but very cold. We did not have room to lie down or sleep. At dawn we continued our journey and at about 8.30am we sighted the roof of some native huts. Half an hour later we arrived at the village – the huts were built on stilts but the natives were living in temporary bandas a few hundred yards away on dry land. On the roofs we saw their fowls and goats, and ducks swimming round. The goats were feeding on the thatch. We were glad to put our feet on dry land once more – one gets cramped in a dugout.

The natives had some of their fields above water level and as they complained about hippos we camped out near them that night. Rashidi and I shot two hippos after dark using torches and scared the rest by firing several Verey lights.

In the morning we moved on towards Utengule and after some two hours we came to a flooded river and backwater which extended for several miles in

width. Once more we entered the flood, this time on our feet. Gradually the water increased in depth from ankle to knee to waist and finally to our armpits. The bottom was muddy and very slippery and the going very tedious – several of the porters slipped and fell with their loads. After three hours of wading we came to land again where we had a well-earned rest and then continued on to Utengule, often in mud. By 4 pm we were ready to camp, the porters had had a gruelling day and some of them were only just able to keep their chins above water. Mosquitoes were particularly troublesome here and so I dosed everyone with 10 grains of quinine and gave them all a drink of strong coffee with plenty of sugar. They had meat and a good feed of rice. I gave the porters a days rest here while Rashidi and I went out and shot several hippo raiders in the backwaters near the rice fields some miles away. Continuing our journey we entered the beautiful Masagati forest country where we spent some two weeks hunting raiding elephant. We had no very exciting experiences but together with the two local game scouts we shot over 20 raiding elephant, all in daylight. Every day we returned to camp wet through from rain or dew, which was very heavy at that time of year. During those two weeks we took quinine every evening and the natives brought us fresh bamboo wine regularly – a very pleasant drink when tapped from a cut off bamboo shoot but intoxicating if kept for a day or two afterwards it becomes a kind of vinegar. When we reached the banks of the Refuji, fast flowing and discoloured by mud, we moved down to Mkasu where we spent a few days. I stayed with the A.D.O. there and was glad to have a comfortable bed. This station was most depressing, in a tongue of land almost surrounded by water. Mosquitoes were more numerous than I have ever seen them anywhere in Africa, there were spirillum ticks in the village and many of the natives suffered from filariasis and yaws. The climate is hot, steamy and depressing. I was glad to see the last of the place but felt sorry for the A.D.O. whom had to spend six months marooned in this miserable swamp.

We crossed the main river below the junction of the Ruhuje and the Pitu and for over fifteen miles we walked through mud and water most of the way, until we reached the next village which was surrounded by swampy ground but was built on sandy soil.

That night Rashidi and the local scout Ibrahim were called out to shoot a hippo on the edge of the rice fields. On arrival at the far edge of the cultivated area they heard a rustling in the grass. Ibrahim knelt down to see if he could spot the animal against the sky line; as he did so he received a

tremendous blow on the knee from a crocodile which then attacked him. With great presence of mind he realised what it was and fired at it. The crocodile was wounded and tried to get away but Ibrahim followed and killed it. The crocodile, a female, was over 14 feet long. Ibrahims' leg and knee were stiff and swollen for several days. Owing to the floods crocodiles had been forced to leave their natural haunts and to live to a great extent on land animals instead of their usual fish diet.

During the night three bull elephant entered the fields and were driven away by the firing of Verey pistols. In the morning we followed them because they were inveterate raiders. Rashidi and I. followed them for 3 hours through very tall "swago" grass and much flooded country – we were able to keep on their trail through swamps by watching the way the grass and creepers lay. Finally we came to a deep backwater which we had to swim. Rifle and ammunition got wet and we had to clean and dry them on the farther bank. In the long matted grass we could see only a few yards ahead and so we stopped and listened when we were approaching them. Fortunately they had come to rest amongst some big sausage trees (kigela) and so we made a detour, as soon as we heard them, to make certain that the wind was in our favour. In order to find out their exact position we climbed one of these trees and saw the bulls at rest some thirty yards away, under another tree, they had trampled the grass flat all round and we had a clear view. They were getting fidgety, we both fired and two fell dead, and the third came at top speed towards our tree and looked up at us with trunk extended upwards; both of us fired simultaneously and the bull dropped instantly.

In the morning we began the return journey to Mahenge, some 80 miles along the overgrown motor road. We hunted and shot several raiding elephant at the various villages en route. Ten days later we were back at Mahenge. We had been away just over one month and were more than pleased to get away from mud and flood and the interminable long wet grass of the Kilombero valley.

THE ELEPHANT COW WITH A BROKEN LEG – MATUMBI HILLS.

In the Matumbi hills of Mahenge district I was following a herd of raiding elephant through heavy growth when I heard a bamboo snap a short distance ahead. Moving up quickly to investigate I saw the rough outline of a cow about ten yards away. She was behind a thick clump of bamboos and began to show signs of suspicion. There was no time to waste if I wished to save myself from a long and tiresome hunt; I could not see a clear passage for a

brain-shot so took a quick snapshot through the closely growing poles, aiming for the heart. She trumpeted and turned round to face me but the growth was too dense for a frontal shot so I slipped round behind some small bushes to my left, approaching to within a few yards of her off side. She must have caught sight of me out of the corner of her eye because she threw herself suddenly on her right side in what appeared to be a deliberate attempt to squash me. I leaped backwards to get out of the way but was very nearly struck down by the bamboos which she knocked over in her fall. There seemed to be little doubt that the fall was purposeful because she lashed out backwards at me with her trunk. I shot her through the back of the head before she could attempt to rise to her feet again.

Going round to the opposite side I found that my first shot had gone too far forward, breaking her near foreleg. I imagine that, being unable to get away and barely able to hobble, she took to the only means of self-defence available to her.

THE LUHOMBERO ROGUE

One day Kazimoto and his small son were returning from a fishing expedition to the Luhombero River where they had made a good catch. Both were carrying long baskets of smoked fish balanced on their heads. The father's load, being long and heavy, sagged from the middle, somewhat obstructing his view. He was leading the way along a narrow path which wound its way through scrubby bush when he walked into an elephant. Without warning the elephant turned on him and drove one of its tusks through his body, killing him instantly. The son, a small boy of ten or eleven, threw his load to ground and ran for his life. When he got back to the village, about eight miles distant, and told his experience, the natives went out to bring the corpse back for burial. A day or two later the jumbé sent a message to me at Mahenge. Rashidi and I went down at once but, as the incident had happened two days previously, we found it impossible to follow the tracks amongst many others on the hard ground. But, the child had noticed that the tusks of the elephant were long and thin; we took note of this and measurements of the footprints for future reference.

It was towards the end of the dry season and water was to be found only in a few of the bigger rivers and at odd water-holes so we patrolled both banks of the Luhombero for two days, looking at likely tracks leading to and from the water and making a thorough search through all shady places frequented by elephant. Although we saw scores of elephant we found none that caused suspicion. Once Rashidi, whilst engaged inspecting the animals of a biggish

herd at close range, annoyed an old cow who made a short bluff charge at him but she pulled up after a few paces and went back to her calf. On another occasion I very nearly walked on top of another cow who was lying fast asleep against the side of a termite's hill; I heard her snoring and backed away before arousing her suspicions.

On the third afternoon we came across spoor which looked uncommonly like that of the rogue but had to give up the hopeless job of tracking on hard stony ground where many others had trodden. That evening we decided to camp out in the vicinity in the cool sandy bed of a small tributary of the Luhombero, a few hundred yards distant from its junction with that river. Towards sundown I went down to bathe in the river while Rashidi walked up the stream-bed to look at some elephant which he heard feeding.

I was just about to dive into a clear pool when I heard a considerable amount of splashing round a sharp bend in the river some thirty yards away. Thinking it might be a hippopotamus I dressed again and went off to make certain. After climbing a steep bank on the farther side, I crept quietly through a small patch of bush and was surprised to find myself looking down on an elephant with long thin tusks. He was enjoying his bathe thoroughly when he got my wind and, thinking, that he was trapped in an awkward position between two high steep banks, he worked himself into a violent temper. Raising his tail with a curious twist that spelled rage, he trumpeted loudly and shrilly and then rushed at the steep bank, which looked an impossible obstacle for an elephant to climb, and scrambled up like an energetic pig. Being unarmed I made myself scarce by jumping down the bank, hanging on to roots to save a heavy fall. By now the elephant was in a real rage, he had got my fresh scent in the copse I had vacated and began tearing down the bushes. Running up the river bed for fifty yards or I made for camp at top speed to get my rifle. I had scarcely covered half the distance to camp when Rashidi and my gun bearer met me – they had heard the shrill trumpeting and suspected trouble.

We found the elephant still tearing down the bush but we could not see him clearly enough to take a shot. Shortly afterwards he came out to look across the river and raised his trunk high to sniff the air. As he did so Rashidi and I put two bullets into his chest. This staggered him and as he recovered and turned to get away we gave him a broadside to make certain. He ran about thirty yards before crashing to the ground, stone dead.

The sun was setting but we had time to go over to check up on our beast and found that his feet fitted the boots we had measured.

THE SEMKA ROGUE – ULANGA VALLEY

I had been touring the western corner of Selous Reserve I was returning to Mahenge by car along the main road from Kilosa. We had made a very early start that morning owing to the terrific heat in the Ulanga Valley at that time of the year. While we waiting at the ferry for a punt to take us across the river a canoe came gliding round a big bend in the main stream. Rashidi, always quick off the mark, ran up to the landing stage to question the paddlers regarding affairs upstream. He called me to look into some urgent matter and, on arrival, I found the crew removing a body which was laid out on a rough stretcher. They took off an old blanket to expose a dead man and told me how he had met his end.

Every year the natives of Semka village camped for some months on the banks of the Luhombero River where they made a living by catching fish in nets and traps. It had been their custom always to plant a field of sweet potatoes near their fishing grounds to eke out their rations – these crops were planted some time before they settled down to their job, and now they were ripening.

In all there were about a dozen families, totalling some forty individuals, now living in small flimsy reed and grass shelters on the river bank.

For several nights a solitary bull elephant had been raiding the shamba and they had frightened him away by shouting and beating of drums. At about 10 pm the previous night the raider had been more obstinate and refused to be scared away. One or two of the braver men ran out into the field, waving burning torches and shouting to frighten him away. This annoyed the elephant who came charging after them. They turned and fled towards their rickety homes but one man tripped in the matuta and fell flat on his face.

Before he could regain his feet the elephant was on top of him and jabbed one of his tusks through the poor fellow's body before clearing off into the impenetrable swago grass which grew all round. The elephant trumpeted shrilly and rushed about for some time. Hearing their companion's cries several men went out to bring him in. Long before dawn they were on their way to Ifakara hospital with the wounded man who died on the journey.

Leaving the stretcher bearers to take the body to the hospital where the cause of death would be registered, we hastened to the scene of the tragedy. First we crossed the river and went on to Kalimoto's village by car. There we collected a few porters and went on foot. About five hours later we were on the spot. It was well after midday and the heat on the river flats was almost

unbearable but, as we wanted to come up with the rogue, we lost no time in getting on his trail.

For two and a half hot and stifling days we followed the rogue through dense, tough swago grass which grew to twelve or fifteen feet in height and was so unyielding that we were forced to cut our way with long sharp pangas (slashing knives). Fine hairs and dust showered down on us, causing irritating rashes all over our bodies and, at times, almost choking us. Although it was impossible to follow the elephant's footprints on the sun baked ground we were able to keep on his track by watching the grass which was slightly bent over all along his trail. Most of the ground was hard and dry but there were many muddy depressions. Food was scarce for elephants at that time of the year and we found that our quarry was feeding on green runner grass which grew in patches at intervals in big open spaces in the sea of swago and, on reeds which grew at the margins of these swampy areas. In these open grassy fields we often found big herds of puku antelope (cobus vadoni – a small red species of the waterbuck family). At night we camped out at the edges of these green glades after making a clearing in the long grass, for comfort and to avoid being trapped in fires. We obtained water from small pools in the swamps.

On the third day we came up with the elephant unexpectedly, near the margin of a glade where he was sheltering from the sun, under the tall grasses which formed a canopy over him. He had his back towards us and was completely hidden from our view. I had no idea that he was so close and began to cut my way in on his tracks when I heard a crackling and swishing a few yards ahead. It was impossible to tell which way he was moving so we ran back a few paces into the open. He had decided to bolt, probably because he did not like the strange smell of a European. We followed quickly but in the end he crossed the river and got himself mixed up with a herd of elephants where we found it hopeless to distinguish his tracks. Reluctantly we gave up the chase. It was the most unpleasant elephant hunt that I have ever undertaken.

After instructing the natives to telephone from Ifakara if the rogue put in another appearance, we returned to Mahenge.

About a fortnight later he came again to dig for potatoes with his feet and we returned to hunt him. I had learned my lesson and knew that it would be a waste of time hunting him in that impenetrable grass, so I took a strong electric torch and waited for him to come to feed.

Soon after eight o'clock at night we heard him pushing his way through the grass. He was quite sure of himself and walked to within about twenty yards

of the hut in which we were hiding. Rashidi switched on the light and picked him out at once, I fired two shots into the region of his heart; He grunted, staggered and screamed, making off for cover at top speed but dropped before he reached the edge of the clearing. He roared loudly two or three times before he died. His feet fitted the original tracks perfectly and so we knew that he was the killer.

MPEPO

Once when camped on the Pitu River, a tributary of the Ulanga, I received an urgent call for help from Mpepo village. We proceeded there immediately and pitched camp late in the evening under some big mango trees. Three bull elephants had been raiding the mtama fields for several nights and had become so greedy that the natives had found it impossible to drive them away. The ripening mtama was well over ten feet high and planted so close that night shooting was out of the question. We spent a comfortable night in camp and in the morning long before daybreak Rashidi and I started out for the hunt. After about an hour's fast walking, we arrived on the scene just before sunrise. One of the shamba owners met us on the outskirts of his field and led us to his "Ulingo" (platform built high up on poles), from the top of which we saw the trunks of three elephants snapping off the heavy bunches of grain which grow on the stalk tops. They were about two hundred yards and feeding near a bigish anthill so we climbed down and made for that as quickly as possible. The wind was favourable and we had no trouble in getting into position on top of the mound some twelve feet above the level of the surrounding terrain.

The nearest elephant was scarcely fifteen yards away and I was just on the point of taking the ear shot for his brain when our guide coughed loudly. The bull swung round to face us and I took the frontal shot quickly before he could make any further movement. He dropped where he stood and I reloaded in time to take snap shots at each of his companions as they made off towards the Pori (veld). Both shots were a little high owing to the difficulty of aiming through the mtama stalks and leaves, but although they missed the heart the bullets penetrated their lungs. We raced after them through the fields where they left a clear trail of trampled stalks. When we came to the edge of the field we found that they had entered the long grass and scrub in single file and we followed more cautiously.

After a few hundred yards one elephant turned of the course and we noticed by the blood trail that he had been harder hit so we followed to put an end to

his misery. When within about twenty yards of the wounded animal he must have "winded" us, we heard a rending of creepers in the bush, and the swishing of the tall grass in front of us gave warning of an attack. We could not see through the grass and other dense foliage but by a stroke of luck we were standing under a "sausage" tree (*Kigelia* sp.) at the time. The elephant had often rested here and the undergrowth had been trampled flat all round – this gave us a clear field of vision for a few yards ahead. Rashidi and I took up positions on either side of the tree trunk in time to see the charging elephant break through the curtain within five yards of us. His trunk was held low between his forelegs and his ears were laid flat against the sides of his head. Both of us fired simultaneously and each was unaware that the other had fired a shot. The elephant collapsed and rolled over on his side. Rashidi ran around and gave him a final shot in the spine to make certain. Then I remembered that, in our hurry, we had forgotten to examine our first victim so Rashidi ran back to make sure that he was dead while I followed number three. The tracking was easy owing to the copious blood spoor but a thicket of acacia thorn trees hindered my progress. I had to stop frequently to cut away overhanging branches, which were covered with strongly hooked thorns.

Before long Rashidi caught up and I was much annoyed to hear a hum of voices coming from a score or so of native followers. Telling them to keep at a distance we continued to cut our way through the thorns. The trees and bushes and even the grass were covered with "upupu" vines on which huge bunches of hairy beans grow at intervals. Very soon we were smothered in the fine golden hairs of the upupu, or buffalo beans (*Lucuna* sp.). Not only do these penetrate the bare skin but work their way through one's clothing to cause a violent and almost unbearable irritation that tortures for hours. Scratching only tends to increase the agony but it is impossible to refrain from doing so.

About an hour later while in a patch of particularly long dense grass we found our track branching in three different directions and all were freshly made by our quarry. It was evident that he was going to make a stand and we guessed that he would be waiting for us along one of the tracks and at short range. We had decided to take the middle course when I heard the native followers talking close behind. The last thing we wanted to do was to give the elephant warning of our approach. More over a charging elephant might easily kill several of them so I sent Rashidi back to disperse them while I made for a tall slender tree a few yards ahead in case we should be taken suddenly by surprise. With the aid of rubber shoes I scrambled up the trunk

with difficulty, carrying my rifle with me. It was one of the luckiest decisions I have ever made because I had just got into position where I could see over the grass tops when the wounded beast came charging down the track on my left looking as though he meant business. Gripping the tree trunk with feet and legs I was able to take a snap shot at his brain and bowled him over. Sliding down quickly I put a final shot through the back of his head. So ended what might have been a catastrophe. My arms and legs were skinned and bruised and the irritation of the buffalo beans was almost beyond endurance. What I said to those hangers on cannot be repeated. I leave it to the imagination.

The tip of the elephant's tail and trunk were cut off according to native custom and, after inspecting the ivory we returned to the shamba by a different rout to escape those infernal buffalo beans. The bulls were all full sized animals and their tusks between eighty and a hundred pounds a pair. It may seem unnecessarily cruel to have shot all three but, from experience, I knew that once elephants have developed an insatiable appetite for mtama grain they are beyond redemption.

When we passed the dead elephant in the shamba we found a gathering of native women and children. The former greeted us with shrill *vigelégéle* cries, long-sustained by a rapid beating of the hand on the lips. We made for camp at a brisk pace but the women were not to be outdone. They bounded along beside us on the narrow path to keep up their shrill *vigelégéle* all the way back to camp where we were met by a much bigger crowd who joined the chorus and nearly drove me mad with their piercing vibrant cries.

Finally the "nduna" (chief), dispersed mob and I lost no time in getting out of my hairy clothing and into a hot bath. After a savage rubdown the irritation started up again but hearty breakfast and a couple of pipes of Boer tobacco helped to allay the irritation and sooth my frayed nerves enough to enable me to spend the rest of the afternoon reading short stories from an omnibus book.

In the evening, while drinking a long sundowner, Rashidi came with the nduna to ask permission for the villagers to have a "ngoma" (dance) to celebrate the occasion. I guessed what I was in for but it was impossible to refuse their request.

It was a cold evening so I sat near a log fire dressed in long trousers and an old tweed jacket.

The drums began to beat soon after sunset, spasmodically at first, and the crowd gathered under the trees about my tent. There were half a dozen drummers whose instruments were made of hollowed out tree trunks and

covered with skins of antelope. The tuned up slowly; drying out the raw hides at the fireside from time to time, until they were in tune. Suddenly, as if touched off by a button, the mob went mad. The drummers beat a rapid tattoo while the women danced round in a wide circle singing with high pitched voices. Afterwards the men chimed in with deep bass notes and heavy stamping of feet. The rhythm of the drums and dancers was in perfect unison and the first hour or two passed pleasantly enough; it was interesting to watch the different movements of the various tribal dances. Most of the women danced with babies on their backs and some of the latter must have been two years old at least. Every now and then they left the ranks in ones and twos to give the little ones a drink.

After dinner the monotony of the songs and dances began to pall and the incessant throbbing of the drums fell like mallets on my head. I tried to read, to sleep, to walk about and talk to Rashidi and Ali my cook; I drank several cups of coffee before midnight and by then the ngoma was nothing but an infernal din for me. But the participants were just beginning to warm up.

In the early hours of the morning I took to the bottle and swallowed more than half a quart, which made me somewhat oblivious of my surroundings.

The sun rose from behind Mahenge mountains and the two chief drummers crawled towards em on their bellies, dragging their long drums with them and beating furiously. Rashidi saluted me saying the nduna asked if I would allow the dance to end!

Was I mad! I gave orders to break camp while I breakfasted and then beat it for the solitude of Matumbi Hills.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IN THE RUVUMA VALLEY

The Ruvuma River, which marks the boundary between the territories of Tanganyika—and Portuguese East Africa, is five or six hundred miles long and in many places throughout the greater part of its length, it is several hundred yards wide. In the wet season it fills to brimming and often overflows its banks to flood large tracts of lower-lying land. In the dry season the whole country becomes scorched and arid the river parched and parcelled. The headwaters from which it derives its name rise in the highlands of Songea on the eastern slopes of the Livingstone Mountains which enclose the great Nyasa rift on the farther side. Its largest tributaries Lujenda, Luchulingo and Msinje enter from the south, the former rising in Lake Amaramba on the borders of British Nyasaland.

Later, in referring to the valley, I will include, in general, the whole of its northern drainage system.

With the exception of a goodly portion of the Songea highlands the valley is infested by Tsetse fly, carriers of sleeping sickness and nagana. These flies suck the blood of reptile, bird and beast and, in doing so, those that are infested with parasites inject these into the blood of their victims. As far as is known their bites are innocuous to the indigenous fauna, certain of which, however act as carriers of the disease which causes sleeping sickness in man and nagana in domesticated animals such as cattle, goats, horses, donkeys and dogs.

The valley, owing to the presence of "fly" and its inaccessibility – its waters are navigable only for canoes and small boats – still maintains much of its pristine wildness. Great herds of elephants and buffalo roam their old and favourite haunts little molested by man as yet. But even here the march of civilization is encroaching on their domain. Considerable numbers of elephant have been destroyed under the Control Scheme; ivory hunters and "butchers" have also taken their toll.

The wild life of its bush-clad hills and valleys is rich and varied; its waters teem with hippopotamuses, crocodiles and fish.

Camping almost anywhere along the banks of the Ruvuma one is bound to see or hear the hippo, there are many thousands of them in the river and its

marginal lakes. As they are by far the most conspicuous of all the riverine fauna I will describe them first.

They belong to the common species, *Hippopotamus amphibius*. Although they stand some inches short of four feet at the shoulders they are very bulky, big bulls weighing about four tons. Their huge barrel-like bodies are supported on short thick legs. One old male I shot measured nearly thirteen feet from the end of his muzzle to the tip of his tail, the latter appendage being less than two feet long.

Their big ugly heads are provided with enormous jaws and powerful tusks, small "pop" eyes and tiny ears. There are a few bristly hairs on their heads and necks and their thick lips are covered with coarse bristles, otherwise their bodies and limbs are naked. The very thick skin is much creased and scarred, with great folds on the heavy neck. The muzzle is much expanded at the extremity and the slit-like nostrils are placed fairly close together. On each foot there are four strong toes with black nails and webbed slightly at the base. All four toes touch the ground on the same level.

The bulls are bigger than the cows and have broader heads. They vary a lot in colour from blackish brown to light brown or coppery yellow on the upper parts, the belly is dusky flesh. Albinos are not uncommon and many have white patches on their bodies and feet.

Full grown males consort with the cows and calves and fight frequently both on land and in the water. Invariably they are covered with the scars of battle. The younger bulls are often chased away from the herd by their seniors, receiving very rough treatment – sometimes they die from their wounds. Very old bulls are treated similarly, and this is one of the causes contributing to their roguishness.

Cows take great care of their young, carrying the babies astride their necks when in the water. When the mother submerges (for a shorter period than usual) the little one goes under too.

In their habits hippos are more aquatic than terrestrial, before daylight in the morning they enter the water and do not leave their natural element until after dark. As will be seen later, there are exceptions to this rule. During the day they lie about in slack water, idling away their time sleeping, dozing and yawning; choosing the most suitable locality within easy reach of their feeding grounds. To save themselves any exertion entailed in floating or keeping abreast the river current they select shallows for their rest where they dig themselves into soft sand or mud. As the sun rises and the day warms up they gradually dig deeper until the whole body is submersed under water. In the bigger rivers, sandbanks in slack water are preferred but, they

also make use of shady backwaters, creeks and inland pools and lakes. In the cool hours of morning and evening they expose the greater part of their bodies to bask in the sun but later when the sun becomes too warm for their liking they either dig in or move off to deeper water where they lie in close formation resting their cumbersome heads on the bodies of their companions.

Herds of twenty to fifty or more are common and in the distance they look like boulders in the river. Unless they have been persecuted by man they allow one to approach within a hundred yards or less without showing any signs of fear.

During the wettest months of the year, from February to the end of May they move to the margins of the river where they escape strong currents and conceal themselves in dense foliage. At this season, too, many of them go inland to occupy pools and lakes in the flooded areas and along the numerous tributaries. Sometimes they travel long distances across country to find new homes in other waters – I have often followed their tracks on land for ten miles or more at a stretch – once, when on safari from the Mbarangandu to the Mavuje river, a distance of some twenty five miles, we noticed the fresh tracks of two hippo all the way along our path. In my experience I have not come across a single instance of mass migration.

It is in the rainy season, when crops of rice, maize and millet are young and tender, that hippo do inestimable damage in the fields – their capacious stomachs can hold three or four hundredweight of food and, apart from what they eat, much is destroyed by trampling.

Towards evening, after a long days rest, they become restive, yawning continually, grunting and gambolling. They do not approach their feeding grounds until dusk. On reaching the bank they make sure that all is well before leaving the water, often at the run. All night long they keep up an incessant grunting and squealing. They are voracious feeders and live entirely on vegetable matter – young reeds, grass and water-weeds, also cultivated crops when they are available. Any shamba within a few miles of hippo haunts is liable to destruction and the owners are hard put to it to protect their food supply. On dark nights, especially, the raiders are difficult to dislodge, occasionally odd animals become bad-tempered and turn on their pursuers with fatal results. They detest firebrands in particular and these often cause them to charge in annoyance. A rifle shot sends them careering back to the safety of water where they can be heard plunging in and, later, hooting their annoyance.

Unless disturbed, they feed all night until dawn approaches, when they return to water. By then their huge bellies are filled to repletion and if killed early in the morning they sink to the bottom immediately, but, within a quarter of an hour or so the body floats to the surface owing to the rapid decomposition of vegetable matter inside them. If shot in the afternoon it often takes an hour or more for the body to float.

In the dry season, when green food is scarce, they pull up water-weeds, bringing them to the surface to be chewed. On Lake Tshidya, fifteen miles from the mouth of the Ruvuma, I watched them often through field-glasses. In the mornings and evenings I saw them rising with great bunches of fodder in their mouths, sometimes they fed on vegetable matter growing under water near the margins of the lake, there it was interesting to watch their great jaws champing below the surface and forcing out big splashes of water. Still more interesting were the birds that had gathered round them for a feast, quite unafraid. Frail lily-trotters and tiny black crakes darted about them, from leaf to leaf, up scurrying insects and dislodged larvae. Egrets perched on their backs while small oxpeckers climbed about their bodies removing ticks for eating and, at the same time, taking advantage of the opportunity to draw blood from the wounds.

At all times of the year quite a number of hippos spend the day in dark shady tunnels which they bore into tall dense grass and scrub in the vicinity of water. Crusty old bachelors and cows with young calves and the most likely to take to this practice but, occasionally, owing to excessive drought when there is not sufficient water and the heat intense, whole herds are forced to seek shelter on dry land. Badly wounded animals with deep gashes and scars also take to land sooner or later; this, I believe, in order to escape being tormented by hungry fish and other blood-sucking aquatic parasites.

One season when I was in the Mahenge district there was a prolonged drought in the watersheds of the Rufiji River and all its tributaries, water ran very low and the whole country was scorched and dry. Thousands of hippos were unable to find enough water to cover themselves; the normally abundant vegetation had wilted and there was little shade for these poor beasts. Their bodies were blistered by the scorching sun and many died as a result.

On land they are clumsy with a most ungainly gait. In walking they leave two parallel lines of tracks separated by a narrow ridge. They are naturally timid when out of their element and, at the least sign of danger make a bee-line for the nearest water where they feel safer and are very much at home. They can float or sink at will at any desired level and are able to maintain the

required depth whether idling, walking along the river bottom or swimming under water. In deep pools I have often watched them floating at ease for hours on end, sometimes with only their heads exposed, at others showing a broad expanse of back. Being powerful swimmers they can get along easily either on the surface or below, at seven or eight miles an hour, possibly more. Often when I have shot them in the head and they have become unbalanced, turning upside down. I have seen their strong machine-like swimming strokes – even if they have been only stunned they seldom recover their balance but, if they do, they generally present an easy target for the final shot.

Ordinarily they submerge by sinking the hind-quarters first the head sliding in backwards. Before going under, the lips of their nostrils are closed as also are the valves in their ears. But an animal in sportive or ferocious frame of mind will heave its huge body high out of the water to plunge in head first with a splash, in deep or shallow water.

When a resting herd is disturbed in shallows they make for deeper water at the run, with much splashing. If frightened on land they do not hesitate to plunge headlong into deep water, disappearing for sometime before coming up to look for the intruder.

When surfacing, unless they wish to conceal themselves, they do so with a loud snort, blowing two columns of water high into the air by expulsion from their nostrils, and invariably they twitch their ears rapidly to remove the water.

In spite of their solemn appearance they gambol a great deal in the water in the early mornings and evenings, sometimes throwing the forepart of their bodies high in the air and shaking their great unwieldy heads from side to side, a most amusing and ridiculous sight.

They are very noisy animals and their harsh grunts and squeals can be heard for a mile or two during the cooler hours but, they are quiet during the middle of the day. If much hunted and trying to escape danger they rise very quietly and slowly under overhanging foliage or water-weeds, barely exposing their nostrils and breathing inaudibly. When passing by or under a canoe their movements can generally be observed by watching carefully for air-bubbles rising to the surface. When swimming near the surface a ripple gives them away.

Males are very quarrelsome and fight a great deal both on land and in the water. When on land at night they make the most blood-curdling bellows, grunts and squeals imaginable. In shallow water they rear up on their hind legs and bite viciously, making deep gashes in each others tough hides,

often causing the blood to flow copiously. Sometimes their jaws become interlocked and a desperate tug-of-war begins; finally the vanquished squeals and grunts and throws himself over sideways making off as fast as he can go for deep water, with the conqueror in pursuit. It is not uncommon for them to die from their wounds.

Near the confluence of the Mbangalla and Ruvuma rivers two old bulls fought a savage duel for two days – the fight was not continuous but they kept at it on and off. Finally they became exhausted and both died as the result.

When approached stealthily by canoe and taken by surprise at close range all the animals in a herd raise their heads and shoulders well out of the water waggle and cock their ears and grunt. One or two of the leaders give demonstrations of their strength heaving themselves about and exhibiting their cavernous mouths – all bluff, for soon they make their way to the deepest part of the river. Some of them keep on popping up to keep a weather eye on the canoe. If they have not been shot at previously, all will come to the surface to look around. If there happens to be a rogue amongst them he may appear very suddenly and without warning, within a few yards of the canoe. Occasionally a bad-tempered rogue is liable to rise under the boat and capsize it, or perhaps he may seize the gunwale to tear part of it away or pull it right over.

In places where hippo have not been persecuted it is most unlikely that the canoe will be attacked, even if it passes right over the submerged animals but it is always advisable to be careful when passing by a herd in narrow waters. As I have said before, they are timid as a rule but one should be careful not to annoy such big and powerful animals.

Generally speaking there is no sport whatsoever in shooting hippo from a river bank or heavy launch, the smallest bullets from almost any cordite-loaded rifle will kill them easily, there is no thrill or danger attached to this kind of killing. But there is a certain element of excitement in stalking raiding animals at night. On rainy nights in muddy fields intersected by deep backwaters it is hard work, and dangerous too, because of the possibility of encountering crocodiles when wading deep. The hunter must be careful to keep on the right side of the wind to avoid frightening the hippo whose sense of smell is well developed. It is a mistake to get between the quarry and their line of retreat to water as it is not easy to get out of the way of a stampeding, herd in the dark, especially on much pitted slippery ground.

Chasing rouges by canoe through overgrown backwaters, pools and lakes in crocodile-infested waters has provided me with many thrilling adventures.

On Lake Tshidya I put out in a small canoe to look for a rogue who had smashed up several “dug-outs” and thus put a stop to fishing which was the natives' main source of income. The two paddlers assured me that they knew exactly where the hippo was in hiding. So we went merrily along by channels in between floating islands of tall reeds and rush. As we pushed our way through a heavy carpet of water-lily leaves and duckweed our quarry broke water, unexpectedly, a few yards to our right, and with a tremendous snort. The paddlers edged to the far side of the canoe throwing me off my balance before I could shoot. As the small craft capsized the hippo was swimming towards us rapidly, on mischief bent. He was within two or three yards of us as we turned over and already his mouth was opened ready to bite. Jumping out backwards I landed on my feet. Fortunately the water was little more than waist-deep. The hippo, somewhat surprised raised his head and neck out of the water to see what we were doing, and I manage to get a quick snap-shot into his brain as my feet sank rapidly into the soft muddy bottom of the lake. The “dug-out”, made of very light wood had righted itself and we were able, after some difficulty in extricating our feet, to climb aboard. The waters were full of crocodiles and I was just about to address some insulting remarks to the guide when he looked at me and said “Allahamdulillahi”, – I realised that his remarks were more appropriate than mine would have been, so reiterated his statement, “Praise be to Allah”. It was just sheer good luck that the water was shallow at that spot.

In my camp on the spur of a small hill overlooking Tshidya Lake, after hippo hunts in the mosquito ridden rice fields I spent many a delightful morning watching the wildfowl and listening to their joyful sounds. At crack of dawn there was much splashing and puddling of hungry duck and the high pitched piping of countless teal in flight, the whispering of their rapid wing-beats came and went.

Pied Kingfishers were early at their work, spending most of their time hovering and making abortive dives to pull up short of the water and flit to pastures new.

Schools of hippo splashed and yawned as they made their way lazily to shelter in the reed-beds. The serrated backs of tardy crocodiles drifted out slowly from deep creeks where they had fished all night.

Harriers quartered the rice fields with slow and heavy flight, while kestrels seemed to be for ever hovering with a machine-like precision of their wings. Elarus, the dapper little black-shouldered kite was conspicuous when he settled in his favourite bush; with breast immaculate and a pearl-grey back he is the best groomed of the smaller hawks. Several pairs of the most

handsome of all fish-eagles, *Haliaeetus vocifer*, had their homes in the tall and slippery migudi trees which are unclimbable by snakes and monkeys. Their wild eerie calls were the loudest on the lake.

King reed-hens, or purple gallinules, darted skilfully amongst the water weeds, their elongated toes and quick movements saved them from sinking through the light leaf floats they trod on – they are the gaudiest of all the water-fowl, dressed in purple, green and bronze and many shades of blue, with scarlet bill and feet to match.

Hoarse, wheezy cackles came from little black crakes, described by the natives as “chokola chokola hoo”.

There were many brightly coloured kingfishers too, most noticeable amongst them *Ispidina*, the tiniest of them all, a perfect gem, with its back of iridescent blues and breast a chestnut-pink. When he moved he flitted fast and low from twig to twig.

From the bushes round about the camp came the soft whispering whistles of soliloquising shrike, strong, plump, piebald birds with cannibalistic tendencies. Scrub bulbuls were numerous and added their harsh twitterings and trills. The handsome nictator shrikes gave a lively display, making the bush resound with their staccato trills and bubbling liquid chortles.

Near Nanihanga village on the Kondé plateau, luck came my way. I had camped out on top of the steep scarp overlooking the Ruvuma River whose parcelled waters gleamed like silver ribbons in the golden sands. We were on our way to the valley to hunt troublesome crocodiles and hippo but, as the Makonde (people of the Kondé plateau) had organised a lion hunt we decided to stay and watch the fun. Excepting the villages and fields dotted about here and there, the Kondé plateau is covered by dense thickets where undergrowth is profuse.

A lion and lioness had come up from the valley and had killed several goats. Now they had been tracked and located in a small patch of bush – this was not very difficult because of the dense native population and the network of sandy paths where footprints are easily seen.

The spoor was followed from the kill until it left a path to enter a heavy patch of bush. Drums beat out the information to the little villages around and soon the men were out along all the bush tracks in the vicinity. It did not take long to find out those paths which had not been crossed or followed by the lions.

Now that their lair had been discovered the Mganga (witchdoctor) was called to cast a spell over the lions to fix them to the spot, for without his services there would be little chance of success. Within a few hours the entire male

population had encircled their victims round a wide perimeter. Then the Mganga did his stuff, which seemed to be quite unnecessary as the unfortunate lions must now have been bewildered by the hum of voices, coming from all directions but, as far as the superstitious natives were concerned it was all important and so the closing-in began in earnest. Strong pig-nets drawn tight all round were fixed to trees. The warriors were armed with "hengu" (bush cutting knives with hooked blades and long handles), spears, bows and arrows and a few old "goboli" (muzzle loading guns).

The rounding-up had begun at daybreak; by sunset a complete circular fence had been erected some fifteen feet high, composed of saplings and bamboos laced with strong green bark. The fence was braced to sturdy trees at intervals wherever possible. The weaker sections were reinforced with a stout rope network.

The work was done to the accompaniment of much shouting and talking. Before dusk the women came on the scene bringing earthenware pots for cooking, food and water. Fires were lit all round and soon the men took it in turns to eat and drink. The women remained with their men-folk all night and kept the fires burning while the men kept guard. We camped out under the stars within hailing distance but slept little on account of the din. I had come as a spectator only and had no wish to interfere with a hunt which had been organised before my arrival.

Before dawn I had tea and walked round the fence as soon as I could see clearly, it was about two hundred yards round the perimeter. Work had begun again, this time to reduce the size of the enclosure. The lions had probed the fence during the night but did not attempt to break through and their growls had given the people a good inkling, of the exact position of their hiding place – the workers concentrated at the farthest point from this, making as much noise as they could. Then they opened a gateway and went forward in a body, led by those with guns. After cutting a passage through the centre of the circle, they constructed a fence along that line. By midday the lions were confined to a rough half circle. During the afternoon the fence was greatly strengthened all round and many platforms were built at intervals. These were raised high enough to enable the men to see clearly over the fence top. All was completed before sunset. That night the fires drew closer, the lions did not attempt to break out but roared in anguish from time to time. Before sunrise scores of natives were perched in platforms round the fence – there was much beating of small drums and many logs of wood were heaved into every part of the enclosure until the lions were

spotted. Those who owned guns got into favourable positions and fired several shots. Both animals were wounded and rushed at the fence where they were mortally wounded by many spear thrusts and arrows fired at close range. They retired into cover and soon we heard their dying moans.

When we returned to our camp it was after noon, we were rather sleepy because of the two restless nights so decided to take things easy for the remainder of the day. Retiring to the shelter of a cool arcade cut into the bush I dozed peacefully until Ali came with tea. The sun was still high and the birds sang softly, especially the bush shrikes and ground robins. Apparently I had encroached on the preserves of a shrike because he kept on scolding me with loud grating hisses.

The ground was clean and sandy and the air was filled with a delightful smell of bush and herbs. Beyond the small grassy glade in front I looked out over the edge of the rocky precipice to the hills beyond the river. Through field glasses I could see clearly the Portuguese boma (fortified station) on the slopes above Nangadi Lake. Nangndi with its extensive swamps and rush-beds is the home of countless crocodiles and hippo. There, too, where water-loving birds are safe from a man in the impenetrable marshes, the wildfowl go to nest. There were very few ducks nests on our side of the river but several of the birds I shot, when they were flying over from the farther side, were in their breeding season, and, the natives assured me that their nests were numerous round the lake. A loud swishing of wings made me look up in time to see a great Martial eagle drawing up to settle on a tall tree on the brink of the cliffs. Looking round with keen eyes he spotted me and rose again on powerful pinions to soar out over the plains – a handsome bird, his head, neck and upper breast dark chocolate with many dark spots on the whitish lower breast and abdomen.

Towards sunset the creatures of the bush became more active, big four toed elephant shrews came out from hiding in their holes, jumping along their runs on long hind-legs, their small forelimbs acting mostly as balancers. After every few jumps they stopped to sniff for food, twisting their long, tapering trunk-like noses in all directions.

Small rats and field mice began to scamper round. The birds were singing loudly, especially noticeable were the wild clear notes of the vivacious bush robin and the mellow flutings of the orioles.

Sitting round the campfire after dinner, we heard lions roaring in the valley. A furious barking of baboons came from the rocky ravines below, followed by a leopard's grunts.

Before we went to bed a barn owl settled on the rangers' hut, hooting melancholy answers to her mate – this bird "bundi" is "mwiko" (taboo) and looked upon by the natives as a bird of ill-omen. My followers were not pleased to see the owl because its presence on the hut meant that one of them or their families was doomed to die. Some months later in the year Stefnno, the ranger, was taken by a crocodile – (we come to this tale later). In the early dawn we were on our way down the steep scarp by means of a narrow zigzag path. It had rained in the early hours of the morning and it was hard to keep our feet on the slippery track.

After shooting a few raiding baboons we came to a village near the river. While waiting for guides to take us to a small lake where a marauding hippo lived, a Martial eagle settled on top of a giant baobab tree near the village. The headman begged me to shoot it because it had killed most of their fowls and ducks. I was loath to shoot the fine bird but in the end they prevailed upon me. Using the small .256 rifle with a solid bullet I fired at the eagle, breaking one of his wings, he fluttered heavily to the ground. There was a rush of feet as half the village raced to pick him up. I shouted words of warning but the race went on. Shortly there was a howl of pain. We ran to investigate and found a short thickset fellow in great distress. He held the bird firmly by its neck but it had gripped him in its vice-like talons, the claws of one foot were embedded in his buttocks, the others deep into his thigh, the perspiration was dripping from his face. The great eagle glared at me scornfully I was forced to cut off his head because it was impossible to dislodge his toes. Even then the long powerful claws remained clenched like springs of steel until we cut through the tendons of his metatarsal joint. Only yesterday I had marvelled at the beauty of the bird, his telescopic vision and his majestic flight – now that he was dead I felt like the Ancient Mariner who killed the Albatross.

A couple of hours later we came to the hippo's hiding place and knew that he was at home because the freshest tracks led into the water which, at that time of the year, was isolated from the river.

We could not locate our beast so put out into the lake in two small canoes, which were tied up in the reeds. The pool was long and narrow so we separated to search both margins simultaneously. Punting slowly we prodded into the sedges and deep under water lily leaves a long and tiring performance. We had been on the job for an hour or so when Stefano gave a

yell and he and his punter dived into the water towards us. It appeared that Stefano was nearly pulled overboard when the hippo seized the pole in its jaws and wrenched it viciously. Luckily Stefano had the presence of mind to release his grip otherwise would have been pulled out. In leaping overboard they pushed the canoe towards the hippo that rose underneath to heave it out of the water, then attacked it with his tusks. This gave me the opportunity to take a quick shot which would have been easy, at a few yards range but for the rolling of our small canoe which wobbled about dangerously in the waves caused by the hippos' upheaval. The shot went home, and we managed to reach shallow water before the old and decayed dugout filled and sank.

Some sixty or seventy miles higher up the river, near Mpoolas' village, we were engaged in trying to disperse a particularly trouble-some school of hippo which lived in the big pool below Kissule hills.

There were swift rapids above and below the pool, which was very deep in parts. Three separate herds of hippo, numbering about one hundred and fifty head all told, inhabited the pool. Two herds foraged in Portuguese territory, the third, led by an old albino cow, raided Mpoolas' crops. The old cow had an evil reputation – she was bad-tempered and had broken up many canoes, moreover she was said to be possessed of an evil-spirit which made her invulnerable to bullets. I expected the job to take two or three days at least, so chose a camping site on a well-wooded island lying between two channels, amongst the lower rapids where it was cool and clean and shady.

Late at night, after I had gone to bed, some of my native followers heard shouting from across the river but did not tell me. Lying awake I listened to the delightful sounds of tumbling water and, later, as my mind hovered in that fantastic realm which borders on sleep, I heard the babbling and joyful laughter of the water sprites. Meanwhile a tragedy was taking place on land and, in the morning two men came over at daybreak to tell us that a lion had mangled a child a few hundred yards from where we slept. We went across immediately to see what we could do to help them.

It appeared that, owing to the hot nights and prevalence of mosquitos in their dark huts, the natives of the small village had elected to sleep out in an open unfenced yard. They were fast asleep when the rattling growls of two lions and screams of a child awakened them. Springing to their feet, the men rushed out in the moonlight after the retreating forms, shouting angrily as they ran.

After bounding away for twenty or thirty yards one of the lions dropped the child from its jaws and both intruders disappeared into the bush. The

poor child had been bitten in the back, while asleep face downwards. I disinfected the wounds and bound them carefully with cotton wool and lint, while the mother held the child who seemed quite happy, drawing figures with her fingers in the sand. Unfortunately one of the teeth must have crushed a kidney and she died that evening before her parents could remove her to the Mission hospital some twenty miles away. She was only six or seven years old.

As soon as the bandaging was over we went off on the lions' spoor but, although we did our best, were forced to abandon the hunt owing to the difficulty of tracking on the hard and stony ground.

Many of the natives round about were Christians and were not averse from eating hippo flesh. As food was very scarce in the district we sent word round to let them know that there would be meat in plenty. When we returned from the hunt we found scores of people waiting for the feast.

We got to work soon after 10 a.m. I used a .318 rifle and took shots only when certain of a clean kill, aiming for the brain in every case. By the evening the herd had been reduced by twenty-seven, such drastic measures may seem wanton but there were far too animals concentrated in the area and they were most destructive to the crops.

We fired many flares from Very pistols at intervals throughout the night to make things as uncomfortable as possible for the dwellers in the pool. In the morning we found that two herds had decamped but the old albino cow and her followers had remained. Before sunrise in the morning canoes were plying backwards and forwards at the lower end of the pool and the natives were very busy cutting up the carcasses which had been stranded amongst the boulders in the rapids. Young boys were helping their fathers to collect as much as possible for their respective families: – there is nothing they like more than to gorge themselves with meat and all were enjoying themselves thoroughly. Some of the smaller children could scarcely keep their heads above the water and there were roars of laughter whenever one of them lost his foothold on the slippery rocks. Knives of all description flashed in the bright sun and there was a muffled sound of axes hacking through the bigger bones. As would be expected there was a certain amount of quarrelling over prized portions. We watched the performance out of interest and to guard against accidents which might be caused by crocodiles or angry hippo. The natives, in their anxiety to get away with the biggest portion of meat they could handle, had thrown caution to the winds and many were up to their

armpits in the water – it was useless trying to interfere. They were drunk with the lust for meat. Crocodiles had put in an appearance and were shot.

All the canoes seemed to me to be over laden before they ferried to the shore and there was one or two capsize on the way over. One big dugout in particular was so low in the water that I felt certain it would never reach its destination but I did not guess its fate. As the two owners put out into deep water, with scarcely two inches of freeboard, a loud snort came from the old albino cow that had been watching the carving up of her family. She certainly looked as though she meant business so we shouted a warning, which the greedy couple ignored. The cow submerged and timed her distance well. When she surfaced for a fraction of a second to take her bearings she was less than ten yards from her objective. She took the fateful plunge and a second or two later the top-heavy craft was heaved out of the water and capsized. The crew saw what was coming and were quick off the mark – when the cow submerged for the final attack they plunged overboard and made for land. They had dived deep to escape being spotted by the rogue and I was extremely anxious for several seconds. It was a great relief to see the hippo attack the canoe again; then two black heads bobbed up for a quick breather and disappeared again. Meanwhile the canoe and its contents were tumbling down the rapids while the Albino turned to stem the tide, giving me time for a quick shot which killed her. Two dark heads popped up again, this time near the shore, which they soon gained.

One would have thought that they had had enough excitement for the day but before long they had found another dugout and were on the job once more.

During the afternoon I shot seven more hippo and at night we kept up a bombardment of rockets every hour or so to scare the herd away. In the morning only crocodiles remained.

CHAPTER NINE

LEOPARDS

Leopards, being adaptable to almost any type of country and altitude, have a far wider and more even distribution than any other cats belonging to the Old World. They are equally at home in mountain forests or seashore scrub, in open parklike country or lacustrine plains. But, above all, they prefer the neighbourhood of rocky hills and valleys where they make their homes in caves and crevices.

Their general appearance is too well known to require description but the variation in their size and colouring is so great that a few remarks on these will not be out of place. As would be expected, those from the higher altitudes have finer and thicker coats than those inhabiting lower lying ground. The forest dwellers are more beautifully marked with bolder and darker spottings on a richer ground colour, which varies from orange brown in heavily timbered areas, to a dirty yellow in the open grassy lands. Individuals differ greatly in size according to their habitat and the males are always appreciably bigger than their mates. The former are more heavily marked with bolder blobs, while the dark spots of the females are smaller and more closely set. On the shoulders and sides of both sexes the spots are arranged in "rosette" formation where the spotting consists of little groups of two or three or four dark blobs, of varied shape, surrounding a lighter ground colour. The spotting on heads and limbs is more diffused and irregular. The general scheme of camouflage enables them to melt into their surroundings. In total length, from tip of nose to point of tail, they range from about five to eight feet; the tail is long and covered thickly to the tip with hair.

During ten years in the Southern Provinces I came across only one case of melanism and curiously enough, that was in the Rufiji Valley near Nyakisico village, on the river flats. On that occasion a black leopard, crossing my path some fifty yards ahead, stopped to look at me. It was early in the morning but the sun had risen behind me and the light was perfect. There was not the slightest doubt about the identification and the absence of any visible spotting at that close range. Unfortunately it was one of those rare occasions on which my rifle was not handy and so I missed a golden opportunity to collect his skin.

The young are born during the rainy season, especially at the beginning of that period, in caves amongst the rocks. Leopards are very noisy during the mating season, calling to one another frequently at all hours

of the night. When camping out amongst the numerous granite kopjes of the southern area we seldom failed to hear their harsh grating voices, which sounded like rough saws at work on hard dry timber. African leopards are not nearly such silent creatures as those of the Asiatic regions and, on many occasions I have been able to discover their whereabouts during the day by following their grunts.

Returning from a buffalo hunt round the Litinginya swamps on the Lumesule River I heard a leopard grunting loudly at regular intervals and decided to stalk him. The sound came from the top of a granite outcrop about a mile away. The time was about nine o'clock in the morning and it was towards the end of the dry season. A small well-wooded ravine afforded ideal cover for the approach. When we were within about a hundred yards of the rocks our quarry grunted furiously and we were able to judge his direction accurately. Peering cautiously over the bank I saw him sitting up on an over-hanging ledge of rock and looking out towards us but, as he showed no interest in my movements as I manoeuvred round for a shot, I concluded that his attention was fixed on something else, and so took careful aim. The bullet from a .318 rifle struck him in the chest causing him to somersault backwards out of sight. Leaving a man to keep an eye on the position, Rashidi and I climbed out of the gully and had walked forward for some fifty yards when we found the remains of a youngish kudu cow, which the leopard had killed the previous day. It was evident that he had been keeping an eye on his kill and grunted to keep away any would be intruders. What remained of the carcass was lying in a shallow sandy depression under a shady bush and an examination of the ground showed that the leopard had been assisted by his mate, whose tracks were smaller than his own. We therefore advanced more warily, by a roundabout route, to take them by surprise.

When nearing the summit I caught a glimpse of the female gliding stealthily away over an adjoining ridge. We waited a little to see if her mate was following but as he did not appear we went to the ledge where we had first seen him. There we found blood and hair on the rock and some small pieces of bone and meat adhering to a small tree trunk at the back. Had it not been for the bloodstains on the rocks it would have been impossible to follow him at all. We took it in turns to track while the other kept his eyes skinned on all around. Although the grass had been burned a week or two previously, there was plenty of cover for a leopard, small cracks and crevices in the rocks, isolated hollows filled with grass and shrubs and scattered boulders. After tracking him carefully for sixty

yards or so we found that he had crawled under an over-hanging rock to hide in a dark hole at the back. As it was impossible to follow, except by crawling on our stomachs, we decided that it would be foolhardy to proceed further. After throwing stones into the hole I fired two shots into the crevice in the hope of drawing him out to attack but no sound came from within. Retracing our steps for twenty yards or so we sat down under a small tree where we could not be observed by the wounded animal. After half an hour we abandoned the hunt and returned to camp. The following day, accompanied by two villagers and their dogs, we went back to look for our victim and found a very dead leopard in the cave. The bullet had cut through the apex of his heart and the great heat of the sun had caused the carcass to decompose rapidly.

Once when hunting buffalo on the lower Mbwemkuru River, towards the middle of February, I heard a leopard grunting about half a mile away. The grunting was repeated at intervals of about half a minute and I could tell by the sound that he was moving quickly across our front from right to left, so ran forward to try to cut him off. There was a heavy drizzle at the time, which made it easy to move silently. The leopard kept a true course and after I had run about two hundred yards I saw the long lithe spotted body gliding swiftly through the green grass which was scarcely knee deep. He was broadside on and less than thirty yards away when I took a shot with my .318 rifle. He disappeared from sight for a few seconds and I knew that he was badly wounded because of the horrible growls. Finally he reared up on his hind legs and clawed the air savagely before disappearing behind a patch of bush. Most of the blood spoor had been washed away by the rain but we were able to follow the muddy footprints. After passing a patch of dense low scrub into which we had flung many stones, we lost track. Several minutes later we found him lying dead. It was lucky for us that he had died so soon because we had passed within a few feet of his body several times without seeing him.

In the Masagati forests of Mahenge district I was sitting in my tent one night when I heard a leopard grunting about half a mile away. The noise was repeated at intervals and each time it sounded nearer. I felt sure he was coming down a hoed road, which passed within a yard or two of the back of my tent. A leopard had killed quite a lot of livestock in a nearby village so, hoping to get a shot, I loaded the shotgun quickly before extinguishing the light of the kerosene lantern. Scarcely had this been done when the grunting came from a bend in the road about two hundred yards distant. Testing the electric torch in the palm of my hand I was

dismayed to find it out of order so pushed the gun barrels through a small window in the closed tent flaps and waited, listening for the padding of his feet as he passed along. The silence was broken suddenly by a rasping grunt immediately in front of me, it was pitch dark and I could see nothing at all, I fired at the sound. There was a fiendish growling and snarling and I expected the enraged brute to come hurtling into the tent without warning. Too late I realised that I had done a foolish thing. Fortunately he was mortally wounded and died a few paces from where he had been hit – it was indeed a stroke of luck. Curiously enough leopards are not always silent when hunting for their prey. Perhaps the fear instilled into certain of their intended victims causes them to give themselves away by noisy movements or cries of warning and fright. This is quite evident as far as baboons, monkeys, dogs and guinea fowl are concerned because times out of number I heard grunts and then the frightened calls and rustlings of the hunted. Having located the exact position of their prey they stalk in deadly silence but if the victim's place of refuge is inaccessible they often grunt in an irritated way in an attempt to unnerve them and make them move about.

Undoubtedly they are clever and use different tactics for their various prey. They are great poultry thieves and especially fond of the flesh of dogs and goats which are easy for them to kill. Owing to the difficulty of tracking down these thieves, who invariably retreat to a rocky terrain; and because of the many fruitless efforts and discomforts of sitting up in platforms to waylay them, when we had many other jobs of work to be done, we nearly always resorted to the use of guntraps for their destruction. By these means we killed scores of leopards every year. The bait, which was comfortably and securely housed, was generally a live goat or a dog but often we used the body of an animal they had killed. Sometimes the leopards came silently; but often they grunted loudly in the distance before getting down to the final approach, which they accomplished quietly and swiftly from an unexpected quarter. Before entering the traps they often walked round the structures several times to see if they could find any means of entry other than the open doorway but sometimes they slid straight in. If set properly, the gun trap is an ideal method but great care must be taken to make certain that the shot goes true, otherwise there is bound to be a most dangerous hunt after the wounded animal in the morning. Although I have had comparatively little experience in tracking wounded leopards, I

have seen enough of their cunning, agility and speed to take every possible precaution to avoid attempting haphazard chances or foolish snapshots at these savage and vindictive cats. I have seen and spoken to many people who have been severely mauled and consider leopards to be the most formidable of all the dangerous game. They are expert at camouflage, move like bullets and make full use of all their claws and teeth, which invariable leave a deadly septic wound. They are so vindictive that they will lie in wait beside their tracks, or up a tree, for hours, in order to get their own back on their pursuers, even when they are only slightly wounded.

Of course it does not follow that all leopards have exactly the same temperament. Once on the Konde plateau we set a trap for a female, which had killed several goats and dogs and many fowls. At the time I had with me two native recruits who had been in training for their jobs for a couple of months. They constructed the trap and set the gun at a slight angle from the true and worst of all they had made the entrance way too wide for a small leopard. I harangued them for so long that it was dusk before I had done with telling them off. Very foolishly I allowed them to load the gun and set the firing cord; then told them to return to camp to brood over the doubtful pleasures of following the wounded animal. The gun went off soon after ten o'clock that night and as soon as it was light in the morning we went off to the trap. Surely enough we found that the leopard had been wounded and its tracks led into a small dense thicket in a basin-like depression. Not wishing to be shot in the back accidentally by an over anxious recruit, I sent the two tyros round the fringe of the thicket, by a safe route, after pointing out two biggish trees for them to climb, and told them to remain quiet in case the leopard should attempt to escape their way. When they were in position I tracked the blood spoor slowly until it stopped at an outcrop of solid rock. The situation had become dangerous owing to impenetrable scrub and the possibility of fissures in the rock so I played for safety, taking up position on a bare, solid boulder. After looking around I collected several biggish round stones which I threw into the surrounding thicket. Luckily one of these must have passed very close to the wounded leopard because she made a few ugly coughing growls and then grunted, giving away her hiding place.

My gun bearer had joined me so I handed him my rifle, a double barrel .450/400 loaded with soft-nosed cartridges, while I took over the shotgun and peppered the suspected locality. Some of the shots hit her

and she made off towards the recruits, grunting all the way. It was an excellent opportunity for one of them to blood his rifle. She passed immediately below a gun. Amazed I saw the would-be scout aiming for so long that he allowed the leopard to pass below. By then he had completed a semicircle of aiming and lost his balance, falling to the ground with a thud. The leopard got just as big a fright as he did and turned off slightly to the right. Soon she came into an open patch, still grunting. One of her forelegs was badly broken; she was stiff from the wound and could only hobble slowly. Her tail was erect and the tip twitched from side to side. She was only about seventy yards away and I was able to get in a raking shot from behind which killed her instantaneously.

I found that the recruit had forgotten to release the safety catch of his rifle and so he learned another lesson.

We were camped out amongst the high granite kopjes in the Londo group, near the source of the Kihatu stream. It was at the end of the dry season when water was to be found only in odd pools scattered widely over a big area; the country was parched. I was making a survey of the pools and plotting them on my map. We had been on safari for a week without rest and were spending the day in camp. Some instinct caused me to look up towards the top of the kopje that towered above us. There I saw a leopard crouching on a ledge which jutted out, he appeared to be very interested in our movements because, when I got up from my chair to collect a pair of field glasses from the table, he raised head and shoulders to get a better view. When I put the glasses up to look at him he dropped his head flat on the rock. He remained to watch us for nearly half an hour.

In front of us there were several springs of water, which irrigated a few acres of swampy ground where green grass was long and lush. Here, in the mornings and evenings many different kinds of animals and birds came to feed and drink; there was little doubt that the leopard, whom we had heard grunting round our camp at night, got his living from the antelopes which frequented the springs. On many occasions, in the mornings and evenings, I saw leopards lying out on slabs of rock from which vantage points they spied out the land below. During the cold season too, when the grass was long and wet I saw them often warming themselves in the first and last rays of the sun.

Leopards are very fond of climbing trees and do not hesitate to follow baboons, monkeys and guinea fowl high into the branches where they are

nimble as any of the smaller cats. Several times I caught fleeting glimpses of them lying out on horizontal boughs but on all three occasions they leaped on the ground as soon as I spotted them, they always saw me first.

With their sharp and powerful claws they can climb almost any kind of tree and I have seen them leap fifteen or twenty feet into forks to escape from dogs.

In the Matumbi hills, west of Mahenge, a native showed me a bough where a leopard waited regularly for his goats. The branch was well camouflaged by leaves and hung horizontally over a path used by the goats when going out to feed. I saw the tracks below and climbed up to have a look. I found many claw marks at the fork and on the upper surface of the branch, also there were many hairs adhering to the rough bark. Unfortunately the leopard did not do his stuff while I was there.

Often, when suitable trees are handy or if they wish to protect their kill from scavengers, leopards climb trees and haul the carcass up in their jaws. I came across many kills jammed into narrow forks at various heights from the ground; amongst them were goats, full-grown buck rams, impala, baboons and a kudu calf. Time and again we came across deep scars on smooth tree trunks where they had sharpened and cleaned their claws after a feed.

I was never lucky enough to see a leopard make a kill but often heard the cries and bleatings of animals they had caught. From examination of several fresh kills I concluded that invariably they seized their prey by the throat or at the back of the neck and dislocated the vertebrae by biting deep with their teeth and wrenching with their powerful claws. After killing they first disembowel their victims and then eat the internal organs, but bury the paunch and entrails in the ground.

Leopards are fierce and bloodthirsty and go mad with blood lust especially when they get amongst poultry or small livestock confined in small spaces – on such occasions they will kill every living creature, unless disturbed at their wanton slaughter.

Game scout Mfaume Ali, a very keen and knowledgeable observer, told me that he came across a full grown kudu cow which had just been killed by a big leopard.

Wild pigs are amongst their favourite foods; even a lion does not find it a very easy matter killing such tough animals.

Although leopards, especially in country heavily populated by human beings, are looked upon as nocturnal in their habits, they hunt regularly in the mornings and evenings.

I have never come across them catching fish but they often steal fish from the natives while it is being smoked and dried. Along the seashore I found their tracks in the sand and saw the remains of crabs, which they had evidently eaten.

They do not appear to bathe for pleasure but often swim across rivers. At Kilwa Kisiwani they do not hesitate to swim across a mile or more of deep seawater, where the tides are strong, to steal goats on that island, as do the lions and wild dogs on occasion.

Once when returning by car from Songea to Lindi and in a great hurry I ran into a leopard round a sharp bend in the road near Salim Risisi's village. It was too late for me to pull up and the leopard was slow in getting off the road. The front wheel of my car hit him in the hindquarters and ran over him – he made a blood curdling noise. It was midnight, and in any case, I had no time to spare, so went on. Two or three months later Salim complained about a leopard which had become a regular pest amongst his fowl and goats. We set a gun trap on a path which the leopard used frequently and, as we had shot several raiding baboons that day, we dragged their bodies to the trap to be used as bait, drawing them across many small footpaths which emanated from the village, in order to make certain that the leopard would get the smell of their blood. We heard the gun go off at about eleven o'clock that night and in the morning found the leopard lying dead at the entrance to our trap – the bullet had gone through the centre of his head just behind a line between his ears. He was a big male but in poor condition. On examining him we found that one of his hind legs had been broken and had healed up so crookedly that it was no use to him. There was no mark on the skin so I concluded that it was more than likely that it was he who had been run over by my car. His inability to catch wild animals had turned the poor beast into a thief.

Near Kidodi, in Kiiosa district, game scout Amini was following a leopard, which had been wounded in a trap. We had not gone far when it sprang at him and he pushed the muzzle of his .303 rifle into its open jaw. Before he could pull the trigger the leopard gave the muzzle of the rifle a tremendous twist. Amini hung on grimly and fired a shot, which found a vital spot. I saw the rifle afterwards, it was of the old Service pattern, the stock was scarred deeply by claws and the woodwork near

the muzzle was torn to shreds. Marks of the teeth show up clearly on the hard steel and the barrel was so badly twisted by the wrench that it was of no further use.

One night at Mvuha village, in Morogoro district, game scout Yotam heard a noise in his fowl house and went to investigate. As he opened the door a leopard sprang out and bowled him over, making a vicious swipe at his head as it passed. The claws ripped the side of his face and caused the loss of one of his eyes.

In ten years I came across only two instances of confirmed man-eating, although there were several isolated cases of odd children and adults being eaten by leopards. The two persistent man-eaters took their toll in the Noto hills of Lindi and at Mtapaira village in the same district. Both of these animals were males and each accounted for about a dozen individuals, mostly children. Scout Abdallah Mwana shot one dead and scout Hamisi Abdallah shot the other, I cannot remember the details of the happenings as I was not present at the time.

One bright moonlight night in June I was sitting out in a wide open clearing in front of my tent near Mkongowere peak. All round the clearing the grass was long and wet. The air was cold and crisp and we were drawn up as close as we could to a blazing log fire. That afternoon I had shot two buffalo and carriers were arriving with heavy loads of meat. A number of the older men of the village were squatting on the far side of the fire waiting for a share. Several of their dogs had come with them and were walking about restlessly amongst the crowd in anticipation of scraps of offal, which were few and far between. There was a light breeze blowing towards the granite hills and we heard the rasping grunts of a leopard coming from that direction. About half an hour later, while the meat was being chopped up and laid out in portions there was much excitement amongst the natives who were talking and laughing with joy. Suddenly a long dark body streaked through the jabbering crowd to seize one of the dogs. I saw the spots in the firelight and heard several sharp yelps of agony as the intruder flashed by to disappear into the long grass with his victim in his jaws. It was all over before I could rise from my seat. The leopard must have been attracted by the strong smell of buffalo blood but preferred a canine steak.

CHAPTER TEN

ABOUT BUFFALO AND A MIXED BAG OF SHORT STORIES

Buffalo are grazers, living almost entirely on grasses and reeds, but they also browse to a certain extent on the leaves of various kinds of vines and the bean-pods of certain legumes. Being heavily built animals they need a lot of fodder and travel long distances in search of suitable pasture. They are gregarious in their habits and go about in herds comprising anything from a dozen or so to forty or fifty individuals or even greater numbers where conditions are suitable.

They frequent all types of country, from high plateau land and mountain ranges to sea level, but they must have plenty of grassland, which is to their liking. They are well distributed throughout the Southern Provinces but prefer those areas where their favourite foods, such as the sweet and juicy Magugu grass and extensive reed beds grow. Shade, too, is essential for their well-being and this is found in forests, dense evergreen or semi deciduous bush, in open parklike country or even in tall dense, grass and reeds when conditions are favourable during the cooler period of the year.

Towards the end of the dry season, they migrate to damper areas where grass keeps green. When widespread bushfires sweep through the country leaving it black and bare, they seek safety in forests, evergreen tracts of bush or swampy lands where fires cannot penetrate at all or at least are safe until later in the year. In many parts of the country the fires are so ubiquitous and fierce that they have to make long, migrations in order to find food and cover. At such times they are guided by instinct and seasonal routine, relying entirely on the sagacity and memories of the old cows of the herd who always lead the way.

Like all other cattle they dislike the intense heat of the sun and so feed voraciously all night. When they have eaten their fill they retire to shady places to rest and chew the cud, choosing their ground according to the season and prevailing circumstances. When river flats and plains are waterlogged they retire to higher ground. When the grass is short they hide away in forest or thicket, or under big shady trees on hillside or crest from which point of vantage they are able to look around for any signs of an approaching enemy.

Sometimes, when the days are cool, they find enough protection from the sun in reeds or grass. Generally speaking they feed down-wind in order to scent any danger which threatens from the rears while they keep their eyes open to the front and flanks. Unless the grass is everywhere long and dense, they do not like to rest near their feeding

grounds but go a long way to select a spot where they are safer from their enemies, lions and men. When they use the same feeding grounds regularly, they return to feed by roundabout ways in order to evade a lurking foe.

In those localities where they have been hunted regularly they retire to the densest thickets or other almost impenetrable cover long before dawn in the morning and do not move out again to feed until after dark. But where they have been undisturbed they are not nearly so particular. In cool weather I have often found them grazing until ten o'clock in the morning or even later and in the afternoons well before five o'clock. In such circumstances they do not make it an invariable rule to seek the densest and most impenetrable cover for their leisure hours, but often lie about, comfortably, like domesticated cattle under shady trees in lightly timbered country.

During the dry hot months they drink regularly at dusk or later but, in the rainy season and, cooler period of the year they obtain enough moisture from the rain or dew on the grass to enable them to go for two or three days without drinking. For their watering places they prefer isolated pools or shallow streams, even when the water is dirty, because of their fear of lurking crocodiles.

Most wild animals require a little more salt than is contained in their ordinary diet and buffalo are no exception to this rule.

Sodium chloride, or common salt, is the salt they hanker after most; undoubtedly this is taken as a tonic and the craving for it is satisfied by its extraction from various sources in an area where salt, in its free state, is unknown – if one excepts certain coastal deposits left by the waters of the ocean. Buffalo, and other animals, obtain their salt from patches of impregnated soil, especially from certain anthrills and in the vicinity of numerous mineral springs; these "licks", as they are commonly called do not contain pure sodium chloride, but a mixture of several salts. Where the ground is hard they dig it out with their horns and hoofs and lick up the soil with their strong prehensile tongues; in soft muddy ground they do not need to dig.

Other sources of supply are found in wood-ash and in certain plants and shrubs. Certain salts are taken as purgatives or for medicinal purposes to help rid themselves of numerous internal parasites. For this reason, when the necessity arises, they visit their own favourite mineral springs or lakes.

Buffalo are fond of wallowing in mud from time to time. This is especially noticeable in the case of older bulls, some of which seem to make it a daily practice. By this means they keep their thick hides clean and supple and it helps to ward off bloodsucking flies, which must be almost unbearable at times. Ticks, also, are removed from those more inaccessible parts by rubbing them off in gritty mud and against the harder margins of the wallows. Undoubtedly they also enjoy themselves thoroughly when thus occupied, more particularly during the cold weather when I have often watched them for hours wallowing and dozing in soft warm mud, which has been heated by the sun.

As is the custom of many other genera of the hollow-horned ruminants, which have the herd instinct, many of the bulls disassociate themselves from their groups at certain seasons of the year, for various reasons. Because of this, as will be seen later, new blood is introduced into the various herds which might otherwise become "inbred" too much. During the breeding season the stronger bulls fight and drive away their weaker companions, old and young, who go off on their own or join up into small parties for companionship and mutual protection. I have often seen three or four bulls together and, at times, as many as six or seven. In localities where the herds are larger, it is more than likely that bigger bachelor parties would be found. The bachelors may be young or old, or mixed. In some cases, for one reason or another, they become entirely ostracised from all herds, and spend a lonely existence, going about singly or in small parties.

Such long continued solitary existence is unnatural and is forced on them because of some disability such as old age, malformity or accidental crippling. But, sooner or later, the healthy and more virile bulls get the urge to return to family life and so, when they find themselves in proximity to any passing herd, they battle their way back to a more natural existence and thus fresh blood is introduced.

I had many opportunities to watch and study wildlife in its natural state and was enabled to observe carefully, through field glasses, scores of different herds of buffalo at various altitudes and in many types of country. Generally speaking I found that those of the mountains and the more fertile and extensive river flats carried bigger horns than those of the dry scrub and bush country. In some groups all the horns of the respective sexes conformed to a similar type and shape. This was more especially so in the case of the smaller herds and presupposes a pure family strain inherited from the herd bulls. In other groups I was able to pick out several totally different kinds of horns in the same herd which would go to prove that there

had been an admixture of intruding bulls. Each breeding bull has his own following of females. As is well known, individual animals of all species have their own particular smell and all members of a family group have a family smell by which they recognise their relationship.

When, owing to circumstances, the numbers of a herd become excessive, the older cows are liable to lead away those animals that are more closely related to themselves. Thus new herds are formed. Of course, this is the case with most if not all, gregarious animals.

Towards the end of the dry season when food and water are scarce it often happens that several herds meet at old familiar haunts and re-unite for shorter or longer periods according to their needs. On these occasions there does not appear to be any embittered rivalry, owing to nature's solicitude for the preservation of their species.

When I was stationed at Kilosa I came across the tracks of such a concentration on the Mkata plains and made up my mind not to miss so good an opportunity to see the grand herd. Accompanied by sergeant Merikebu, the head game scout, I left Kilosa by car one morning soon after 3am. When we were within about four miles of the feeding ground, which had been used regularly for several days, we left the car under a tree and proceeded to the spot on foot. The whole country had been burned black and water was available only in a few widely dispersed pools. The feeding ground was a huge damp vlei where young green grass had sprouted early and was already a foot or so high. Every night, after they had had their drink at distant waterholes, they came round on the same circuit, grazing from one vlei to another throughout the night, slowly wending their way back to the shelter of dense thickets where they would escape the scorching hours of sunlight.

We crossed quickly to the far side of the vlei to await their arrival. After selecting our position, we hid behind some small bushes on an anthill on top of which grew a big tamarind tree. A light breeze blew towards us and the prospects were excellent. Just before sunrise we heard the first heavy rumblings of innumerable hooves, and a little later came the sound of many horns knocking against each other and against overhanging branches in the scrubby bush. Then we saw them surging through the trees on the far side of the vlei, jostling one another as they hurried to their last feeding ground. When the leaders had advanced a hundred yards or so into the open glade they began to crop the green grass voraciously, as if they had been starved for a week. Soon the whole herd was grazing towards us. Although they were most intent on food there

were always some of their number on the lookout for possible danger. These sentries took it in turns to stand and look around with horns laid back and outstretched noses. For half an hour or so we had a magnificent view and were able to count them accurately. There were well over two hundred and fifty, including calves. Amongst them were many fine bulls. Finally when the old cows decided that it was time to proceed to cover, they led the way out into the bush right past our hiding place, surrounding us on all sides. We were perfectly safe from any danger of being overrun by a stampeding herd because of the anthep we had climbed. They were in a hurry and walking fast but when they got our wind they went off at a heavy lumbering gallop. Soon we could see nothing but a dense cloud of dust, which they had stirred up with their feet. We had been well repaid for the early excursion, it was the biggest herd I ever saw together in the open.

Some well known hunters consider that buffalo have poor eyesight, but this has not been my experience. Time and again they have spotted me from several hundred yards away when it was impossible for them to get my wind. Sometimes, when they saw me at a distance of three or four hundred yards, they gazed at me intently with outstretched muzzles and then walked towards me, out of curiosity. This is good enough evidence that they are able to recognise unfamiliar objects at longish range. The average buffalo would not connect the form of a man with the danger of firearms or other lethal weapons, but he does evince some interest and suspicion in anything new and strange to his world. Only those that have had the experience of unpleasant contacts with man and his deadly weapons would realise by sight alone, the full import of his appearance. The foregoing remarks refer to buffalo in open country. As regards buffalo in dense bush and long grass I have come to a similar conclusion. Although it would appear that antelopes are quicker at getting off the mark, it must be remembered that they rely on speed to escape from their oldest enemies, the big cats. Buffalo are heavier and slower in their movements and rely to a great extent on their strength and formidable horns for protection of themselves and their young. They would be foolish if they bolted too quickly in heavy growth because it would give the cats an opportunity to leap on them unexpectedly from the rear. Even full-grown lions very seldom attack full-grown buffalo bulls or cows. Therefore the maturer animals of the herd turn to face the enemy rather than bolt at the first sign of danger. Naturally the discharge of firearms puts them to flight. Most of those individuals who have learned to

recognise man by sight give the warning to run away but many of the harder cases are by no means cowardly and often stand at bay until it is too late. I believe this is done courageously and not because of inability to see.

When buffalo are goaded into attacking a man in any type of country they rely on their sight and do not waste their time in charging long distances on scent.

Almost all wild animals rely mostly upon their noses and ears for any sign of danger. This is very evident in those remoter places where man has seldom trod.

Although a buffalo's eyesight may not be as keen as that of the antelopes and gazelles of the open plains, I am convinced that it is not to be despised.

Unfortunately, buffalo have an evil reputation and are commonly looked upon as bad tempered animals with a vicious and vindictive nature. To a certain extent this reputation is true but it has been grossly exaggerated. Very definitely any hunter following a wounded buffalo must class it amongst the most formidable and dangerous game. Otherwise, apart from occasional rogues, which are also found amongst elephant, lion, leopard and rhinoceros, they are just about as harmless as any of the antelope and will run away when they recognise man's presence by sight or smell. Even when their herds have been decimated, instead of becoming violent as might be expected, they become more nervous. I have been amongst many scores of herds, in dense thickets and long grass and have never been charged by the herd or by an individual (this does not include wounded animals that were being followed). On a few occasions a herd has stampeded past me and given me a good fright especially in long grass and reeds where there was no adequate cover to get behind – but it was their motive to run away and not to attack. Here it should be noted that it is not advisable to approach a herd from its direct front; one should do so from the flanks, because buffalo feed down wind, and unless they are able to locate accurately the direction from which a shot has come, they will continue their course downwind.

Bachelors bulls, solitary or in parties, are generally looked upon as being far more ferocious and dangerous than the herd bulls and cows but I have not found them so. In fact I always felt that I was up against a tougher proposition when following old cows or the more virile herd bulls.

There is no doubt that there is an element of danger in following any full-grown wounded buffalo into denser cover. Even where the country is fairly open, one should beware of such things as overgrown antheaps or any isolated cover in which a buffalo could hide. Some are more vindictive than others are and one should always be careful when following a wounded animal. With the exception of one case, which was possibly accidental, I have never been charged by a buffalo immediately it has received my first shot; invariably they have run away or tried to do so. They are powerful and courageous animals and naturally resent being driven from pillar to post when suffering from an agonising wound, who would blame them? On such occasions there is a limit to the amount of pain that they can suffer or annoyance that they will endure. Sooner or later, according to the animals' particular temperament or the nature of the wound, a buffalo is almost bound to turn on a persistent hunter. Let me say here that any hunter who is worth his salt should never fail to follow up and try to put an end to any suffering which he has inflicted, no matter how dense and impenetrable the cover into which his quarry has retired. Bearing this in mind no hunter should fire a shot at a buffalo unless he is satisfied that he has a reasonable chance of hitting a vital spot. Shots to be avoided are: unnecessarily long shots; pot-shots when an animal is barely visible; snap shots at retreating animals or those moving quickly through heavy cover; blind shots at some visible part of the body when it is impossible to tell what part of the anatomy one is firing at (excepting in special circumstances when following a wounded animal). Of course, the "browning" of a herd is nothing less than a crime. I have had a fair amount of experience in following wounded buffalo and have been guilty of taking risky shots. Amongst the hundred and fifty or so that I have killed, some were rogues and others were dangerous after being wounded. Many of these had to be followed into dense thickets or tall grass and reeds. For me the situation was always unpleasant, as a charging buffalo is a difficult animal to stop. The vital target is so very small - nothing but a brain shot or dislocated vertebrae is likely to bring them to the ground. When they charge it is generally from an unexpected quarter and at close range. They really mean business and the attack is most determined, being pressed home unless they are killed instantaneously or stunned. Therefore, when following wounded buffalo I always carried a fairly heavy double barrel rifle, using solid hard-nosed nickel bullets, which would crash through all obstacles to reach the vital spot. It is quite possible for smaller bullets to reach the objective but the

chances of its doing so are considerably smaller. The buffalo comes with his muzzle stretched out and horns laid back and he only lowers his head when on the point of making the final sweep with his horns. If you lie flat on the ground and he cannot get at you with the points of his horns, he will try to turn you on to your side into a more favourable position, using the bend of his horns or muzzle or pawing at you with his feet. A heavy hard-nosed bullet will smash its way through the chest to a vital spot or through the skull or higher to reach the brain or vertebrae. A lower shot, although it may reach the heart cannot be relied upon to stop a charge immediately, it must be remembered, too, that a heavy bullet is less liable to deflection than a light one. If the first shot fails, the second barrel can be brought into action without delay and therefore has a considerable advantage over a single barrel rifle when one is taken by surprise at very close quarters. Wounded buffalo do not always charge even when they are followed persistently and encountered at short range. I can remember clearly four occasions on which I almost stumbled over wounded animals that were lying down in long grass. Two of those got up and bolted and two scrambled to their feet facing me – I shot the latter before they could get into further action. Taking them on the whole I think the chances are even that they will run away or charge, at least in the earlier stages of following a blood trail. But the longer the following, unless the animal has collapsed or become too stiff to move quickly the greater the probability of a charge. Therefore, when following wounded buffalo, I have made it a rule to take every opportunity to get in a snap shot, however difficult the mark – especially if the quarry is about to disappear into heavy cover or if the light is beginning to fail. A quick shot on these occasions is not only justifiable but I feel that one should seize every opportunity to bring the misery and the hunt to a quick end. Of course it would be wrong to take a difficult snap shot at a wounded animal when the chances are in favour of getting a better opportunity.

It is well known that wounded buffalo have a habit of side tracking or circling round on their pursuers in order to take them by surprise. Although I have never been attacked in this manner, I have checked up on reports of three different native game scouts, by visiting the scenes and found them true. On five occasions wounded buffalo came back on their tracks when I was following them – once from behind an anthep, and the remainder on narrow tracks in long grass, on all those occasions I fired well below the base of the horns with success.

On all occasions it appeared to me that charging buffalo looked smaller than usual, perhaps it was imagination but I believe they really do hunch themselves up for the attack.

Although I have not been attacked from a side track or encircling movement, I have only escaped such unpleasant circumstances by taking every possible precaution such as climbing trees or anthills when available or moving very quietly. Twice I was charged by buffalo bulls that I had not wounded, but both of them had good cause for their vicious behaviour. Once near Illongo village in the Kilosa district I was walking along a well-worn elephant path that descended steeply through a belt of reeds into a sandy riverbed. As I emerged from the reeds, round a sharp bend I came face to face with an old bull who charged on sight. I shot him at about seven or eight yards and he dropped dead. One of his horns was missing and, on examining him I found that it had been broken off at the base, leaving a big jagged hole in his head. The wound was septic and alive with maggots. The smell was so unbearable and the animal in such poor condition that not one of my meat-hungry porters would touch the carcass.

The other incident happened in the Mahenge district. One day, when I was in my headquarters on Mahenge plateau, an urgent telephone call came from the Labour Officer at Kiberege who told me that a buffalo had killed a native and severely mauled two others within a few miles of his camp. Some of his labourers, whose home was near the scene of the tragedy, were afraid to report for duty because their path lay through the heavily forested country in which the rogue lived.

After a cup of tea in the morning my wife and I made an early start, motoring through to Kiberege, about a hundred miles along the main road to Kilosa. Game scout Rashidi Motomihako came with us. We stopped a few minutes with the labour officer to get further details and to find out the exact locality of the killing.

At the same time we picked up a local native guide who knew the area and volunteered to lead us to the right place. A few miles further on along the road the guide stopped us and pointed towards a biggish thicket where he thought we would find the buffalo. The patch of bush was somewhat isolated from the surrounding forests. On its northern side there was a wide strip of coarse long grass and scrub. To the south there was a long narrow glade of short green grass, newly sprung up after burning. I drew the car off to the side of the road near the open glade.

It was nearly eleven o'clock by then and we had not breakfasted, I decided to have a quick meal while Rashidi and the guide went off to see if they could pick up fresh tracks. Within a quarter of an hour they returned to say that they had found a red-hot spoor in the long grass to the north. There was a possibility that our quarry might break cover through the glade in order to escape and hide himself in the extensive forests beyond. This might entail a prolonged hunt so I left Rashidi, much against his will, to guard that exit and to look after my wife who remained with the car.

The guide led the way while I followed close behind. In a few minutes we were on a very fresh narrow trail in tall dense grass. Soon we entered the forest with the guide still tracking because this gave me a better opportunity for looking round. We had barely covered a hundred yards when the guide bent down a little to peer through the stems of the gloomy undergrowth and pointed ahead. Before I had time to get a view I heard a harsh grunt which was followed immediately by the crashing of bushes and saplings and pounding hoofs. There was no need to tell the guide to beat it; he knew his stuff. Very dimly I could see a dark mass bearing down on me at great speed. The rogue began his charge from about fifteen yards and I could see nothing but a moving mass of tangled vegetation. There was no vital target to aim at and, it would have been worse than foolish to waste a chance shot. In a fraction of a second I made up my mind. There was a small tree about six or seven inches in diameter, in a direct line between us, and about three yards to my front. If I moved to the right quickly the buffalo would have to deviate a little to get round it. Just before he took the turn I leaped sideways and slightly backwards to face him a trifle from the flank. Unfortunately, I landed with one foot in a deepish hole, which put me off my balance. By now the buffalo was within a yard of me and, as I fell, I fired the right barrel at the point of his near shoulder. As he swept low with his horns I fired the second barrel into the hind part of his stomach – it was too late to pick a vital spot. As the shot went off, the horns struck the rifle just in front of the trigger guard and jerked it out of my hands. I was then flat on my back, the sharp horn missed my body by inches, and the saliva from his mouth covered my arms and face. I was entirely at his mercy but both bullets had hit him hard and, had taken the fight out of him. He staggered and coughed, covering me with froth and blood from his lungs then turned slowly about to hobble away. I noticed then that

his foreleg was broken and he seemed very stiff. Now was my chance to escape and I moved in no uncertain manner. The bush was too dense for running so I leaped into the nearest tree with baboon-like ease. To my dismay it was not strong enough to bear my weight and began to bend to earth. Luckily for me my enemy was still in retreat so I looked round for my rifle which I found undamaged by the rough treatment but I could not reload it because the barrels were choked with earth. As soon as the buffalo was out of sight in the long grass into which he had retreated I went back to the car to clean the rifle with a pull-through. For the first time I now felt the shock of the encounter and decided that it would be a good idea to have a short rest, a cup of tea and a soothing smoke of Boer tobacco before returning to finish off the job. On all those occasions when I have been in a dangerous position, the events have been so swift that there has been no time for fear, any feeling of nervousness comes as a re-action when the conflict is over

About a quarter of an hour later Rashidi and I went off to kill the wounded beast. The natives had heard the shots and a dozen or so had come along to find out what happened and to be in early for the meat.

Although the buffalo's foreleg was broken the situation was still dangerous because of the dense cover into which he had retreated, so we told the natives to keep away. Before following the blood-spoor into the grass we took the precaution of climbing a few trees on the outskirts to try to get some idea of his whereabouts. From the tree tops we could see a thin line of grass stems which had been slightly bent over by the pressure of the buffalo's body. This line disappeared from view after about fifty or sixty yards so we knew that he had turned right or left at that point. A little later we saw a bush being shaken violently about forty yards along the trail and several paces to the right; he had circled back. Aiming down towards the root of the tree I fired a couple of shots to see if he would move, but the shaking continued. Leaving our guide to watch the spot we followed the track quietly. When we gauged that we were opposite the buffalo I pushed in carefully through the coarse stems until I could see the telltale shaking of the branches. When within about five yards I saw a dark form at the base of the tree and put a shot into it to see if I could draw him out, then ran back down the tracks to where I could get a clearer view if he charged. As we reached our path we heard an agonised bellow from behind. In front of us we saw a heap of struggling black bodies – the mob of natives had followed us and in their anxiety to escape when they saw us running

they had fallen over one another and, were tangled in a hopeless mess. When a buffalo is dying he often makes a peculiar agonised bellowing and so we knew that the bull was in extremis and there was no need to get excited. I had reloaded my rifle during the short retreat and now we went back confidently to find our quarry all but dead, lying on his side and kicking out spasmodically. I put a bullet into the back of his head to stop any pain.

He was an animal in the prime of life, his horns were very sharp, beautifully shaped and of a fair average size, being forty-three inches in a straight line across the across the widest spread.

On his belly I found the cause for his bad temper. There was a big ugly wound where a patch of his thick skin had been torn out. The ulcer, which was about the size of a soup plate was festering and seething with maggots. Two days previously some natives had found the tumour, for such it was, that the buffalo had torn off by rubbing it against jagged stumps of trees. The labour officer had weighed the lump of meat and skin and found it to be approximately seventeen pounds - no wonder the poor beast had been in such a violent mood.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BABOONS

The baboons of the Southern areas belong to the genus papio and although they are not quite as big as the chacma baboons of South Africa they are little inferior to that species in size and strength. Some the older males or "dogs", as they are called, approach a mastiff in size and weight. Their heads are massive and their jaws provided with big strong teeth, more powerful than those of any domesticated dog. Besides being very muscular they have the advantage of being able to use their hind feet and toes as auxiliary hands.

Baboons are distributed very thoroughly all over the Southern provinces, from the seashores to Lake Nyasa and in many different types of country. They are great rock-climbers and are generally found in large numbers in the vicinity of granite outcrops and other boulder-strewn hills. But they also inhabit open bush country where there are no big rocky hills. They live in family groups of from fifteen to fifty or more individuals.

In spite of their heavy build and rather ungainly appearance they can gallop at an amazing speed, almost as fast as a good dog, for several hundred yards at a stretch. They can also climb trees with agility although, of course, they are not nearly so nimble as monkeys on account of their weight and big heavy heads. Their tails are longish, with a very noticeable downward kink several inches above the root of that appendage.

They spend most of their time on the ground during daylight hours, hunting for their food which is varied and consists of such things as bulbs and roots; fruit; young shoots and leaves, the young of many of the smaller mammals; lizards, spiders, scorpions; young birds and eggs, and many other titbits. The old "dog" baboons rule the roost in no uncertain manner and march ahead of the party with majestic tread. They are most intolerant of the younger generation and woe betide any youngster who finds and tries to monopolise a plentiful supply of food – he will be cuffed, beaten, swung round in circles or caught by the tail and bitten severely.

The very young cling to the fur underneath their mothers' bodies but when they are older they look like comical and cheeky little jockeys as they ride pick-a-back around.

Before sundown baboons begin to retreat towards their sleeping places which may be on the hilltops or in the valleys, but invariably they select

the highest trees for their night's repose. Before it gets too dark they settle themselves along the higher boughs, having made certain that they can leap from their tree to the next one in the event of disturbance by a python or a leopard. In the mornings during warm weather they leave their perches as soon as the light is good enough but on colder mornings they often sit huddled up together for warmth until the sun shines.

I have read accounts of baboons raiding fields at night but never in my experience have I seen or heard baboons feeding on the ground after dark nor have any such instances been reported to me by the natives. Their deadliest and most dreaded enemy is the leopard and for that reason alone they would not like to leave their perches during the hours of darkness.

They may possibly sleep in crevices high up precipitous rocks where they would be unassailable by their spotted enemy but I have never come across evidence of such dormitories. I am inclined to believe that in any case they would be much too scared to take the risk of getting tangled up with the big snakes which abound in those regions and of which they live in mortal terror – the sight of a dead one makes them chatter furiously.

Just before sunrise I have seen baboons standing or walking about on the summits of great granite boulders but invariably there have been some trees growing near the top.

Their small brown eyes are strong and bright and their sight appears to be much keener than that of man.

That they have an organised scouting system is evident from behaviour – on hundreds of occasions I have watched this organisation with growing interest. When moving about their feeding grounds the older animals take it in turns to climb up the tallest trees to spy out the land. Generally an old "dog" brings up the rear and is assisted by some of the younger animals that help him by climbing up and looking out from many treetops. Their loud warning cries are quite different from any other sounds they make.

When feeding, playing about or resting there are always sentries posted round about the outskirts of the troop – this is particularly noticeable where there is a big party of fifty or more individuals. One or two old animals take up advantageous positions from which to keep in touch with the younger ones who are posted as sentries round their perimeter. Sometimes a sentry gets slack or fiddles about or dozes – then a deep warning bark brings him back to his senses.

When their suspicions are aroused the sentries give a loud sharp bark to warn the party, the old "dogs" bark gruffly and appear to try to intimidate intruders by making deep growling guttural noises.

Baboons seem to be able to tell the difference only between one and more than one, so that if two people approach them and one hides while the other goes away they know there is a trap, but if three people approach and two go away they are outwitted. Sometimes I have been able to approach and take baboons completely by surprise by means of various tricks and it has been amusing to listen to their many different shouts of annoyance and dismay. Quite often some unfortunate young sentry gets a beating up because his elders have been disturbed without warning.

I have had to shoot many baboons because of their thieving habits but I have never seen them return to a wounded animal's assistance nor have I been attacked by them even when right in amongst big numbers, although sometimes they will threaten with bared tusks and menacing attitudes.

Sometimes I have come unexpectedly upon big "dog" baboons "talking big" from behind some hiding place – on all such occasions the baboon has all but tripped over himself in his anxiety to increase the distance between us, making a succession of deep rumbling grunts indicative more of fear than anger. Perhaps the fear of firearms has prevented any attempt at an attack but I have never heard of baboons making a concentrated attack on human beings nor have I heard of an attack by an old solitary rogue being pressed home on a man. Although, as will be seen later, they do occasionally maul women and children.

All over Africa natives tell the tale of young girls being stolen by old "dog" baboons – this of course, is a fable. But baboons do know the difference between men and women. They will not enter a field when there are men about, excepting at a safe distance, but they have no such respect for women. It is quite common to see them round about fields and villages where only women are present. At a village on the Mbalo stream, near Mahenge, I watched scores of baboons stealing rice from a field where the women were reaping, many of them were within ten yards or so of the reapers and took little notice of their shouts and threats. In fact, some of the older dogs looked extremely menacing at times. I shot several of these before they left the vicinity.

Near Ifakara village Jumbé Mohamed stopped me as I was passing in my car and begged me to shoot an old rogue baboon. This solitary and bad

tempered old bachelor had eaten dozens of fowls and had so terrorised the women that they would not go out into the fields unless accompanied by men. Mohamed had gone out himself, armed with an axe, the rest of the male population being away on road work. The baboon attacked him and he threw his axe at it, whereupon the rogue seized the axe and the jumbé bolted for home. I went out to look at him keeping my rifle hidden behind my back. He was a bit suspicious of a European and reluctant to retreat, but he did so slowly when I was within about thirty yards, snarling and showing his teeth as he did so. He did not attempt to run but just kept pace with me and it was a simple matter to kill him.

During ten years in the Southern provinces I saw two women and a young girl who had been severely bitten by baboons, the latter died in Kilwa hospital. I heard of at least another dozen women and children who had been mauled and was told by a father and mother of a case where their very young baby had been taken from the verandah of their hut and eaten by a baboon. The latter incident was said to have occurred at a small village near MsangaMkun in the Mikindani district. I cannot vouch for the truth of the story but have no reason to disbelieve the parent's tales especially as they and other villagers pointed out the tree that the brute climbed with the baby before eating it.

Solitary old rogues are often bad tempered and take to living about villages where they steal anything they can get, including fowls and goat-kids and even cooked food from the utensils lying about. All baboons frequenting the neighbourhood of villages and cultivated areas should be exterminated because of their depredation, which are considerable. Moreover they are greedy and wasteful destroying much more than they eat.

In the remotest parts of the bush they are harmless to men and should be left alone to take their part in the general scheme of nature. There they are amusing and interesting to watch and study. On the lower slopes of Mkongowéré, a towering granite boulder several hundred feet high, I have often watched them feeding, playing and squabbling. They have no fear of height and it was wonderful to watch them climbing up and down the sheer granite cliffs with ease and great skill where a fall would have meant instant death. Sometimes they proceeded headfirst down what appeared to be a perpendicular face almost devoid of any foothold. From such precarious positions they would stop to raise their heads to look out over the valley hundreds of feet below. Once cycling round a series of bends in the motor road between the great Makumbuli rocks I found

myself in the midst of a large party of baboons. The road was hard and as I was freewheeling down a slight incline they had failed to notice my approach. A young sentry had failed to give the warning, and an old man baboon rushed at him, seized him by the tail and swung him round in circles, muttering with rage. Before letting him go he bit him in the thigh. I could not help feeling sorry for the little fellow who screamed as if he were being murdered.

THE SPOTTED HYAENA

The spotted hyaena is by far the biggest and most powerful of the still existing hyaenas and it is about this animal and its habits in the Southern Provinces of Tanganyika that I am writing. It must be remembered that the habits of animals vary considerably according to their environment. They are heavily built animals with very strong shoulders and necks. Their skulls are wide and deep and their powerful jaws equipped with muscles and molars capable of crushing almost any bone excepting the biggest bones of an elephant. In colour, they are a dirty smoky yellow covered with a fair number of dark brown spots. Their ears are rounded and biggish and their tails comparatively short and thick. Their big feet are furnished with four toes each which are provided with strong non-retractable claws so that their footprints are very easily identified, resembling those of a big domestic dog of which there are very few in the country.

In spite of their size, strength and powerful jaws, they seldom attack any living creatures bigger than themselves and then only if the victim is asleep or sick. But there are exceptions.

They are solitary and nocturnal in their habits and seldom seen in daylight. Being cowardly creatures they live almost entirely on carrion and have little to recommend them excepting that they are great scavengers and take a full share in keeping the air of the country fresh and clean. No matter what the state of decomposition of a carcass they will return night after night until every bit of rotting meat and skin is eaten and then they will break up and eat the bones.

As a rule they do not hunt in packs and I have never come across an instance of this nature nor have I seen any evidence to support stories told me by the local natives regarding odd cases of pack hunting. But as many as a dozen or even a score will collect round the carcass of an elephant at night, coming in to the feast from their separate homes and

calling loudly as they approach. They make many different kinds of noises but the commonest is a deep drawn out grumble that ends in a high-pitched scream "00000000-WEE". Sometimes they just make a low grumbling moan and from time to time they burst into shrieks of the most hideous laughter.

During the day they live in the disused holes of antbears and other animals deep underground, issuing forth at night to prowl the country singly, or in pairs if they happen to be mating. When they are big enough the young ones, two or three in number, follow their mother on her rounds. They travel long distances in a night - I have followed their tracks along a path for at least fifteen miles. Having an acute sense of smell they are able to pick up and follow the scent of a rotting carcass for many miles. Besides feeding on carrion they kill and eat any kind of animal which is smaller than they are, or incapable of defending itself. I have not come across an instance of a hyaena eating one of its own kind nor have I seen signs of any other kind of animal eating a hyaena.

Their hideous calls are heard frequently at night round villages and in the bush. Certain bolder individuals take to living in the vicinity of towns and villages losing much of their fear of man. These animals kill sheep and goats, dogs, cats, fowls and even sickly cattle, becoming bolder and more aggressive as time goes on.

Their strength is amazing. Once I shot a full grown waterbuck bull and left it lying on a sandy beach near my camp on the Ruvuma River. A solitary hyaena came along during the night, dragged it a good fifty yards through the heavy sand then up a steep bank into some scrub where he devoured the best part of a hind quarter.

In 1924 and 1925, when walking round the Western shores of Lake Nyasa from Fort Johnstone to Karonga, I came across many natives who said they had been bitten by hyaenas about their faces and feet, but I had good reason to believe that most of the scars were caused by disease or neglected jigger-fleas. However, there was no reason to doubt that some of these people had in fact been bitten while lying asleep at night beside a path when on a long journey. But in the Southern Provinces of Tanganyika such occurrences are very rare. Nevertheless when sleeping in the open the natives in certain areas do not trust these scavengers and take care to keep their fires burning throughout the night.

Near Lukulédi Mission, in the Masasi district, a hyaena killed a man and ate part of him. A party of three was returning late at night from a beer-drink. They were very drunk and when one of their number fell out to go

to sleep beside the path the other two did not notice his absence. In the morning he was found half eaten. Suspecting that there had been a drunken brawl there was an inquiry and inquest. It was proved beyond doubt that the hyaena was solely responsible.

When I had my headquarters at Chumula Hill, little more than a mile from Masasi district office, an old dog hyaena became a great pest. Not content with breaking into many of the fowl houses in the village and at the Mission two miles away, he killed several dogs and goats. Then he began to prowl about the Europeans' houses where he stole a strange assortment of articles, amongst which were several pairs of shoes, a tricycle saddle, some books, two or three cushions and rugs, leather straps and many other things. I happened to be away on a six weeks tour at the time and on my return was asked to do something about it. I was sleeping very soundly on my first night at home after the long trip when my wife called out to say that there was a hyaena at the back of the house. Collecting my torch and shotgun I went out to look for it. There was no sign of the animal so I went to the front door, which opened on to a wide verandah. The house was n very dark one on account of a low thatched roof and I walked noiselessly in bare feet. Hoping to take him by surprise I did not switch on the torch but walked out in the dark. As I passed through the verandah door I was met by deep angry growls. Turning on the light I saw the hyaena about three yards away looking at me and snarling, he had dropped a cushion which he was in the act of stealing. In a flash he turned and bolted knocking over a couple of chairs in his path. It all happened so quickly and unexpectedly that I had no time to shoot. Dashing out to the edge of the small hill on which our house was built I saw the hyaena running along the motor road about fifty yards below and was able to give him a charge of buckshot which killed him after he had run another fifty yards or so. As there was no more trouble from hyaenas after that there was no doubt that this one had been responsible for all the trouble in the area.

They were a great pest all over the country killing many goats and fowls and dogs. We killed many scores by means of guntraps, which we found most effective especially as they become very bold and incautious once they take to scavenging around villages and towns.

CROCODILES

Crocodiles abound in all the bigger rivers of the Southern Provinces. Most of the smaller streams with deep pools at intervals have their quota too.

The rivers and creeks round Lake Nyasa are infested with them as are most isolated permanent pools and lakes all over the country. They are also plentiful in the mangrove creeks and swamps along the coast. As far as I know they all belong to the same genus and species – *Crocodilus niloticus*.

Although they are not to be seen lying about on sandbanks in such great numbers as are found in many other parts of Africa they are nevertheless present in many scores of thousands. Crocodiles are expert in the art of camouflage and no matter how keen one's eyesight, it is extremely difficult to recognise their knobbly countenances amongst the many different types of water-weeds and rocks and roots which they frequent. They vary greatly in colour too – from yellowish brown through many shades of olive-green to deepest brown. Lying still as death with their bodies submerged beneath aquatic plants they look out across the surface of the water through small protruding eyes hidden amongst upturned water-lily leaves and other plant life of a hundred different hues. Here they breathe imperceptibly under cover of a leaf or blades of watergrass. As they have a very acute sense of smell and hearing it is very difficult to take them unawares. They can sound or surface so stealthily that there is scarcely any visible disturbance of the water. But when they doze in the hot sun in the morning or afternoon stretched out flat on a heavy bank of weed or on the sands it is easier to approach them. Even then one must move quietly and cautiously and keep on the right side of the wind.

In those remoter parts where crocodiles know little or nothing of the dangers of firearms they are much more careless in their behaviour. They lie about quite unconcerned, allowing human beings approach within 50 or 60 yards or so before rushing towards the water or sliding into it quietly if they happen to be near the margin.

Do not be misled by their apparent sluggishness, which is only skin deep. They do look torpid and lazy sprawling about drowsed by the warm sand and sun – often with their mouths wide open waiting for some hungry plover to come and pick their teeth or crawling about flat on their bellies. But when aroused they are capable of rapid movement, even on dry land. If disturbed by a rifle shot when they are facing away from the riverbank they often reverse their direction in a second by throwing themselves over sideways and backwards, using their hind legs and powerful tails as a lever.

If they happen to be some distance away from the water when disturbed it is most likely that they will rise high on their legs to wobble back to their element with ungainly but rapid motion. In this attitude, with their bodies raised clear of the sand one gets a true impression of their size because it is only then that the great depth of their frames can be appreciated.

In water, which is their natural element, they float or submerge with the greatest ease and can paddle along slowly with almost imperceptible movement or flash through as quickly as a fish. Their toes are webbed but they use these mostly for balance, propelling themselves by means of their long powerful tails, which are laterally compressed.

They live chiefly on fish, which they catch by various means and swallow whole. Their conical teeth are made for gripping, not for chewing, and as their short thick tongues are practically immobile they have to manoeuvre their food into position for swallowing by means of short quick jerks of their heads. Nor is this such a simple matter because of their stiff necks. The lateral movements of their heads are greatly restricted by the peculiar formation of the joint between head and vertebrae.

The upward and downward movements of the head are easier. When shooting raiding hippo on the Ruvuma River I used to take the opportunity to feed the crocodiles and to observe their habits. Roundish lumps of meat and hide were seized on the surface of the water and thrown into their throats by means of a backward and upward jerk of the head – sometimes when the meat was thrown accurately to land near their snouts they caught it in midair.

Long strips of meat with hard thick hide attached were seized as they fell. If these happened to lie crosswise to their jaws they juggled them into position, finally throwing the strip into the air so that it would land endways into their open mouths which they closed with a loud snap.

When the river was polluted with blood hundreds of these reptiles would appear from downstream and from upstream too if the wind happened to be blowing in that direction. Watching for them through field glasses sometimes I would see just their heads floating along. At other times the whole serrated back would appear above the surface for a minute or two. They seemed to have little trouble in making headway against strong currents.

When catching animals on the edge of a riverbank they spring out at them with amazing speed to seize and drag them under water to be suffocated. They are supposed to seize antelopes and other animals by

their noses while they are drinking – this is quite possible but I have never seen it happen to wild animals although I have seen goats taken in this manner. Antelopes are very nervous of drinking water in deep pools or rivers and generally choose shallow places where crocodiles would find it difficult to remain undetected, especially as the latter have a very strong musky smell and the former have delicate nostrils on which they rely for their security from predacious animals. I have found the remains of waterbuck and pig in crocodiles stomachs and it is my belief that they catch many four footed animals when these are crossing rivers. I know that dogs can smell crocodiles when they are under water and a few yards away from the shore because I have been forced to use them as bait on several occasions. On every occasion the dog, which was tethered up close to the water's edge, gave me ample warning of the crocodile's approach long before the latter's eyes appeared on the surface of the water. Needless to say the dogs used were pariahs from native villages and a ceaseless watch was kept to ensure that they were not maimed. Purebred dogs that have been brought up in towns should be kept on leashes when in the vicinity of crocodile infected rivers because their instincts are dulled and they are much slower in recognising the dangers lurking in the water.

Once I was watching a troop of baboons drinking at the edge of a big pool. Sitting in thick cover on the opposite bank I had a perfect view. Suddenly there was great consternation as a big crocodile came rushing down the incline towards them. Barks and screams came from the panic-stricken crowd as they leaped away in all directions. The crocodile snapped at one with his jaws and missed by a hair breath but lashing out with his tail he struck an old female in the chest. She landed in the water crumpled up by the blow. I stood up just in time to see the crocodile drag her under. The crocodile had been hiding in wait amongst some low scrubby bushes on rising ground several yards from the margin of the pools.

I have never heard of a crocodile attacking a live hippopotamus though they live cheek by jowl in the some pools. Reliable natives told me that the latter make a great fuss and clear all crocodiles out of selected localities when they are expecting a birth. I cannot vouch for this. In any case even a full sized crocodile is quite unable to bite through the hide of a freshly killed hippo. I watched the former on countless occasions making frantic efforts to tear a hole in the belly-skin (this is the weakest part) of hippos I have shot. Tugging and jerking with all their might they

end up by threshing the water madly with their tails in their efforts to increase the leverage. As often as not they roll over completely, then their teeth slip from the tough elastic hide to close together with a loud snap. They hang around until the body rots.

Every year they take a heavy toll of goats and dogs and ducks from villages near riverbanks. At least a score of natives are taken annually, probably many more. But it is difficult to arrive at an accurate figure owing to the remoteness, and inaccessibility of many hundreds of villages.

On certain stretches of the Rufiji River these reptiles are particularly vicious and less cowardly than usual. Generally speaking crocodiles are such cowardly creatures that it is not necessary to take any precautions when wading waist-deep through rivers in a crowd of people, provided the party does a fair amount of talking and splashing as they go along. In those areas where crocodiles had a bad reputation I used to fire a shot into the water before entering. But, within a few miles on either side of Mpanganya Agricultural Station on the Rufiji River a few unpleasant incidents occurred which caused me to take more care in crossing rivers.

The Agricultural Officer told me of an extraordinary experience that had befallen him a few days before my arrival. While canoeing down the river he passed a sandy island in midstream. On the island he saw an enormous crocodile which he decided to shoot on account of its great size. His two native paddlers did not like the idea but he persuaded them to approach to within easy range. As soon as he fired the crocodile threw itself backwards into the river and made a bee-line for the dug-out which was long and heavy being made of mvul wood, one of the hardest timbers of Africa. The rifle was an old worn out .303 and was loaded with eleven rounds of ammunition. As the reptile approached several more shots were fired at it. On it came regardless of the shooting. The natives paddled for the bank with all their might. Soon the crocodile was under the canoe, which he tried to overturn by rising under it. Fortunately the dugout was too heavy to be capsized in this way but the crocodile changed his tactics and began lashing out at them with his tail. Only MVUL could have stood the strain. The occupants were kept busy dodging the blows and whenever he saw an opportunity the European fired another shot until in the end there was only one round of ammunition remaining. Realising that this was all that lay between life and death he did not fire the last round until he felt certain of a winner.

That last shot saved their lives and they did not see the crocodile again, alive or dead. It was the most astounding story I have ever heard about the pertinacity of a crocodile, but, knowing the teller, I believed every word of his tale. After he had told me the story I tested his rifle finding it to be worn out and most inaccurate.

A day later I came to some deep wide crossings through muddy stinking backwaters of the Rufiji. Long grass and reeds grew thickly on either side of the channel. We were in a hurry so waded through the filthy water which was almost up to our armpits in places. As we were a big party (I had twenty porters) we were not much concerned about crocodiles and got through quite safely.

On our return journey, some two weeks later, we heard a tale about this crossing – this time we waited for canoes. It appeared that a canoe was ferrying some people across the backwaters a few days after we had passed. As one of the paddlers dipped his blade into the water a – crocodile seized him by the wrist and dragged him out of the canoe – he was never seen again. After this experience the ferrymen lashed two canoes together and when they paddled backwards and forwards they stood up with one foot in each canoe. The crocodile attacked again – this time he seized the paddle of the foremost man. As he dragged it down the man behind struck the brute on the head with his blade, overbalancing slightly as he did so. In a flash the crocodile had him by the wrist and dragged him away to be eaten. One of my scouts, Saidi Kipende, was called to help. He found the crocodile sunning itself on some mudflats near the crossing. He fired at it but failed to kill, the crocodile rushed at him overland and he paralysed it with his second shot. On opening up its stomach they found human remains and several bangles belonging to previous victims. The crocodile was very nearly eighteen feet in length.

At Kissaki on the Mgeta River a crocodile took to man-eating. He lived in a big hole under the riverbank. The entrance to the hole was deep down under water but the back end was well above water level between the roots of a giant fig tree. This had been discovered by the natives in the dry season when there was little water in the river. Within some thirty yards of the fig tree the village path came down to water. Long grass and weeds had been cleared from round about the watering place to make it safer for the women. In all eleven people had been seized by this crocodile and dragged away to his vile den where they were left to rot before eating. I happened to be in camp near the village one day when

the twelfth victim, a woman, was severely mauled. She was drawing water at time. As was the custom she stood n good five yards away from the water's edge drawing the water in a calabash attached to the end of n twenty-foot bamboo pole. When the calabash was full she drew the bamboo from hand to hand turning round to pour the water into a large earthenware jar behind her. As she turned to empty the calabash the crocodile sprang out at her – she heard it coming and rushed away screaming. The tips of the crocodiles jaws closed on the calf of her leg tearing away much of the flesh and muscle. Other people who were close at hand shouted and came to her assistance, saving her from a horrible death. The crocodile retreated into the river and the woman was taken to the local dressing station. After some weeks she recovered from the wound but was maimed for life.

Arriving on the spot within half an hour of the calamity I arranged for a dog to be brought down to be used as bait to entice the crocodile from his lair. We tethered him a couple of yards from the waters' edge then I sat down behind a bush with my rifle in position. The poor dog was frantic for a few minutes and kept on running to the river margin but after a while he lay down quietly. The river was in flood and we could not see into the red muddy water. Half an hour later the dog became uneasy and soon began to rush round in circles yelping loudly – he could smell the crocodile, which must have emerged from its hole to lie in wait under the slack water in the bay. Now it was absolutely necessary to keep dead still with the rifle pointed in the direction where I expected the crocodile to appear. Although I did not move my eyes from the water I did not see the crocodile's eyes and knobby nose break surface but became imperceptibly aware of the cold straw brown eyes staring fixedly at the terrified dog. Very slowly and without the slightest ripple those eyes drew nearer and the ugly head rose by degrees. Here I must tell you that to take a frontal shot at a crocodile on the level is a risky thing to do because the hard slippery skull often deflects the bullet. The shock merely stuns the reptile temporarily and when he recovers he becomes extremely sly. My position had been chosen on the highest ground available but not as high as I should have liked, so I waited in the hope that I would be able to take a shot at the junction of the head and neck. Like a flash of lightning he sprang at the dog. Luckily my eye was glued on the sights and the bullet tore through the vertebrae of his neck killing him instantaneously. I had been waiting for him for just over an hour. The poor dog had been through a terrible ordeal so I killed a fowl

for him and gave him a feast. In the crocodile's belly many bangles and anklets were found – these had been worn by his victims. From nose to tip of tail he measured just over sixteen feet.

This crocodile's underground den was situated so near to the place where he caught many of his victims that it would have been quite possible for the latter to escape drowning while being dragged under water to the filthy larder. It is quite possible that there would be small fissures leading to the open air in many of these slimy holes. In which case a person might live there for several hours or even days – it would be hard to imagine a more horrible lingering death.

At one of the villages on the Ruvuma River, in the Newalla district, crocodiles had been a great nuisance for some years. The local scout, Stefano, had shot several of these pests which had taken numerous goats and dogs and most of the village ducks. Besides this they had broken through many fish-traps and nets and had mauled several fishermen. One very dry season when the river ran lower than in previous years the fishermen took more risks than usual in their efforts to trap and net fish in the restricted waters. Seventeen natives were caught by crocodiles during a period of two months; many of these were of Portuguese East Africa. Stefano was an excellent shot but found these man-eaters a bit too wily so he asked if I would give a hand. The natives knew the pools frequented by these rogues and pointed out their hiding places under banks overgrown with matted reeds. The water was deep and, excepting by canoe, we could not get within two hundred yards of their haunts. As it was useless trying to locate them by paddling round in canoes I decided to entice them upstream where I could get at them. On the way down to the river I had shot a few baboons to use for bait. Choosing the village watering place for number one who lived on our bank we waited until afternoon when we took the body of a baboon down to a sandspit where we disembowelled it in the running water which would carry the blood past the crocodile's nose. Then we staked the body securely in shallow water. Stefano stayed with me while the others went away. We hid behind some bushes on the bank about fifteen yards away from the bait. It was four o'clock in the afternoon, the sun was scorching and there was a blinding glare on the water so we took it in turns to watch. At about 5p.m many heads of small crocodiles began to appear and moved slowly towards the bait. Later several bigger heads rose cautiously to sink again out of sight. Just before sundown there were at least a score of crocodiles approaching but the one we wanted had not

yet arrived – Stefano knew him by his colour which, was olive yellow. The sun was sinking when we spotted our quarry that had appeared from nowhere and was looking fixedly at the baboon. Several times he faded out of sight under the water to appear again a little closer to his prey. When he reached shallow water I shot him in the ear. As he rolled over belly up his tail writhed feebly then he sank right way up.

In a few minutes several natives came running down from the village. We put out in a canoe and fixed a strong hook through its tail. The hook was fastened to a piece of chain and a long stout rope. A dozen of us dragged him out onto the sandbank where we made a big log fire to give a light while we cut him open. In his stomach we found several stones, the largest being about the size of a hen's egg, and two brass bangles which were afterwards recognised by the women in the village – there was no doubt that we had got one of the man-killers. He measured 16 feet from tip to tip.

The following afternoon we crossed over two wide and narrow channels in the parcelled sandbanks to a deep pool where the second rogue lay hiding. We took the bodies of the baboons with us to attract our quarry. We opened them up in the stream and staked them securely in some very shallow water. We had plenty of cover amongst bushes and reeds but no shade. Sitting here from three o'clock in the afternoon until sunset was almost too hot to bear – we had to scoop out holes in the sand before we could sit down. Soon after 5p.m I spotted the crocodile through my field glasses, he was swimming upstream slowly beside the reed covered bank. Every now and then he disappeared to rise again higher up the stream. By now many other crocodiles had come into the scene. I thought the big fellow would not arrive until the light had failed. He had been missing for five minutes when I saw his big ugly head resting on the edge of the sandbank. Just as I was beginning to despair he crawled out towards one of the baits, with his broad back towards us. In the dusky light I was able to see the bright silver foresight of my rifle so aiming at the back of his head where it joined his neck I fired – the bullet tore his vertebrae to bits. I sent for my food and bedding and after we had dragged the crocodile well away from the river margin we camped out on the sands under a starry sky. In the morning we opened up the body anxiously to see if we had got the crocodile we wanted – we had no other means of identification. A thick ivory bangle and two others made of brass rewarded our efforts. He was a little over 17 feet in length.

I spent two more days trying to find the third man-eater a few miles further down the river but had no luck so left Stefano to carry on the hunt. About a week later a message came to tell me that Stefano had been taken by the man-eater. I was over a hundred miles away at the time and hurried back to investigate.

His gunbearer took me to the spot and told me how he met his end. Stefano shot a big crocodile, which he took to be the man-eater. It was about fifty yards out from a sandy beach in shallow water and too late to drag it out. As he was a keen fisherman he prepared a night line and insisted on going out in dusky light to set it near the crocodile's carcass. The gunbearer followed with his rifle and the villagers watched them from the shore. They saw several big catfish swimming round the body so Stefano threw out his baited hook, pushed a sharpened stake into the sand and fastened his cord to it. As he turned round to go back to the village a crocodile seized him by the leg and dragged him away to deep water. The gunbearer fired a shot into the river but the crocodile took no notice of it. Stefano was dragged under water but rose to the surface once before he disappeared for good. When he rose he shouted, "Ninakufa, Kwa - heri" - "I am dying good-bye".

The gun-bearer had noticed that the rogue had a short tail and the villagers assured me that a short-tailed crocodile was the one that had killed several people from their village. That night I shot a pig in the tapioca fields and put it out for bait on the edge of an island a couple of hundred yards from the riverbank. We sat there all day until the evening when a big crocodile came out onto the sands just before sunset. He had a short tail so I shot him. We found nothing in his stomach to prove that he was the man-killer but all the fisherman swore that they recognised him as the culprit. As no more people were taken by crocodiles in that area there was good reason to believe that we had killed the culprit.

While engaged in cultivation protection work much of my time was spent hunting cunning old hippopotamus raiders and rogues which invariably hid themselves in the most inaccessible backwaters and creeks in low-lying marshy lands. In all these bogs and swamps the waterways were overhung with long rank reeds and grasses, the surface of the water being covered with waterlily leaves and many other water weeds. As all these areas were infested by crocodiles the native scouts who were willing to tackle the job often found it difficult or impossible to persuade the local boatmen to accompany them and so I found it necessary to do much of this kind of

work myself. Often I would leave the canoe and crawl along a muddy hippo tunnel to the far side of a promontory hoping to catch a sleeping hippo unawares. Times without number I found myself within a yard or two of crocodiles that had been basking on the land. Almost always they detected me before I became aware of their presence in the dark and gloomy surroundings. Invariably they rushed off or slithered past towards the nearest water – then there was the chance of a crippling blow from the tail. Looking back on my many experiences of this nature makes me wonder at my luck that I was never attacked by one of these hideous slimy reptiles.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A SHORT SAFARI IN KILWA DISTRICT ALONG THE COASTS

The mwitu (forest) round about the middle Mavuje river, which empties its waters into the Indian Ocean near Kilwa Kisiwani, used to be a favourite feeding ground for hundreds of elephants in the days before the Control Scheme got into its full stride. Food was plentiful in the forests and their surroundings where rubber creepers grew to profusion providing succulent fruit and milky juice in their leaves and vines. But, owing to their preference for the native's grain crops the elephants were a constant menace to the population.

In the fields at Nangangachi one old bull became so fat and lazy that he took up permanent residence in the ripening mtama refusing to be scared away by the owners. Game scout Ninga Ismail telephoned from Kilwa to Lindi to tell me about the raider who had exceptionally big tusks. As much as I would have liked to win his trophies, it would have been unfair to allow the nuisance to continue until I could get there, so I instructed Ninga to shoot the bull and to leave the tusks in his head until I arrived, because the Natural History museum in London wanted a big skull.

The rainy season was just over and it was impossible to use a motor car. So I went through on foot, covering the hundred miles in four days. The roads and paths were overgrown and very muddy in many places and there were no bridges over the rivers and streams, which were still full.

On arrival I found that Ninga had killed the big fellow and a very fine specimen he was. Investigation proved that the native's reports, which were nearly always exaggerated, had been correct. The damage done by the raider warranted his death. The ground was still muddy from the rains and it was easy to follow the tracks made during the previous fortnight. I found places where the elephant had turned and charged natives who had tried to frighten him away. Also we found where he had rested during the day under big trees and where he had slept on his side after gorging himself with grain. Always he chose antheaps for his pillows and to make it easier for him to rise to his feet.

A few days later the tusks were drawn by twisting them about in the putrid sockets until they came away easily, without damage to themselves or the skull. They weighed ninety-eight and ninety-four pounds respectively.

Continuing to Kiguruka we shot a few raiders in that area, and then wishing to take a short cut to Njinjo, I called for a guide. A cripple presented himself for the job; he had lost an arm, which was broken off well above the elbow, his thigh and shinbone were badly bent. I asked him about his accident and he told the following story: A few years previously he had made a living by tapping gum in the Mavuje forests. Together with a companion he used to spend weeks at a time wandering about looking for the best trees. They were armed with small axes that were used for cutting herringbone incisions into the trunks they wished to tap. One day, while engaged in making gashes in a tree, a bull elephant stalked him so quietly that he knew nothing of its approach until he was seized by the arm and flung into the air. When he landed from the fall the elephant trampled on him breaking his leg in two places before it went off trumpeting with rage.

Hearing his shouts his companion came to his assistance and later collected stretcher-bearers from the village who carried him home in a rough cradle. The flesh of his limbs was badly bruised and torn by the elephant's rough trunk and feet and soon became septic. Some weeks later an assistant district officer passing by on his rounds heard of his predicament and took him by car to Kilwa hospital where he recovered but lost his arm.

A year or two later the same district officer was killed by an elephant in another part of the country, but this is not part of our tale.

Round about Njinjo we shot a dozen or more raiding elephants and when that job was over we tracked a lion down the path towards Lake Maliwé because he had killed several goats in the village. We found where he had eaten his last victim and continued on his tracks, which led down to the lake where the spoor followed round the margin of a narrow creek. Looking through a belt of reeds I spotted him drinking on the farther side about a hundred yards away. Using a .318 rifle I fired at his heart, he grunted as the shot struck him and I heard the thud of the soft nosed bullet. He rose on his hind legs and clawed the air before bounding into a dense reed bed. I followed the blood trail cautiously and found him lying dead about fifty yards away.

Ninga and I then walked out on to a rocky spit where small creeks intruded from the lake. After watching several schools of hippo which had been disturbed by the shot I took a pot shot at a bigish crocodile who was floating on the water some fifty or sixty yards away. After squirming about for several seconds and thrashing violently with his tail he disappeared under the water. We waited for him to come to the surface again for another chance at one of his kind. While

concentrating on the water in front of us I heard a faint friction of pebbles behind Ninga and slightly to my right. Looking round quickly I saw a crocodile within a couple of feet of Ninga's legs, its jaws were wide open and I expected it to seize him there and then. Raising the rifle in a flash I fired into the vertebrae of its neck, killing it on the spot. Ninga, who thought my rifle had gone off accidentally, leaped into the air with fright. We looked over the crocodile carefully and found that it was the one I had wounded in the lake. It appeared that the small solid bullet had entered the head below the level of the brain and I concluded that it had come ashore in a dazed condition because it was no longer able to struggle for existence in the water, probably its breathing tubes were damaged by the shot.

ALONG THE COASTS OF KILWA, LINDI, AND MIKINDANI

The moon was full and the "bamvua", or spring tides, were at their height. Our small Arab dhow was riding at anchor off the sandy beach just inside the narrow entrance to Mikindani bay, the most beautiful little harbour on the Tanganyika coast.

The bright golden moon, sinking towards the horizon, still shone full on the placid water of the wide land-locked lagoon; there was not a ripple on the surface of the water which lay before us like a great oval mirror reflecting the glory of the moon. Even the tall palm trees were silent. It seemed as though the "Pori" and its wildlife were fast asleep but we knew most of the animals and some of the birds, were very much alive.

Suddenly from the dense coastal thicket came the tremendous bellowing roars of a lion, telling the world that he had dined. After the reverberating bellows there followed a succession of harsh grunts, they came slowly at first and as they diminished in sound the grunts came faster until finally they were almost inaudible – he was quite satisfied with his meal. Then we heard the ugly grumbling growl of a hyaena; this ended in a piercing shriek. Galagos, or bushbabies, chattered harshly in the baobabs – a monstrous noise for such tiny delicate looking creatures. From far away we heard the deep booming of ground-hornbills, firstly the slightly higher pitched notes called "bwana, bwana, nimimputa" followed by the deeper booms saying "leta, leta, ni'mle" (master, master, I have caught it and the answering "bring it, bring it, let me eat it"). Now cichladusa the thrush-warbler was awake and whistled sweetly from the palm trees, a big fish leaped into the air for joy and fell back into the water with a splash.

Now lights began to flicker in the village, which lay on the opposing shore under the growing shadows of the surrounding hills. We were waiting for "Umande", the gentle dew-breeze from the land, to fill our sails and take us out to sea. The brimming bay was full to overflowing but there was no sound of lapping water, all was still.

A darkening shadow stole across the water from the land, "Umandé" was approaching and the agitation brought a ripple in its wake. The unfurled sail flapped softly in the breeze before it filled. Slowly the dhow slipped into the deep channel where the ebbing tide bore us along more swiftly through the gates into the outer bay. Scores of native women were wading waist deep in the shallow waters covering the submerged coral reefs. They were catching "dagaa" (small sardines) on the surface by means of scooping with light porous black cloths: some worked in pairs but most of them worked in small parties of half a

dozen or more. The parties encircled the fish and closed in towards them, splashing the water with their hands to keep them from breaking out, then when they were close enough they put the cloths under the "dagaa" and scooped them out quickly.

The widening waters of the Indian Ocean were deep indigo and scarcely ruffled by the breeze. The first flush of dawn spread rapidly across the sky changing imperceptibly from pale shell pink to rosy-red and by degrees to orange, then to gold. Soon, as we slipped through the shining water, the sun rose orange red above a band of cloud. The breeze, which had been fitful, now blew steadily and helped by the strong current, we gathered speed. Ahead of us there was a great splashing in the water, about a mile away every now and then a big fish leaped out of the water. I was trolling a six inch spoon at the time and thought it advisable to change this for a nine inch mullet, which I had prepared for trolling. While reeling in there was a sudden jerk, I struck immediately and felt that my hook was home: the nahodha (captain) knew his stuff and circled round, releasing the sail skillfully. The fish was strong and for a good 20 minutes he fought in all directions and sounded deep. When at last T brought him to the gaff I was nearly as tired as he was because I had used the brake as much as possible in order to exhaust his energy – there were big fish ahead. When I saw him I regretted that I had not played him longer. He was the biggest horse mackerel (karambisi) that ever came my way and scaled 57 pounds, very deep and wide with strong rasp like keels near the caudal fin. These fish are not only heavy but very strong swimmers and in my opinion put up a better fight, weight for weight, than Barracuda, Albacore or the "Kingfish" of East Africa (nguru).

When he was in the dhow I cut my line above the wire trace to save time and fastened on a seven foot wire trace (3 swivels) with 12/0 hook baited with mullet. The sea battle had drawn nearer and was moving towards our right: in no time we were sailing fast to cut across their front. What a thrilling sight as we closed in the patch of water, a great shoal of herrings was being attacked by bonito, barracuda and tuna. Bonito leaped out of the foam in all directions and occasionally a barracuda shot out like a gleaming spear vibrating with energy: one or two yellow-finned tuna made mighty leaps. We sailed just in front of the seething battle and saw bloodstained waters. My weighted bait passed through the centre of the churning sea and I was so engrossed in watching, that the heavy bamboo rod was nearly jerked out of my hands – fortunately my reel had a clutch otherwise there would have been a broken hand or dislocated thumb. The nahodha handled the dhow superbly. In spite of a twenty pound pressure on the brake the fish went on and on; the four hundred yards of heavy flax line (98lb breaking strain) was drawing to its end. I braced myself for what was

coming, lowered the rod to horizontal, as there was no hope now: the line tautened, left the water in a shimmering spray and snapped. It is nearly always disappointing to lose a fish in this manner but on this occasion it was a relief. Almost from the beginning I realised that the strong steady pull was that of a monster shark and that it would require a bigger reel and longer line for any hope of success.

Soon we were passing the native village of Msanga Mkuu and anchored outside the coral reefs were at least a dozen outriggers and dugouts –the only visible signs of life aboard were black feet sticking out over the gunwales – apparently the bottom fishing was not good and so, as is their practice on such occasions, the fishermen were lying down and fishing with their big toes – the lines being attached thereto by means of a slipknot. We had decided to sail outside the enclosed sea of Mnazi bay and so steered for the open sea – outside the bay we kept a course parallel with the small breakers and a few hundred yards outside the reefs. Here the water was deep, there was a light swell but the sea was unruffled. Our dhow with its ample sail was making four or five knots: sometimes a few flying fish broke water and terns were busy after sardines, diving headlong into the water with a splash. Now I was trolling a small silvery fish (chaa) and using a 10/0 hook (passed through the fish's mouth and out through the side near the tail, the mouth closed above the "eye" and tied fast to prevent water entering). Dolphin-fish (fulusi) were on migration and soon we were amongst them. In a short time I had seven or eight in the dhow, ranging from 5 to 15 lbs. They are perhaps the most brightly coloured of the bigger fish but the colours fade quickly as soon as they are taken from the water. Most Europeans do not like their flesh because it is very oily but the natives are very fond of it and use it smoked and dried in the sun. Dried fish are called ng'onda by the natives who preserve it thus for sale.

At about 2p.m we entered the deep narrow straits between Namponda Island and Msimbati Cape, the reefs were still much exposed and white egrets, black herons and plovers were busy fossicking in amongst the corals and the pools. Here we caught a fine kingfish (one of the bigger mackerel – known as "nguru" by the natives), weighing over thirty pounds. We rounded Namponda Island to find a safe anchorage. Some native fishermen were busy cleaning their catch on the pebbly beach and I bought a dozen or so of different species for pickling in formalin (which I later sent to a museum for identification). They had a big haul and many varieties, all taken from their fence trap ("wando" or "uzio") which enclosed a few acres of coral reef left exposed at low tide. We also bought a few mullet (mkizi) and squids (ngisi) for bait. One of them agreed to

hire us his big dugout for a few days, including the services of himself and partner – it is always advisable to employ local fishermen who know the best spots for fishing. Tent and loads were portered a short distance through the bush to the other side of the island where there was level sandy soil and shade for camping. On the way as we passed a big baobab tree, we saw a fat python slide down and drop to the ground with a heavy thud, (it was a female, the tail being short and thick), in a few seconds it had disappeared into a hole in some rocks. The fishermen told me that this snake was the guardian of their fresh water supply which came from rainwater collected in a deep hollow high up in the bole of the baobab: it had been there for years and frequented the reservoir regularly. When camp had been reached I set out in the dugout with the fishermen and left the staff to unpack. We sailed out across the wide bay and I trolled a 6" Hardy's Herring spoon at about 4 knots and caught a nice koli-koli, about 10lbs., and three Barracuda, one weighing over 30 lbs. The barracuda certainly travelled fast when hooked and dashed and darted in several directions, leaping out the water several times, but he had not the stamina of the big horse mackerel. Just before sunset as we sailed into the narrow, deep entrance to the bay an enormous shape surfaced some twenty yards away. For a second or two I thought it was a whale but then it became apparent that it was a species of basking shark at least 30 feet in length. The native sailor knelt low and prayed to Allah to deliver them from Papa Usingisi (the "sleepy" or basking shark) – when the shark submerged we turned back towards Namponda Island. The tide being almost on the turn, we anchored just off deep water on a ledge of the coral reef. Here we used hand lines and sinkers and caught a dozen or more Red Snappers in a few minutes, then one got away from a hook and they stopped feeding. Meanwhile the line from my heavy rod was lying out some distance, attached to a big cork float. It was now dusk and the tide was full, the extensive flattish reef was several feet under water and teeming with marine life. The strong spring tides swirling through the crevices in the reef had torn and ripped the seaweed from its grip; loose corals were dislodged and rolled about pools. Crustaceans and many other forms of marine life were feeding voraciously in the abundant waters. Small fish were feeding eagerly on crustaceans, weeds and seagrass and the big predatory fish were hunting the shoals of smaller fish and octopus and squid. While we were anchored in the deep tide channels where the corals shelved steeply big predatory fish were lurking or nosing in the gullies. Great Rock Bass (weighing up to 300 or more lbs) hid under shelves and in the jagged caves waiting to seize anything that came their way. The biting edges and roof of their cavernous mouths are covered with ugly patches of spiny teeth, right

down into their throats – their mouths are wide enough to engulf a human being. A great shoal of mullet swam past leisurely near the surface of the water, suddenly they were galvanised into action as a school of barracuda flashed into their midst: they scattered in all directions leaping wildly as if they were playing "ducks and drakes". The long lithe barracuda shot out after them like animated spears: not only did they kill for food but for sport – many of the mullet were left floating on the water with big bites of flesh and bone torn from them. Shortly afterwards a ribbon fish reared high out of the sea and struggled along on his tail; ten yards behind a barracuda flashed through the air in hot pursuit and the game was on.

Returning to the shore after dusk I sat on the rocks above a small sandy bay listening to hundreds of fish dashing and leaping about in the water. What more pleasant sound could a fisherman wish for? That night the natives were worried by the hermit crabs and "usubi" (sand flies) the latter penetrated my mosquito net and so irritating were their bites that I was forced to sit up in my deck chair as close as possible to a blazing fire. From the distant mainland came the roars of lions. Occasionally we heard explosions in the inland sea made by the giant Eagle rays leaping high out of the water and landing flat, probably to rid themselves of sea lice and other vermin. I do not know what these fish weigh but they are some fifteen feet in length and just as wide.

In the morning we crossed over to the mainland to hunt hippo in the creek – they had been raiding the green rice fields. After much difficulty struggling through the mangroves up to our thighs in stinking mud we shot five of the raiders and returned to camp after noon.

In the evening we went out at dusk and while punting over the muddy flats which were covered with sea grass, we heard a tremendous splashing as thousands of mullet came leaping past. A big shoal of porpoises had got amongst them and they were making for shallower water where the porpoises would not dare to follow.

Later we anchored in between two sunken coral reefs where I fished deep with a strong line and twenty feet of cable wire trace. A huge rock cod took the bait and dragged us, anchor and all, for 50 yards or more, and then he found a hole in the reef where he fixed himself firmly. Although there is little sport in the catching of one of these brutes, I thought it would be interesting to know his size and so determined to do my best to get him out. A heavy mist came over the sea and the fishermen wanted to return but I persuaded them to remain. Soon after midnight when the tide began to turn we heard weird noises which frightened the natives. We heard singing and talking and

the splash of paddies, sometimes they seemed very close and then they faded away gradually, and then came back again. The natives knew what they were and told me they were "libwengo" (sea sprites), and that they would try to take us away to be smashed up on the outer reefs, there was no doubt in their minds that the libwengo actually exists. To me the sounds were certainly eerie but I wanted my fish. Three times the rock-cod left his hide and after dragging us some distance, entered another. Finally, as dawn approached he got through a cavern in the reef and I could feel the steel cable grinding on the sharp edges. The game was up when the flax line was drawn through and cut and parted on the reef. Disappointed we paddled back slowly. On the way a big kingfish leapt high into the air and soon afterwards a giant Eagle Ray shot out several feet above the water and landed flat on his belly, he was only some 50 yards away and made a noise like the explosion of a big gun.

In the afternoon we crossed by dhow to Msimbati and then walked across the peninsular to a village near the maze of mangrove swamps that extend to the mouth of the Ruvuma River. While walking waist deep in grass along a narrow path through dense coastal bush I noticed lion's spoor and then saw the black tips of his ears moving along ahead of me. Stopping I clicked my fingers and the gunbearer put a rifle in my hand; the lion heard the porters and bounded into the bush. It was getting dusk and so I followed quickly and as quietly as possible. Peering through the scrubby trees I saw his pale fawn chest (the head was hidden by leaves) – at least I guessed it was because the colours differed from the surroundings – and took a snap shot. The lion reared up and made a stifled roar. A few seconds later we heard his dying moans. I shot him because the porters who came to collect my loads had told me that a lion was eating their goats.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SONGO THE CROWING SNAKE

Between the "bomas" of Masasi and Tunduru there are many granite outcrops of varied shape and size: some rise singly, some in clusters and chains, boulder-strewn or solid rock, with coves and crevices and overhanging shelves. Trees grow precariously wherever they can get a grip, even in the smallest cracks in sheer precipitous walls. Long rank grass grows profusely wherever there is enough earth for its sustenance. In Songea district these rocks and hills attain more mountainous proportions.

Let us go amongst these rocky kopjes to see what we can find. On Chumula hill, near my Masasi home, the dreaded "Songo" ruled supreme, or so said native legend. Some said that he was black; others saw him ashy-grey. But all agreed that he was eight or nine feet long and most aggressive; a low red crest grew on his head after the manner of a cockerel's comb and like that bird, he crowed. This I know: none save one or two old snake charmers, dared to climb that hill. Often I searched for Songo on Chumula hill, and amongst the rocks of many other hills in the vicinity, but without success. I found the deadly mamba, dark olive-green or black, the spitting cobra and others of his kind, pythons and ugly puff adders, the poisonous little night-adder who frequents warm paths after dusk and many harmless snakes. And so I have some reason to conjecture that Songo is a myth invented by some wily old "Mganga" many centuries ago (for stories of the monstrous snake are told in distant parts of Africa); these sly old scoundrels live by their wits and are clever in their ways. Some make love-potions and various other charms. Some cast out evil spirits and are called upon to ward off the curses of a wizard. There are rainmakers and those who propitiate ancestral spirits, others manufacture drugs. There are general practitioners and those who specialise. All have their secrets to guard and their clients to remember.

Several flocks of guinea fowl nested round about Chumula's base and collectors stole their eggs, but not before they received the blessings of the bird-seer and an antidote for snakes. Rare medicinal plants and herbs grew high up on rocks, their secrets guarded jealously by the druggists. I have a shrewd suspicion that this is how Songo made his name. For similar reasons, most conspicuous rocky kopjes were invested with romance. And so, if we wish to understand the Pori and its people we must have some regard for native superstitions and the romance of the rocks.

To be strictly honest I must confess I have no proof that Songo is a myth. Once, and once only, on Huwe Mountain, I thought I heard the Songo crow – there were no villages in the vicinity and no path led that way. My scout, Halufani, was with me at the time, he turned to me and said "Kweli bwana, Songo mweuyéwé analia" (Truly, master, Songo himself is calling) – was it indeed the dreaded snake?

Scientists ridicule the story because they say a snake has no vocal chords – but vocal chords are not required for whistling. Who has not heard the loud warning hiss of a puff adder? By means of a slight adjustment to his mouth perhaps he could whistle loudly. If a crocodile can whistle, why cannot a snake? Beneath the sharp pinnacle of Nauru a famous native hunter met his fate. Luwinda Mbunda, a poisonous little snake, leaped at him from several feet away and bit him in the thigh. He was buried near a village on the road that passed by. I have never seen this venomous reptile but the natives all insist that he coils himself into a spring before he leaps. Near Luikas' village in Mponda's country I met a small party of natives carrying a corpse – they assured me that Luwinda Mbunda was responsible for the death: I saw the tell-tale tooth marks and the swelling on his thigh.

Puff adders are noted for their lazy disposition and rightly so. Once when hunting near Ndindingamba swamp my guide trod accidentally on a fat and sluggish snake which was coiled up on the ground. The guide leaped several feet into the air and turned an ashy-grey, he must have pressed very heavily on the torpid reptile, which did not move an inch: but, when I teased her with a stick she struck at it viciously. Do not imagine that these ugly adders are always quite so lazy or you will come to harm, they strike swiftly when aroused. "Liboma" – this is his local name – is all the more dangerous because of his sluggish habits. By the rustle of the grass or vibrations on the ground most snakes hear one coming and are quick to get away, (not so Liboma who is much too lazy) – they only bite when cornered or taken by surprise. Sometimes in the breeding season they may become aggressive, but such attacks are rare. If you are afraid of snakes, wear thick pig-skin leggings; if not, there is no need to worry.

Camping at Malekwe, a long way from Kihatu where the nearest natives lived, we hid ourselves amongst some boulders, beneath a most inviting cluster of shady evergreen trees – grass fires had left the country bare and black. We overlooked some wide "mbuga" – (flat ground with under lying water), – where the animals came to feed on young green grass which had freshly sprouted, we had come to count them. Below us were two long pools, which overflowed and ran a short distance over rocks before disappearing completely underground.

There was no more running water for fifty miles around, and so the wildlife of the Pori came here to quench their thirst.

Many herds of elephant and buffalo came to drink and bathe and play. The elephant waded deep into the water and used their trunks for sprays and we heard very plainly their noises of delight – shrill trumpeting and flute-like calls, deep-internal rumblings and loud gruff roars. From time to time the mothers and babies made sounds like yelping pups. The buffalo came at dusk and preferred to wallow in the mud. Antelopes came too, and many smaller mammals. At dawn and in the evenings the birds came down in flocks. At night we heard the lions roars and the leopards grunts.

One early morning when we were skirmishing around we followed "Segu", the little Honey-guide. He made a lively chattering as he flew from tree to tree. Every now and then we whistled softly to assure him we were coming and sometimes, when he outstripped us he would fly back to pick us up.

Walking quietly, in rubber shoes, amongst some boulders I heard the peculiar chuckling and snuffly gurgles of "Mkule" the ratel – he too had heard his old friend, Segu calling and, always in a hurry, he shuffled quickly to the feast. As his needs were greater than ours, we stopped to watch the game. Soon we saw Mkule climb a biggish tree where he dislodged a native beehive with his powerful claws. He scrambled down quickly to feed on honey and young bees. He ate ravenously and when he had had his fill, he licked his paws and mouth to clean them before hurrying on his way. Then Segu flew down to eat the crumbs from his master's table – fat young bee-grubs, which were scattered round about. Often we followed Segu and were rewarded with wild honey, which he found. Always we left him a little bark platter full of larvae in the comb.

Mkule is about the size of a fat retriever – on very short legs; his body is sleek and black with a big silvery patch on his back. He is strong and brave and, in the bush, a gentleman. But, when the pangs of hunger force him to go to town he becomes a poultry thief, when he kills wantonly every fowl that he can find. He is fierce and has an evil reputation where natives are concerned – he bites below the belt – and I can assure you that only a very brave man would dare to attack him with a spear.

In the Londo group of kopjes I have spent many happy days fossicking amongst the boulders and the valleys in between the rugged hills where we found many interesting animals and birds. The rubber-footed hyrax, not much bigger than a rabbit, is a very old fashioned creature who has come to us but little altered from several million years ago. He has some little cousins who live in hollow trees and in Tabora district, some hundred miles away; I found a colony living underground in termite galleries, a long distance from the hills. But, next to

these, the elephant and rhinoceros are his nearest living relations. Being a true cave dweller he spends all his time amongst crevices and crannies in the rocks and in spacious boulder strewn caverns where cracks and fissures afford him safe retreat.

In the mornings and evenings he comes out into the open to sun himself and to feed on fleshy leaves and juicy stems of evergreen shrubs and bushes which grow between the rocks. I have never seen him drink and it is more probable that he obtains all the liquid he requires from his food, because, in the long dry season there is not a drop of water anywhere within his reach. When the sun gets too hot for his comfort he goes deep into the cool labyrinths of the caves. By the natives he is called "njitsheri" because of his harsh wheezy squeaks. When climbing about the small bushes and shrubs where he gets his food and when dozing on warm ledges before he goes to bed, he must keep a sharp lookout for eagles and cats, which prey on him. At the least sign of danger he bolts into his den where pythons follow him but he is wily and has many different passages and open doors.

"Kibarama", the klipspringer, is a highly specialised little antelope who lives amongst these granite hills where his small well-padded hooves enable him to get safe foothold on slippery boulders and jagged rocks. He is not afraid of high pinnacles or dangerous drops. Carefree, with grace and ease, he bounds quite unconcerned from crag to crag along precipitous walls. To save him from harmful bruises should his foothold crumble; nature has endowed him with a tough and supple skin. The hairs are hollow, coarse and filled with air so if he falls against a boulder when hard put to it to escape his enemies – leopards and serval cats – the thick soft coat acts not only as a buffer but comes away freely to save him from excessive pain. Every kopje has its quota, according to its size, of these little animals. They live in pairs but on the bigger hills I have seen a congregation of half a dozen or more – this would be a very temporary gathering because they are not gregarious in their habits as a rule. Always, when driving through the narrow passage between the Makumbuli rocks, I stopped the car to look for Kibarama who often quizzed us from above.

On a few occasions, when fortune favoured us, we saw "Mkwanda", the antbear, and "Ngaka" the pangolin – both live almost entirely on termites, but eat ants of every kind, and both have powerful forearms and claws for digging in the hardest ground. They are nocturnal in their habits. During daylight hours Mkwanda lives deep underground in tunnels which

he digs – as he excavates he scrapes the debris backwards between his hind legs and leaves it a heap outside the entrance to his den. He sleeps like a log at the far end of his tunnel but, before doing so he seals the passage behind him with the last scrapings of earth, leaving only his thick tail protruding – this he waggles automatically from time to time, thereby admitting fresh air to his stuffy chamber. Sometimes, in the grey dawn of morning, when he was later than usual, we chanced to meet him going home and would comment upon his mighty ears.

The pangolin, or scaly anteater, as his name implies, has all the upper parts of his body covered closely by hard and heavy scales. Unlike Mkwanda he does not often take the trouble to make elaborate homes but goes to sleep in daylight in any convenient hole or hollow, tree or crevice in the rocks. From time to time we come across him curled up tightly in a ball. Unfortunately he is fond of eggs and is a menace to all those game birds whose nests are on the ground.

On the Lumesule River, near the Litinginia pools, we often camped out in the open on an extensive and very barren granite outcrop. A few big trees provided ample shade when we were at home during the hottest hours of the day. All around the grass was tall and dry and from the North, fierce fires swept through the bush towards our camp. Long before the fires reached us we saw herds of buffalo and antelope on their way to a safe retreat, guided by memory and instinct and common sense. They had scented danger in the smoky atmosphere and were not slow to make a good escape. The smaller mammals too, and the reptiles soon sensed trouble brewing: some went underground others fled to the safety of the barren rocks, but always some were tardy and were burned to death. The tortoises, especially were slow to get away, so were many insects and the poor chameleons who put their trust in trees. As the flames drew nearer, our fortress was invaded by snakes, rats and lizards and myriads of flying insects. A beautiful serval cat came trotting quickly in our direction but when he saw us he leaped away lithely to find another refuge. A red-tailed rabbit came bouncing past to dive into a crevice.

For some time we had listened to the crackling and an ominous hum of sizzling vegetation. Gradually the hum became a roar, flames leaped upwards, loud hisses and explosions of pent-up gases rent the air. We were almost suffocated by the pungent smoky fumes blowing across the bare rock which acted as our barrier.

In the skies above us there were many birds of prey; most notable amongst them were Egyptian kites and a pair of short tailed Bateleur eagles. The kites

used their feet for seizing all small flying creatures. The Bateleur, to a great extent a carrion feeder, watched the scorched ground for the dead and dying. For fully fifteen minutes I watched black fork-tailed drongos flit past in ones and twos – they are by far the most daring of all the smaller birds – with verve and dash they zigzagged wildly after grass-hoppers, before the fire, not behind. Often they appeared to me to fly too near the flames. I felt nervous for their safety but none were burned though we counted well nigh two hundred from where we stood and watched. All birds are voracious feeders and to them our thanks are due for the great part they play in helping to reduce the myriads of insect pests which, otherwise, would live to destroy our crops and propagate their species beyond all hope of our control. Fortunately for the indigenous flora most trees and plants of tropical Africa are not only drought resisting but are able to withstand the ravages of fire.

There was a strong wind blowing so the fire raced ahead. Covered in fine black ashes and with our nostrils filled with soot, we ran down a wide and well-worn elephant path towards the Litinginia pools where we bathed in the cool refreshing water and removed the grime. That night much of our horizon was lit up by the flames and many rugged kopjes stood out in bold relief.

In the morning a heavy haze obscured the valley but soon a breeze dispersed the smoke. We stayed for an hour or two after sunrise to see what animals would come our way. Buffalo and antelope came to lick the ashes for the salt, civets, servals, jackals, monkeys and baboons, genets, mongooses, polecats, zorilles (cousins to the skunk & weasel), and many others came to look for scraps. Through binoculars I watched a Bateleur eagle feeding on a fried puff adder. He is one of the handsomest of all our eagles, with head, neck, breast and belly and his scapulars deep glossy black. The hind-neck and the greater portion of his back were a rich chestnut maroon (this colour varies with their age): brown wing coverts with a bronzy sheen, the short tail chestnut brown; the cere (at base of beak) and naked skin in front of eyes were coral-red, so were his feet, his beak was black and he wore a massive crest of black feathers on his head. Being a master of the air he soars majestically with graceful ease in ever widening circles. When in the mood to frolic he turns upside down and twists and tumbles with acrobatic skill. By the natives he is called "Kapungu" because of his loud eerie call, they also say that when an animal dies the vultures will not touch the body until Kapungu, their King, removes the eyes – this is just a native fable.

Black crows, pied crows and the white-necked raven came early to the feast. So did guinea fowl and francolin and the rare rock bantam and many others too numerous to mention.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

LINDI LIONS

The small seaport of Lindi lies on the south east coast of Tanganyika Territory, some 60 miles north of the borders of Portuguese East Africa.

Much of the coastal regions and hinterland within a 90 mile radius is covered with dense scrubby bush and thickly matted grass. For some 20 miles inland from the sea the country is generally rough with many rugged limestone hills and valleys intersected by innumerable ravines and creeks.

Further back between the limestone outcrops and the more elevated sandy hills beyond, the land is roughly undulating and covered alternately with dense scrubby bush and long lank grass. Dotted about at random on hilltops and in the valleys giant baobabs spread their grotesque limbs high above the pygmy growth. Heavy drenching rains begin to fall early in December, continuing until the month of May. During this period all vegetation runs riot. The hard sun-baked clay of hill and valley turns to sticky mud, streams and rivers fill to over-flowing and depressions turn to swamp and lake.

The months of June and July are cool and refreshing. The remaining months of the year are hot and dry, the heat increasing as the months go by until October when the sun has sucked the last vestiges of moisture from the hard cracked soil. Now strong winds fan the bush fires that sweep through the withered grass and trees to leave the country charred and black. But always there are low-lying damp depressions where the grass and bush will never burn; in such places and in the deeper river valleys where the trees are evergreen all wild life seeks refuge.

In November after the first light showers of rain have fallen the whole countryside bursts into green. Within a month or two the abundant grass is waist-high everywhere. The native population lives in hundreds of little villages that are scattered far and wide. Some rest on ridges and hilltops others lie in the valleys, all are built in clearings hacked out of the virgin bush. Wherever possible a more or less sandy porous soil is chosen for the sites. Big shady mango trees, bananas, pawpaws, limes and other fruit trees and vegetables are planted round about. More often than not fairly extensive plantations of mihogo (tapioca) are cultivated in the immediate vicinity of the huts.

There are few perennial streams and during the hot dry season water must be drawn from small pools or excavations in the riverbeds or swampy hollows. Often the women have to travel long distances to draw water for the

home and it is natural that they should do so early in the mornings and towards evening to avoid excessive heat.

All the villages are connected by innumerable narrow tortuous paths that are in constant use – natives are always on the move visiting one another or going off to some small duka (Shop) or perhaps to town.

The whole country is infested with lions and, as will be seen man and beast live cheek by jowl.

The lion's food consists mostly of wild-pig and warthog because other game is scarce. The former are hunted to a great extent by night while they shout noisily for roots, the latter go to earth at night so they are stalked by daylight while fossicking for their food.

In the rainy season and the following month or two there is plenty of food for pigs and they grub far and wide. In their rambles they cross the native paths continually and often stop or walk along motor roads for a breather. Lions dislike the excessive wet dripping grass and bush and so take to road and path for comfort and utility, for sooner or later they are bound to come across the strong fresh smell of pig.

When the grass is long and dry and brittle a lion has great difficulty in approaching his wily victim because of the noise made in moving through the grass – the pig's hearing is particularly acute. So here again the lion is often forced to make use of man made tracks.

Lions travel great distances in a single night in the hope of running into a sounder of pig. Natives also make a habit of walking at night in order to avoid the heat of day. From time to time the two are bound to meet.

There is always the struggle for existence and all living creatures will take the line of easiest resistance. Pigs congregate around the outskirts of villages where cultivated food is abundant. Lions follow because there the pigs are plentiful and fat and lazy. Of course all this makes for the lion's happiness and he, too, soon becomes fat and lazy. But when the food supplies run short all become disgruntled.

Hungry lions prowling along roads and in the villages now begin to take more interest in human beings and their domestic animals. Goats and dogs and fowls, even pigeons make good eating for a lion. Sooner or later the lion is bound to meet a man; instinct and cunning assure him that man is at a disadvantage in the dark. Out of curiosity he begins to stalk a native after dusk and being of an inquisitive and playful nature this may end up in a sudden rush or spring accompanied by a growl. It does not take him long to discover the effect and to realise that natives are terrified of him at night. Finally he gets bored with play and it turns into the real thing. If he is hungry

he will drag the corpse away to eat it in a thicket where people will not dare to follow him at night.

It does not follow necessarily that a lion will become a man-eater after killing and eating one or two people, but the chances are that he will, everything depends on the circumstances. But in the Lindi district many lions take to this means of a supplementary or regular livelihood.

When I visited Lindi for the first time towards the end of 1930 the District Officer informed me that over one hundred and forty natives had been taken by lions during that year. Later, when I went to work in the Southern Province I found out that this sort of thing had been going on for as long as the local inhabitants could remember. The toll of lives had not always been so great but it had regularly amounted to as many as fifty or sixty deaths a year. During the several years that followed we managed to reduce the number of victims to twenty or so a year. Amongst many other duties, the most important of which were the Preservation of Game and the control of elephants and hippopotami, I had to grapple with the Lindi lions and set about this by touring that area very thoroughly. On these jobs it is essential to know every inch of the territory.

When on safari in the district it was usual to hear lions roaring at night, more especially during the rainy season. And when my camp was pitched beside a much overgrown motor road it was quite common to hear the roars growing louder and louder as one or two or more of these animals approached on their nightly rambles. Generally speaking they would make a slight detour when they became aware of the tent and the peculiar smell of a European. But on several occasions they walked round my tent, sometimes brushing against the canvas sides and ropes. On a few occasions a lion actually entered the verandah portion to have a look inside. I can only conjecture that a mosquito net must be a rather puzzling proposition for these big wild cats, because I was never molested. Sometimes two different parties of lions approached my camp from opposite directions, each party trying to roar the other down – then the sound was magnificent.

On many occasions when passing through a village in the morning the inhabitants showed me the spoor of lions which had spent several hours of the previous night resting and playing about in the warm sandy lanes between the huts. They lay down and rolled in the sand, strolled about sniffing at the walls and odd utensils lying round or hanging from the huts. They peered through cracks in the walls and even scratched violently to tear away the mud plaster. Most of these tricks are done in

play but they can become serious quite easily. I saw several huts where lions had torn away the walls to get at the inmates and twice I saw where they had ripped through thatched roofs. At other times their antics are more amusing, as for instance one night a full grown lion was passing by a hut in the village of Nangangachi when he spied what he took to be a native lying rolled up in his sleeping mat. This he stalked and sprang on then carried it off a few yards into the bush where he found to his disgust that the mat was wound tightly round a bag of rice (to protect it from the dew). One can imagine his indignation; he tore that bag to shreds and scattered the contents to the four winds before he walked off bristling with rage.

Near Jangwani, a village close to Lindi town, a lion was attracted by the strong smell of harvesters who had been working all afternoon in the fields cutting and stacking their crop of Ufuta (sim sim oil seed). It was not long after dark when he arrived on the scene. Near the stacks there was a burned and blackened tree-stump on the top of which rested an earthenware pot. The lion crawled towards the stump and sprang at it, clawed it deeply and bit out a hunk of charcoal. Then in fear or rage he rushed at the Ufuta stacks scattering the bundles in all directions. After that he surveyed the scene and ended up by biting to bits several gourd containers that the women used for food and water. Perhaps he was having a bit of fun or "getting his eye in" or possibly he really mistook the stump for a woman with a pot on her head. Young lions are particularly playful; often I came across signs of this. Especially in cotton fields where the crop was young I found the footprints of a pride of youngsters showing where they had rushed around in circles making leaps at one another; one moonlight night I caught them in the act. Many tales were told to me of how they had bounded, growling fiercely, after a party of natives and, after putting them to flight had walked off into the bush.

Once when motoring along the banks of the Ruvuma river I spotted two lions standing on an island and looking at me over the top of a strip of sedge. Stopping the car I got out to look at them through my field glasses. As soon as I jumped out they squatted down on their haunches behind the sedge where I could just see the tops of their heads and ears. When I started the engine they stood up again to watch. This happened several times.

As it was getting dusk I continued on my way to Mwambo at the mouth of the river, a few miles further on. We camped in the rest house and were

sitting out on the verandah when we heard a body brushing against the reed walls of the hut – this was about eight o'clock at night. Hippos were a nuisance here so my two Scouts picked up their rifles and rushed round to shoot the intruder. As they rounded the corner I heard a heavy crash in the reeds, the rangers heard it too and followed a path leading down to the river. It was moonlight and they hoped to get a shot before the hippo jumped into the water. Imagine their horror when they very nearly tripped over two lions (for they were the culprits) which emerged suddenly in front of them on the narrow path. The lions melted into the reed bed with a growl, the scouts returned at top speed and out of breath.

In the morning we checked up and found the lions spoor and followed it back along the road to opposite the island from where they had swum across to follow us out of curiosity. I was camped on the Ruvuma near Lake Tshidya when my porters rushed into my tent at midnight because they were afraid that a lion intended mischief. Picking up my torch and rifle I went outside and soon heard a faint roar followed by a succession of roars each of which grew louder and louder. It seemed that the lion was charging towards us at the gallop, the air vibrated with deep jarring grunts. Thinking he was on top of us I switched on my torch fully expecting to see the brute about to make his final spring. I had been deceived, the sly old scoundrel was an expert ventriloquist and had been trying to stampede us into flight, in which case he might have charged and killed a straggler. Of course by that time I was wide awake and realised that it would be quite impossible for a lion to roar as he did and gallop at the same time.

When he gave us a repeat performance we all laughed loudly and shouted rudely at him.

In the morning we found that he had been standing looking at us from a distance of about one hundred and twenty yards.

We followed his tracks, which led down to the river, and we were disappointed to find that he had swum across to Portuguese territory where we could not follow him.

When a lion is full of pork he gets very lazy. Several times when following them after they had killed and eaten a whole pig I surprised them sleeping within a few hundred yards of the kill but the growth of bush was so thick that I never actually saw them asleep though I heard them snore.

Now let us get down to the more serious aspects of the game. The organisation was difficult owing to the nature of the country and the

means of communication. During the wet season it was impossible to use motor cars, even bicycles were more nuisance than they were worth owing to narrow winding footpaths, overhanging grass and the stickiest mud. So that for five months in the year, when the lions were most troublesome, all safaris had to be done on foot. Three native scouts were allocated to the district and they were posted to the most convenient localities in their areas. There were seven other districts in the province, some of them very large. The elephant and hippo control scheme was in full swing and most of my time was spent on long safari to keep in touch with the work and to give a helping hand. But when I happened to return to my headquarters at Lindi there was nearly always the prospect of a lion hunt.

Our means of communication having been fixed, we got down to the job of trying to get on the tracks of any troublesome lion as soon as possible. The ways and means varied according to the circumstances.

When possible we tracked them down and shot them, other times we drove them to a vantage point with beaters. Sometimes we sat up over a kill at night and often we had to resort to traps of different types, such as trip wires for firing horizontal guns and guns set perpendicularly at the entrance to a small stockade wherein a goat was put for bait. Even the office clerk was pressed into the service and great was his joy when he succeeded in trapping a full grown lion after bagging a succession of hyaenas. Every now and then the natives themselves killed a lion with their muzzle loading guns (goboli) and their bows and arrows, spears and what not.

Follow me in the hunting of a few and you will get a clearer impression of the chase, which should enable you to visualise the scene.

Before my arrival in the district a solitary old lion had killed and eaten over forty natives on the sisal estates round Mingoyo. Many of the victims were labourers who were pounced upon when going to or from their work. Others were villagers taken from around their homes in the vicinity of the Muhumbika stream. People were afraid to move about between the hours of sunset and sunrise. I was on a long tour of inspection from Mahenge and made careful enquiries about the game at all the little villages along the road. On arrival at Muhumbika I heard about this man-eater and found out that he had been using the motor road regularly between the hours of 10p.m and midnight. Continuing some sixteen miles to Lindi where I had to see the Administrative Officers I finished my business and left again on the return journey at about 9.30p.m that night

in the hope that with any luck I might run into the lion. Scout Rashidi Motomihako was with me and we were driving an open car that was fitted with a powerful spotlight. Soon after passing the 16th mile a lion walked out into the road and stood broadside on looking at us. Drawing up quickly I lost no time in firing a shot from my double barrel .450/400 express rifle. The distance was about sixty yards. The lion gave a deep growl and sprang across the road to disappear into the scrub. I knew that I had hit him hard. It was impossible to follow him into scrubby bush at night so I reversed the car a few yards until we came to a small ramshackle native hut. I spent the rest of the night in a deck chair on the verandah where there was little chance of sleep because of mosquitos and terrific roaring of the wounded lion. He broke the silence at regular intervals throughout the night until it was nearing four o'clock in the morning. The lion was not growling, he bellowed with all his might. After midnight the roars began to weaken in intensity, gradually becoming fainter and fainter until they died out. It sounded as though he had tired of trying to frighten us and that he was making for the hills.

As soon as dawn broke some of the braver inhabitants of the nearby village joined us and expressed their disappointment that the wounded animal was making good his escape.

When it was light enough to see clearly I went off with two natives to follow up the wounded beast, leaving Rashidi, much against his will, to look after the car and to prepare morning tea. Rain had fallen in the early hours of morning and it was impossible to pick up the lion's spoor. I was convinced that he was not far away as it had seemed to me that all the roars had come from the same direction, so I insisted on a thorough search in the scrubby bush. My two trackers who were armed only with spears kept well behind and made very little attempt to scour the ground. While hunting about cautiously I noticed some peculiar deepish depressions in the soil but did not pay much attention to them.

Unfortunately I used a solid bullet when firing at the lion because I had no soft nose with me. I felt certain that the shot had gone home but the situation was beginning to look hopeless. However I went on slowly casting about for any signs. Peering into an anthep covered in grass and shrubs I became aware that I was looking at a lion's tail, which stuck out horizontally towards me. Whistling to attract the pessimists who came up very gingerly I pointed into the anthep. When they saw the tail their eyes bulged and they turned round and bolted.

It was quite evident that the lion was dead; otherwise his stiff tail would have pointed in the opposite direction, so I shouted to my fellows to call them back. When they returned I took one of their spears and walking up close I threw it at the lion hitting it in the stern. Even this did not convince them— not until I climbed the antheap and stood on the dead body would they approach.

We called up the villagers who trussed up the lion and carried him back to the road on a long pole. The lion was one of the biggest I have ever seen, he had practically no mane and his colour was the lightest fawn. His claws and teeth were perfect though he was a little past his prime. The solid bullet had passed through his shoulders breaking both forelegs. His chest was raw from bumping on the ground – both forelegs being broken well above the elbow he had leaped away on his hind legs, landing on his chest (remember the peculiar hollows I had noticed on the ground). In spite of this disability he had managed to travel well over two hundred yards.

On cutting him open we found some of the neck vertebrae of a human being. The lion was recognised as the man-eater by several natives who had seen him. No more people were killed in that area for a year or so until another lion came to take his place.

On the verandah of a small hut on the outskirts of Nangaro village a young woman with a baby on her back was standing facing the wall. She was winnowing the chaff from the grain that she had been pounding with her heavy pestle and mortar. Inside the hut her Mother was busy getting the fire ready for the cooking. Her brother, Abedi, a lad of 17 or 18 years was making a clearing in the bush some fifty yards away. Round about the hut was a mihogo field (tapioca) and beyond the cultivated area there were dense thickets.

A lion crept up stealthily and, without warning sprang on the young mother who screamed aloud as she fell deeply gashed by claw and tooth. The old woman rushed out to her assistance and beat the lion about the head with a long stick of firewood. The lion turned on her and after killing her dragged the body through the tapioca towards the bush. Abedi who had heard the commotion came rushing back in time to see his mother being dragged away. Mad with emotion he raced wildly after the retreating form and hanging his small axe over his shoulder, seized the lion by the tail attempting to arrest its progress. The lion continued undeterred. Just as the latter was about to enter the bush the youth thought of his axe and made a despairing stroke at the lion's head. The

blade cut deep and paralysed the lion but the axe had slipped from Abedi's grasp. He ran back to get assistance. Soon a few older men turned up armed with an old muzzle-loading gun and spears and put an end to the wounded lion. Abedi's sister died the same night; her baby had been killed at the onset. I checked up on Abedi's story and after being absolutely satisfied that the tale was true we gave him a reward in cash and presented him with a muzzle-loading gun in recognition of his bravery.

I was sitting in my office in Lindi when a telephone message came from Mtama, a native village some forty miles along the road to Lake Nyasa. The post office clerk reported that a lion had killed several goats in the village. My camp equipment was in readiness on the car and we arrived on the scene before midday. A goat had been killed and dragged away early that morning and we were soon on the trail but after an hour's tracking the rain came down in buckets. The downpour obliterated the spoor and obliged us to return.

We had found out previously that the lion had been using a certain road regularly so we chose a spot on his route for the building of a small stockade in which to set a gun-trap. We got down to work quickly – it was quite a simple affair; a pear-shaped construction of poles driven into the ground and roughly laced together with the inner bark of certain trees. The lower half of the narrow end of the enclosure is left open, top and sides are laced together and are covered with thorny branches to prevent the lion from breaking through. A spring-gun, pointing downwards, is fixed securely and perpendicularly above the centre of the opening, which is about three and a half feet high, by fifteen inches wide. The gun is fired by means of a small wooden lever that passes under the trigger and over a crossbar. The lever is operated by pressure on a strong piece of cord which connects it to a peg driven into the ground midway between the gateposts. Of course adjustments must be made with great care.

When all was ready we borrowed a goat for bait tethering him securely at the back end of the trap where he was fed and bedded comfortably. This done we loaded and set the gun before returning to camp for the night. Soon after midnight it began to rain and a little later we heard our gun go off.

In the morning when it was light enough to see clearly we went off to investigate. On nearing the trap we could see that there was no dead lion at the entrance and as there was thick bush all round we moved

cautiously in case he was badly wounded and lying in wait for us behind some cover.

While thus occupied we had not noticed that we were passing through great armies of "siafu" (warrior ants), until we found them in their hundreds inside our clothing and clinging like small bull-terriers to our flesh. There was only one thing to do – lion or no lion, we had to find a place free from the savage little brutes where we could tear off our clothes and pull the ants off one by one. Afterwards we worked round to the road again beyond the trap keeping a respectable distance away from the siafu.

On the road we found the fresh tracks of a lion which approached our trap boldly. Glancing ahead along his tracks we noticed deep slithering marks in the soft mud where the lion had slipped badly and fallen on his side. Inside the trap we could see only a seething ball of reddish brown siafu. What had happened was clear: the siafu had been attracted by the strong smell of the goat and the poor beast, driven mad by their bites had bitten through his rope to make a wild dash for freedom. In doing so he had set off the gun and killed himself. Some time later the lion had come along and being interested in the smell of goat had got himself thoroughly covered by siafu. In a panic he slipped and fell, then beat a hasty retreat into the bush where he took the first opportunity to roll about in sand and rub himself against the trees – it was our turn to laugh, and we did so heartily.

As it was impossible to get any nearer the trap we went on the lion's trail. Evidently he had had enough of goats and ants for the time being because he made straight for the wildest part of the valley below.

It had not rained since the lion had passed and the tracking was easy all the way. On the damp sand flats we found the going easier still and, better still we were able to move quietly as the grass had been burned fairly recently. Pig and warthog were plentiful and before very long we came across signs of where our lion had killed a pig. We saw where the lion had stalked and made his rush and leap, the ground torn up in the scuffle, drops of blood, and bristles from the pig's back. The body had been dragged away for fifty yards or more towards a shady bush under which were thick low clumps of creepers.

I was standing dead still behind a low and leafy bush and looking down the trail but could see nothing. A puff of wind must have blown from us towards the lion because he stood up to look back along his tracks. I was a few yards to the left of his direct gaze and most of my body was

covered by the bush. As my rifle was already in position it was an easy shot. The soft-nose bullet struck him in the chest and he dropped without a sound.

While hunting raiding hippos in the mangrove creeks of the Mbwemkuru River two natives from a small village reported that a lion had killed a man and carried him off into the bush. Paddling upstream as fast as we could we arrived at the village soon after ten o'clock in the morning and soon were on the track. The man had been taken at about 7p.m the previous evening on his way back from a fishing expedition.

The spoor was fairly clear in the sandy soil and through the muddy stretches of the river flats but there were many patches of long grass and reeds. There was no one capable or willing to do the tracking so I had to do it myself which was a disadvantage because I could not look ahead. After about half an hour we came to hillside thickets that were almost impenetrable. Here were the remains of the victim. There was little left of the poor fellow, save his hands and feet and most of the harder bones which had been licked clean by a rasping tongue.

Later we came to a pool of water where the lion had had a drink. From now onwards tracking became more difficult because the lion had been using this pool for several days and there was a maze of tracks. I had to be very careful in keeping to the most recent footprints, which led us up into rocky hills where the vegetation became very dense. Often the going was painfully slow because of the harder ground and stones.

My two followers were becoming very nervous and it was only their fear of going off by themselves that made them stick by me. The lion was becoming bolder as time went on. Often we had to reverse our steps on finding that he was behind us. We were being hunted. Late in the afternoon I decided to give up the chase in order to get home before light failed.

The natives led the way and I followed. For some time I had been feeling uneasy because I felt certain that the lion was bent on mischief. Just before we reached the open river flats I looked back along our trail. The light was fading and the tree trunks dark. A little more than ten yards away I noticed a pale object that appeared to be out of harmony with the growth of trees and bush.

Instinctively I knew it was the lion although his head and legs were hidden by leaves – I took a quick snap shot. There was a throaty growl as the lion made a leap towards us; it was his last. He died where he landed within five yards of where I stood. The bullet had gone through his heart.

A man had been killed near Lake Rutamba and I was on my way to that place when a lorry driver stopped to tell me that the same lions had killed another man some ten miles further south. I changed my course and went up the main road to Ali's village near the Muhumbika stream, which was the nearest point that I could reach by car.

Ali gave me the latest reports of the native hunters who were endeavouring to keep in touch with the rogues. It appeared that there were five lions working together and that they were moving in our direction.

As it was after 5p.m there was no point in moving further afield so we camped out at Ali's beside the road. Soon after 6p.m we heard drums beating furiously – it was the "ngula-mtu" call which meant that someone had been killed by a lion. It was too late to do anything about it so we spent the night where we were. At 5.30am in the morning the drums beat out again so off we went in that direction.

On arrival we found that three women had been killed and taken away to be eaten the previous evening. They had been collecting roots in the bush a few hundred yards from their homes when they were pounced upon. Following their trail we found the remains within half a mile but the lions had done with their victims and had gone off towards an extensive patch of dense scrubby bush. It had been raining on and off and we had some difficulty in keeping to their tracks. We went on as fast as we could, scrambling through slippery gullies where the long wet grass soon soaked us to the skin. Creeping through trees and sometimes crawling on hands and knees under the low hanging branches of thorny dwarf acacia trees whose hook-like claws often held us back. Casting about for the footprints where they had been washed away by running water.

At last we came up with our quarry in a most impenetrable tangled mass of grass and small bushes thickly covered with leafy creepers. Here we had to cut our way laboriously until coming up with the lions we so disturbed them that they broke cover in several different directions leaving a very strong catty smell about their resting place.

We followed the spoor of one and before long found that all had come back again into single file.

Some time later, after going round in a wide circle we found that the lions were now following us. After a long hard game of hide and seek we had to abandon the chase in order to get back to camp before dark. We were tired, wet through and badly scratched by thorns.

Revived by a hot bath and a couple of strong pegs of whisky I lay back comfortably in a long chair in front of Ali's hut smoking my biggest pipe. While James, my cook, was preparing a meal on the small veranda around the corner of the hut we discussed plans for the morrow.

It was soon after 9p.m when James suddenly gave a lusty shout and leaped into our midst to tell us that lions were stalking him through the tapioca field. Seizing my rifle and torch I ran round quickly but failed to see the lions. We pulled James' leg and sent him back to get on with the cooking but he insisted on having an armed ranger at his side.

After dinner I called up all the goboli (muzzle-loading gun) owners and issued them some fresh black powder and percussion caps. One fellow, Sefu by name, produced a terrible looking old and pockmarked blunderbuss – the barrel was worn so thin that I warned him to put in a very small charge. But, as you will see later, he ignored my advice.

At daybreak we found lion tracks within fifteen yards of James' kitchen and he was most indignant!

We went off hot on the trail. By 11a.m we found that the lions had entered an extensive but isolated patch of bush. To the right of which and on the far side were open sisal plantations. On our left was a wide hoed road running the full length of the forest. I had about forty followers, as it was my idea to try a beat if possible. The situation was ideal. When all the beaters had arrived I left them to go in, in extended order – every fifth man had a gun of sorts. My two scouts, armed with .404 rifles led the way. Leaving them to the beating I walked and ran quickly and quietly, in rubber boots, down the open road on the left. I was making for a point where a well-worn bush path joined my road after passing through the forest from the far side. This path was much frequented by pig and often used by lions. Keeping a good look out on the way I was more than pleased to find that the lions had not yet crossed over.

Having arrived at the desired point I glanced quickly down path to the right and then slipped in a few yards to a vantage point where I found a handy tree for cover right on the path's edge. With the fingers of my left hand resting on the trunk I raised my rifle into position gripping the barrel between forefinger and thumb. Looking along the sights I could see open stretches of path at intervals for a distance of some sixty yards.

Now I could hear the beaters in full swing – I was only just in time. A lion's head oozed through the undergrowth about fifty yards away, he glanced right and left before entering the path then padded strongly towards me. Twice he stopped to look back over his shoulder showing annoyance by his twitching tail. Unnoticed

by me four other lions entered the trail and now I saw a pride of five advancing in single file.

There was a wide ditch between us about twenty yards from where I stood. Waiting for number one to cross the ditch I fired as he topped the rise. Number two was in the ditch, he turned and leaped out on the farther side where he received the bullet from my second barrel – both had dropped in their tracks without a sound.

Before I could reload my rifle the remaining three had bolted back towards the beaters and I gave them warning. Instead of creating din, as I had hoped, there was a deadly silence. It was a question of every man for himself and every man was busily engaged in finding the biggest tree in his vicinity.

A terrific explosion rent the air, followed by two rattling growls and a short silence. Then came shouts of anguish calling upon father and mother for assistance. Running towards the yells and shouts I found Sefu lying on his back. Two black and perspiring bodies slid down a tree trunk close at hand. The poor fellow, in spite of my warning, had rammed a double charge of powder into his rusty old weapon.

When the lions broke back, two of them, following one behind the other, had passed directly under the horizontal bough on which Sefu perched. As the first one was almost under him he fired. The miserable old barrel burst and bowled him off his seat. Falling to the ground he landed almost on the second lion's back. His left hand was badly lacerated and the burning powder had blinded him.

When all the beaters had collected and we had dressed his wounds as best we could we rigged up a rough stretcher and carried him back to camp.

It was too late to continue the hunt so we all went back together to the road. From there I took Sefu to Lindi hospital where he soon recovered completely.

That night there was a heavy thunderstorm and tracks of the remaining three lions were obliterated. They had been taught a lesson and for some time we had no more reports of man-eating in that area.

Naturally every hunt was different, according to the lie of the land. Some were over in a few hours, others took a day or two or more. Often we lost touch with our quarry for days at a time until another death was reported from another village several miles away. Here let it be noted that most man-eaters become more wily as the days go by. Often we were defeated by heavy thunderstorms, which obliterate the tracks, or perhaps the ground was too hard and dry for tracking to be practicable. On these

occasions we were obliged to take meaner measures – "when the devil drives needs must". We resorted to traps of various types or we sat up in hides near a kill or in platforms built in treetops. But there is little or no sport in shooting lions at night with the aid of a torch.

Lion hunting in dense bush and long grass is difficult and exasperating work but there is always the thrill of adventure and the desire to come to grips with the enemy. The strong element of danger adds spice to the chase and keeps the hunter up to scratch. It is a grand sport only for those who are really keen. There are many contributory causes that lead to man-eating. Generally speaking it is only old and feeble lions or crippled animals that take to this means of livelihood. Occasionally the accidental killing of a man by young and playful lions may become a more serious affair. A chance meeting at night between a man and a hungry lion may give the lion a taste for human flesh. Or for various reasons there may be a shortage of their natural food. But in the Lindi district the lions have been man-eaters for many generations – it is in their blood.

In seven years we killed over a hundred lions – of these over forty were man-eaters, the remainder were responsible for the destruction of numerous goats. Some took to eating fowls and ducks and on a few occasions they even pulled down dovecots to get at the birds inside. Once I shot one with a rat in his mouth.

In my wanderings I have lived and hunted in many parts of Eastern Africa – in Southern Rhodesia, Portuguese East Africa, Nyasaland and Tanganyika where lions were numerous. Never, with the exception of a few isolated cases, did we think of taking any precautions at night. In fact it had always been my practice to sleep in the open underneath a tree during the dry weather. But in the Lindi area, after a few unpleasant scares at night, I considered it wise to use my tent, closing the flaps behind my head.

When I was transferred to Malaya in 1938 I advised my successor, Ionides, to take more care at night. He laughed saying I was getting nervy and perhaps a change would do me good.

Not long after my arrival in Malaya a letter came from Ionides in which he said 'You were right about these ruddy lions, one came into my tent last week and removed my canvas bath which he tore to shreds. I hunted him for days but had no luck". Some weeks later another letter came, telling me that a lion had entered his tent again, this time dragging the ground sheet from below his bed. He got that lion.

FINAL CHAPTER

LOOKING BACK

Looking back along the trail, many experiences stand out clear cut and vivid in every detail. Lest memory fail, I have recorded, for the benefit of those who come after, some of those more outstanding incidents of the Pori as I found them in my time, for the scenes are changing fast.

Old Chuma's trail is fading. Most of the great bull elephants of Mahenge have been shot for their ivory. Hundreds of herds of elephant have been decimated to save the natives' crops from ruin. Thousands of head of beautiful antelope and other game are killed annually for food. More firearms are being imported yearly. New roads are penetrating the vastness of the bush. Civilisation advances swiftly, threatening the wild life of our continent.

I have written my story with the hope of gaining a few more adherents to our cause – the preservation and perpetuation of the many different species of wonderful fauna which in Africa's greatest heritage.

Lest keen sportsmen should swoop down on me with a vengeance, saying "It is all very well for you, you have had your fill and now wish to spoil the sport for others", I would make it clear that it is far from my desire to advocate the absolute protection of all fauna. I merely wish to emphasise the fact that there is urgent need for strict control. Indeed, it is my aim to encourage true sportsmen, keen photographers and naturalists to pursue their hobbies; because it is through the energies of such people that what we know of wild life and its ways has been discovered and made known to the world.

The incidents narrated and the journeys described in this book are concerned only with the south east corner of Tanganyika Territory. There are vast areas still waiting to be explored. The habits and behaviour of animals and birds vary according to environment and circumstance. Although they all have a great deal in common with others of their species, each has an individual character. Many are temperamental and their tempers may vary from day to day. It is difficult to tell what will be the reaction of any particular pachyderm, carnivore or buffalo in provoking circumstances. In many areas they have been forced to change their habitat and have adapted themselves to a strange environment.

Now, a few words for the hunter: – There is no need to be squeamish with the regard to the taking of life for food, or for other good reasons. After all, domesticated animals are just as fond of living. But I would ask all sportsmen to kill as sparingly and as cleanly as possible. Risky shots should not be taken; wounded animals should be followed and put out of misery without delay. Blood lust and the "browning" of a herd are unpardonable. Those who are keen on bird shooting should take care not to endanger the well being of the flocks by shooting during the breeding season or by taking too big a toll, thereby "killing the goose that lays the golden egg". Think twice before taking the life of a rare animal or bird. Night shooting with the aid of a torch is prohibited, excepting where predatory animals are concerned – it is a mean way of killing and should be resorted to only in exceptional cases. Shooting from "hides" and platforms in trees near feeding grounds, salt licks and water holes is the meanest and most cowardly trick of all. Of course this does not refer to those carnivores which have caused damage to people or stock. Sitting up in a tree or platform or on the ground, at night, waiting for a lion or leopard which has killed human beings or domesticated stock requires skill in the selection and preparation of the 'hide' and is justified. There is an exciting and tense anticipation of what may happen. There is a greater thrill and increased danger when "man-eaters" are the quarry. Patience and self-control are needed. One's position is nearly always cramped and there are many irritations, including mosquitos, ants and sand flies. The solace of smoking is denied, coughing and sneezing must be stifled – the slightest movement may spoil the chances of success, or cause the hunter to be hunted. One must remain wide-awake throughout the night. Under the continuous strain of eyes and ears, bushes and boulders may appear to move and sounds are magnified beyond belief. Sight or hearing or even smell may be the means of detecting the stealthy approach. Disappointments are frequent and it is not seldom that the shadowy and ghost-like form arrives when least expected. But, for me, this is a much-overrated pastime.

To those who wish to get the utmost pleasure and satisfaction I would say that there is no form of hunting comparable to that of tracking down one's quarry – the harder the hunt the greater one's reward.

First and foremost the art of bush craft should be mastered. Much useful information can be gathered from the books of genuine sportsmen, photographers and naturalists; read them carefully and you will become enthused with the spirit of adventure. But, bush craft must be learned in

the Pori, it is a most delightful and absorbing hobby, while you are learning to distinguish the footprints of the various animals – you are filled with the joys of exploration and discovery. You learn to walk quietly, to "feel" the wind, to approach skilfully. Your eyes and ears become accustomed to strange lights and shades and sounds. If you are keen and persevering your powers of observation become increased a hundredfold. When you become thoroughly acquainted with every detail of the objects you pursue, you learn to pick out fragments from the maze of nature's camouflage. The smallest tell-tale signs of what you seek: it may be a tiny portion of a footprint, a slightly bruised plant, an upturned pebble, some loose sand out of place, the tip of a lion's ear, the point of a horn, stripes or spots, a colour which is not prevalent in the surrounding bush, or a hundred other clues. Meanwhile you will learn the art of camping out comfortably with a minimum of kit. And, when you have earned the freedom of the Pori, remember that you are one of its guardians.

Hunter, photographer, naturalist – there is room for all and freedom, in the boundless Pori that awaits you. Join us in the pleasures of safari and the joys of camping out. Give me the freedom of the Pori! The bright sun of Africa courses swiftly through my veins, my heart beats faster to the throbbing of the drums. Standing out on the far horizon, I see the mountains and the lake bathed in the purple glow of sunrise. I see old Chuma shuffling softly down his long trail to the coast, his huge tusks gleaming in the moonlight as he goes. I see Gigantosaurus, at rest, on Tendaguru hill. The great bulls of Mahenge are roaming far and wide. They know the paths to follow and the time of ripening grain. I feel the thrill of exploration and excitement of the hunt. I hear the lions roar. The wizards of the bush have cast their spell: insidiously the spirits of the Pori have crept into my soul, they call loudly and more loud. I cannot choose but go "Twende porini bwana, twende, twende!" – "Let us go into the bush master, let us go, let us go!"

