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# WITH MY WIFE ACROSS AFRICA

BY CANOE AND CARAVAN

By  
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THE AUTHOR AND HIS WIFE.

but their owners had left before dawn, loaded with meat, and were beyond reach, well on their way back to the Kubango. Lisho's men deserted us on the 23rd August, some seven or eight miles below where the Utembo joins the Loengi. Near this junction was a village called Monkoyas, where there was a small Portuguese post with a couple of Askaris, and these men tried to help us to obtain more carriers. I made two attempts to reach Monkoyas, but was too ill to complete the journey.

By the inducement of good wages, and through the belief that I was a Portuguese official with authority, we slowly but steadily collected a new lot of carriers, including four Hukwe bushmen, who agreed to follow us down the Loengi, and four Mambukushu from two little villages lower down this river. In this way we at last collected enough carriers to take some of our loads along, the others being left behind in the forest to be sent for, as our retinue increased. Our other difficulty was the scarcity of food; grain was unobtainable, game was scarce, and the pain and physical weakness which affected me made hard hunting impossible. It was imperative, however, to obtain meat, as this is the hope and guerdon of every Mambukushu, for which he seems to think, work and dream. Faint-heartedly scratching the smallest possible area of soil just before the rains, he trusts to Nature's tropical bounty to give him enough cereal food for his bodily necessity, the while he slaves to satisfy his hyæna-like appetite for flesh. The men spend their lifetime making snares, pitfalls and falling traps for game, the women weaving the rope for the snares. Everywhere, in Mambukushu country, the game is driven, hunted or trapped. Immensely long and big fences are made across likely spots, and enticing gaps and paths left through them, where a small trap is

placed or a pit dug. When the frequent game drives take place, the unfortunate animals, running in fear and haste from the hunters, fall down and are impaled, or find themselves noosed. The bigger animals are hunted or driven away from the water till they are weak and exhausted, and fall readily to the spear or arrow. Some, like the zebra, are poisoned with Euphorbia juice. Even the fish which escape net or trap are poisoned with herbs, or suffocated with mud stirred up in the water.

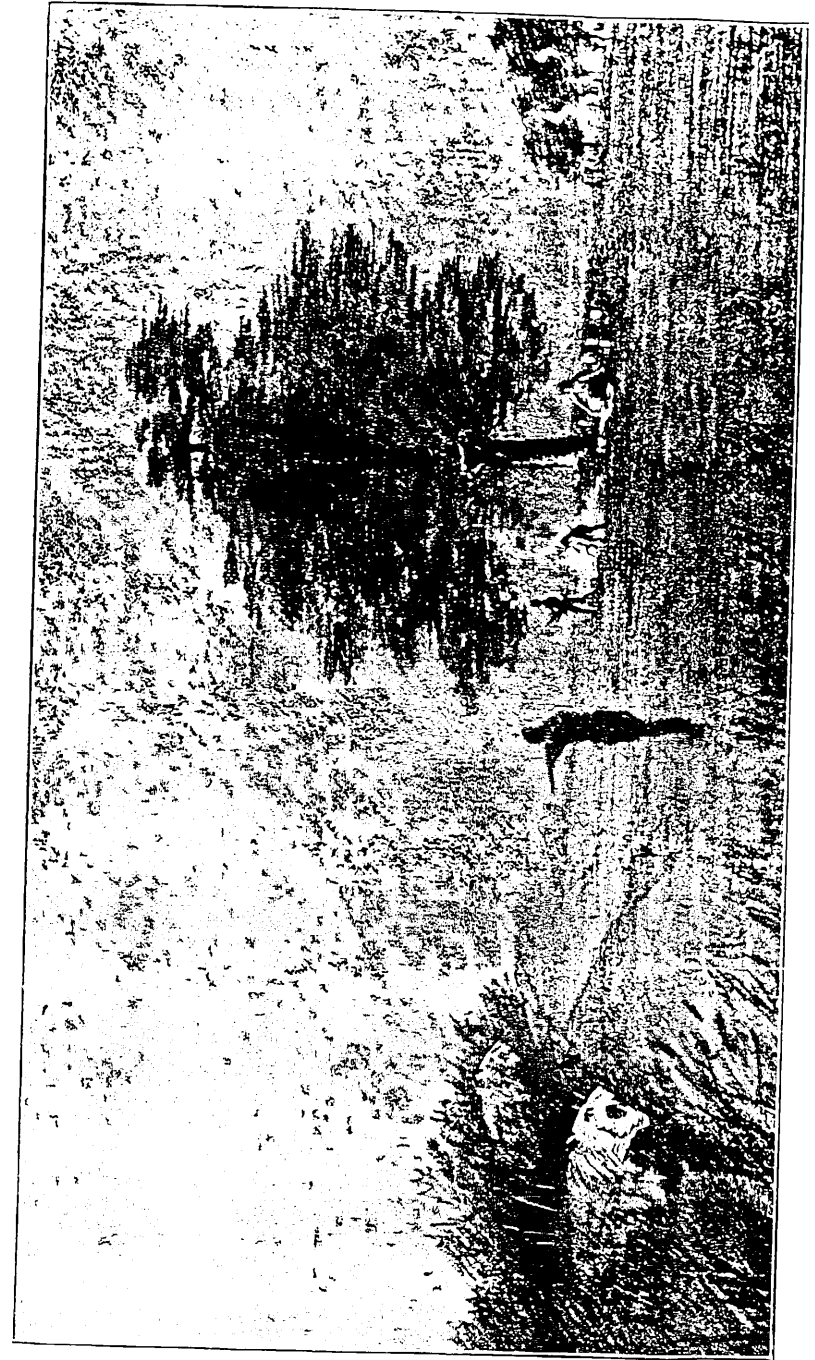
It was naturally difficult to find sufficient food in such a country for such hearty eaters, but our recruits were at least willing to help themselves—by collecting seeds from the M'Shibi trees, Mabula fruit, the roots of water lilies, and a few fish from the river—till I was able to procure meat. We moved six miles down the Loengi, on the afternoon of the 26th, with eight carriers, sending them back to the previous camp to fetch the other half-dozen loads left behind. The next day, after being joined by four men from a neighbouring village, we marched another half-dozen miles down the river, again sending back for the loads left behind. It was now imperative to obtain meat to content the carriers, and fortune, smiling at last, brought me within range of two tsessebe antelope, which I killed in the afternoon; and as fortune, like misfortune, rarely comes singly, I met two bull kudu towards dusk. The sound of the shot which killed the bigger of the pair sent the second running a little distance, to stand there wondering at the noise; for I was one of the first white men to fire a rifle on the Loengi. The kudu looked so splendid standing broadside on to me, with his great spiral horns silhouetted against the crimson sunset, that I forgot the need of food, forgot the suffering this need had brought us, and, to the disgust of my Mambukushu hunters, watched the bull

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till his form faded with the light, and was merged in the shadows of the bush. It might be thought that the three buck already killed would have sufficed for a far greater number of men than we had recruited; but it is a remarkable fact that these three animals, as well as a large rhinoceros, which would have provided sixteen Europeans with food for several months and an equal number of most Africans at least ten days, filled the ravening maws and distensible stomachs of sixteen Mambukushu carriers for just five days, despite the fact that they ate some of the skins and bones as well!

The tsessebe had been killed at long range, the kudu with one shot, while the rhino had lost her life in attacking us, and these incidents helped to give me the reputation of a successful meat-getter, which was worth more than money (of which they knew nothing), beads and cloth, to that super-eater of flesh, the Mambukushu gentleman.

The story of how the rhinoceros died is worth repeating, as it has its humorous side. One of the Askaris who accompanied us was very clever and an invaluable servant, but had a characteristic and remarkable vanity. It expressed itself in various ways—in laying down the law, giving orders wherever he could, and impressing on the other natives his intimacy and influence with us. As a measure of his importance, he wore a large straw hat, decked with three ostrich feathers and a porcupine quill, and strutted along the path, impressing the carriers and villagers we met. Being the only man who could interpret for us, it fell to Beangora's lot to accompany me one day on the spoor of a big rhinoceros. I followed up every rhinoceros track, in the hope that it might prove to be one of the large, but almost extinct, white or square-lipped variety, which I was very anxious to



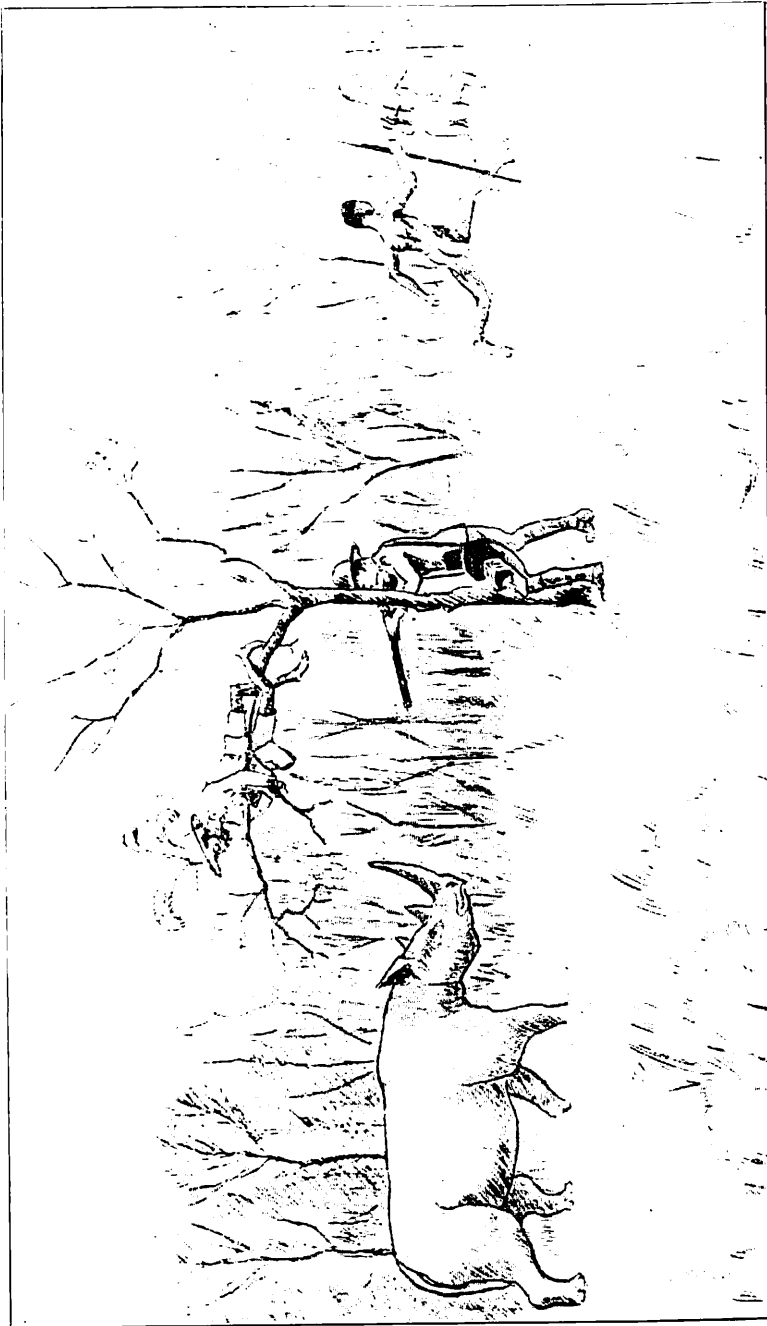
I TRY TO SHOOT THE LIONS WHICH RAID US (p. 153).

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photograph, and the unknown Loengi river seemed a likely spot to find the last of them.

The Mambukushus and Hukwe bushmen, however, did not share my curious sympathy for these fast disappearing animals, and had hunted the "Gava," as they called it, to extinction, though I did not know it then. We followed the big rhino for hours, through glade and thorn thicket—Beangora, two Mambukushu and myself—and when we were becoming weary with the interminable tracking, and the terrible thorns, we heard loud snorts and crashes, and there appeared a huge, grey-coloured rhino chasing the two natives who were ahead of me. The rhino's charge was no blind rush upwind, but a deliberate pursuit in a semi-circle, which ended only four or five yards from a sapling that partially and temporarily sheltered me from the enraged animal's vision. At the approach of the rhino, Beangora climbed into a branch of the sapling, but it bent under his weight, and then—though I really believed that one of the rare white rhino was before me, and uncomfortably near at that—I laughed softly; for though the body of the vain one was twisted humbly and in a monkey-like fashion round the bending sapling, there remained on his head the straw hat, still cocked to one side and retaining all the splendour of its ostrich feathers and porcupine quill. My amusement vanished, however, when I realised that the sapling continued to bend, and might bring the clinging form into the rhino's line of vision or break and drop the Askari in front of her.

The rhino had in the meanwhile heard my chuckle or seen me, and turned to come round and attack. This movement gave me a view of the skull and neck, which a long thick horn had covered, and as I had by now pushed the camera to one side of my body, to make room for my rifle, I was enabled to get a shot



at her neck. The bullet caused the rhino to stumble, another turned her, a third hurried her retreat into a flight and the end. Then, temporarily crestfallen, the little, clinging figure, crowned with the great, feathered hat, slid down the sapling, and for once the voluble tongue was stilled and the self-confident smirk absent.

It was a sad business for both the rhino and myself, for her ill-temper was possibly due to an approaching confinement, and I was sorry that a good photo had been lost and two of these curious animals had been destroyed. It was at least fortunate that the beast was not a white rhino, as I thought at first from her great bulk, light colour and long horn.

The only people really delighted at the rhino's death were the Mambukushu carriers, who, undaunted by a surfeit of tsessebe and kudu, meat, skin and bones, rejoiced, even with distended bellies, at the further prospect of unlimited food and constant mastication. The one relief to both of us white people was the prospect of a day or two's rest from the toil of hunting, and grace from the butchering of splendid animals, which these horrible Mambukushu had forced on me by refusing to carry our loads without a continuous meat supply. Fortunately, there was more game in this section of the Loengi; spoor of tsessebe, kudu, roan, eland, wildebeeste, zebra, reedbuck, duiker and stein buck were not infrequently met with, and three lions had pulled down a buil giraffe at Likoma shortly before our arrival. Possibly this is the best game region of the Loengi valley, and here we found two Boer hunters at a village called Kakaunja, two miles beyond Yombo and some ten miles from where I had shot the rhino. They had railed from Natal to Livingstone, trekked up the Zambezi to Katima Molilo, crossed the desert to the junction of the Loengi with the Kwando, and

then followed the course of the former river to where we met them. The Boers had suffered much hardship, and complained bitterly of the Mambukushu, who were, they declared, the worst natives they had ever met. Their dislike and distrust of any further venturings among these people was so increased by the story of our own ill-treatment by the Mambukushu that these two strong and hardy pioneers determined there and then to turn back and find their way up the Kwando, hoping to discover along the banks of the river a tree large enough to carve out into a canoe, which could take them and their few loads up stream to Moxico, the country where they hoped they would find land to farm and breed stock for the Congo markets. We both hoped that these adventurous people would find a way through the difficult, little known country ahead. I have more than once had cause to criticise the habits of game destruction among the Boers, but have ever held them in great respect for their traditions of fearless and almost peerless African exploration and venture; while the stories of their long, hard fight with the Zulu, and the tenacity and bravery of the Boer women, are enough in themselves to leave one a candid friend rather than a hostile critic. The Boers told me of another route from their camp to Libebes, which was apparently shorter and certainly better watered than the one we had followed. It depended for its water on probably the same old stream beds and overflow channels which had supplied us with our filthy brown fluid, for these Marambas flow in parallel lines south-eastwards towards the Kwando; but as the same Maramba may be called many different names in its course, none of those given me by the Boers is to be found on the only and very incomplete map of this part of the country.

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Near Yombo we had a mutiny among the carriers, who refused to move farther east. Paid and fed well, they had no reason for this refusal except the ingrained sloth and cussedness of their race, and I had no compunction in taking their spears and axes and forcing them along the path they had once promised to guide us until at least we could find other people to take their places. My wife, myself and the two Askaris took posts at intervals in the marching line of twenty men, who very soon saw that we were not to be continually trifled with; and after being watched and guarded for a day and night or two, they not only became reconciled, but joyfully helped us to find other carriers who could replace them. At Likoma, which we reached after a sixteen-mile march along the river, I found the first village marked as such in my map, and the chief, a man of about seventy years, gave me some very interesting information of the country and its villages. In a land where a village is shifted every few years in search of better soil, or because the headman after whom the village is called dies, naturally or with help, no map dependent on village locations can remain even approximately accurate. Only one of the mapped villages ahead of us still existed under its former name, and even this one had changed its location. The chief told me, among other things, that from his village to where the Loengi joined the Kwando was four days' march, and there was a white man living at this point, and two others three days further south along the Kwando. Of the game of the country there were still giraffe, zebra, eland, kudu, wildebeeste, tsessebe, lechwe, reedbuck, duiker and stein buck; a few black rhino (Fume) were to be found, but of the white variety, the immense Gava, none had been seen for many years, and it is doubtful if any survived. Likoma

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had killed some in his youth, and well knew these quaint and clumsy forms, with their long front horn, square mouths, immense bulk and comparative inoffensiveness.

Some lions had killed a bull giraffe a few days before our arrival, and the highly scented remains of its skin, bones, and what was left of the meat were stewing in the fleshpots of the village. My luck of bagging a buck every day had continued with a tsessebe, shot that morning, and it was to be continued the next, when, in marching from Likoma's to Tamfu, a large village reached in the evening, I shot a lechwe.

The valley of the Loengi continued to increase in width, but kept most of the features which characterised it thirty miles further back, and the bed of the stream retained to an increasing degree its extraordinary tendency to meander. In this great valley, two to six or more miles wide, the tortuous, reed-fringed stream, but three or four yards across, flowed very gently. The slopes of the valley were distinctly pretty, with park-like clumps of trees growing on slightly higher ground, while roughly parallel to the river and often indistinguishable from it in appearance were numerous reed-fringed lagoons. The lower Loengi, or Luiana, as it was now called, continued like this to its junction with the Kwando.

Our original intention of canoeing down the Loengi was rendered ludicrous when we saw the river in the dry season, but canoes must be needed when the rains have flooded the valley, and from bank to bank there stretches a great flood of yellow water. The valley seemed very suitable for crops and pasturage in the dry season, for it was still damp in many places—even in the August and September of a very dry year—and irrigation seemed easy.

There were no tse-tse fly, and the cattle I saw looked

well nourished and healthy, so that it must be the laziness of the Mambukushu alone which prevents the better cultivation of this valley. From a village called Kapinga onward we were to enter the country that Schulz and Hammar had described forty years before as filled with game, where thousands of wild animals roamed undisturbed in a land of good grass and plenteous water. We had crossed the Loengi to reach a particular valley, whose description as a game paradise had been one of the reasons that led us from the west coast, twelve hundred miles away, to this spot, laden with heavy cameras and telephoto lenses. Schulz's description of the abundance of the game is so remarkable that I will quote the author's words:—

“ A little further on I came on to a salt lick or creek that ran from the south-west into the Liana river, and even as I write now my mind is pleasantly excited at the marvellous sight of game that burst on my view. As far as I could see up the open laagte the ground was teeming with heavy game. Close in front of me stood three giraffes, a little further beyond a troop of seven more ; between these a troop of buffalo ; a little beyond troops of giraffe, eland, buffalo, hartebeeste, quagga, letzwe, rooi buck, blue wildebeeste, ostriches, reed buck, and more and more, repeated over again until the whole valley seemed one teeming mass of life. Unable to control myself from excitement and wondering what effect a shot would have on this vast assembly of game, I stealthily looked round, and finding none of the party in sight, although there were more reasons than one why I should not shoot, I guiltily clinked the nearest giraffe sixty yards off under the ear with a Martini-Henry bullet, and she dropped, with one chopping blow of her powerful forelegs, into the clump of reeds they were standing in, which effectively hid

the body from sight as it lay. The shot boomed along the valley, hedged in by the forest on either side, awakening the recumbent and resting game into activity. Mercy! what a wonderful sight it was! The troops careered about like mad till the earth reverberated to their hoofs ; some ran one way and some another. Many troops thundered down in my direction and passed close to the advancing column of boys. Two rhinoceros that had been reposing in the reeds lining the little creek where the giraffe was lying started up, and with elastic bounds no one would give them credit for bolted for better cover, and the giraffes made off with their long, swinging, pendulous strides till lost in the dust and general turmoil in the distance. Some lions that I could not see for dust roared loudly and joined the general stampede, for a stampede it was on the largest scale I ever witnessed, in which at least some ten thousand head of large game took part.”

This game paradise, only seven miles from our last camp, was reached just before sunset, at that hour when most beasts come to drink and graze. It was approached cautiously and silently, and as the sun was at our backs the approach was made under the choicest of circumstances. Expectantly, almost nervously, I peered from behind the last of the bushes which line the great valley, five or six miles long and now covered with short green grass. My expectancy was turned to amazement and depression, for on that vast plain between forest and river *not one solitary beast or even bird was to be seen!* There was the silence of dead places in the air, and in my heart a depression due to love of the wild and a knowledge of the extent of the terrible scourge of disease and slaughter which alone could have turned to an empty silence this one-time paradise of game. The rinderpest, that plague which destroyed so much wonderful African animal life in

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1895, had probably sadly diminished the great herds of game, but from their recovery in other parts of Africa it seemed certain that the spears, trap and poison of the relentless human hyænas, the Mambukushu and Hukwe, had done much in later years to destroy the slowly recovering numbers of game, and their methods of game destruction were more horrible than the actual loss of animal life. A buck on being noosed or trapped often remained hours with broken limbs before being speared to death. Herds of game were driven on to spears half buried in the ground, which tore the wretched animals to pieces in their terrified flight. Even when the hunters came up to them the horror did not end, for I have heard of these people actually skinning a little duiker alive in order to obtain what they thought was a nicer skin for a drum.

The next morning the great valley was equally empty and silent, and from now onwards till we reached the Kwando river, past the villages of Orua, Katinda, Neri and Mataa, a distance of fifteen miles, no game at all was seen.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE KWANDO RIVER—JOHNS THE GREEK AND HIS TRAGIC FATE—MOONLIGHT BUFFALO HUNTING.

WE were now near the junction of the Loengi or Luiana (as it is called in its lower reaches) with the Kwando, and where, forty years earlier, Hammar and Schulz had been attacked by a chief called Kikonto. These unfortunate white travellers, the first who entered the region (and there have not been more than three or four since), had been deserted by some of their carriers further down the Kwando, but, persevering in their attempt to cross Angola and Africa to the west coast, they had discarded most of their goods, and with many hardships reached Kikontos. This chief and his overlord, Matambanja of the Masubias, the people of the eastern bank of the Kwando, while pretending friendship, first plotted their destruction and then actually attacked them near Kikontos. Burning their surplus goods, the white men retreated with a small party through the thirsty sand-belts to the Kubango, where they hoped to find kinder treatment from its Mambukushu chief Andara, the uncle of Libebe and grand-uncle of Lisho, who treated us so badly. Their sufferings in the desert and their abominable treatment at the hands of Andara, which was even worse than our own by Lisho, is mentioned elsewhere, but it can be imagined that we could have no great appreciation of the inhabitants of the Luiana-Kwando junction, or encouraging memories of the place itself.

We were relieved to hear of a white man a few miles to the north of us, and marched across to his hut,



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been a dik dik of a reddish colour was seen, but not obtained, and the natives apparently did not know it. The white rhinoceros was not met with, but may be present between Mossamedes and the Victoria Falls. Of the large carnivora, lion, leopard and the spotted hyæna were met with in the region of our traverse, though in much fewer numbers than might at first be suspected, owing to its remoteness from civilisation. Five hunting leopards were seen and two shot in the region between the Kwando and Zambezi, a side-striped jackal on the Kunene, and skins of the brown hyæna and aardwolf were seen in the Mossamedes province.

Of the smaller mammals, the ratel, two varieties of genet, the serval, wild cat, two varieties of otter, and the galago were met with.

### *Individual Species.*

ELEPHANT, *Elephas Africanus* (N'zovu in M'bundu), is now rarely found west of Kipungu (one hundred and fifty miles from the coast), but in the forests to the north of this post, and especially to the south, elephants are present and may be met with (at certain seasons) from here to the Kunene, and beyond it to the Kubango. They are scarce along the upper Kubango, but the spoor of a large herd was seen one hundred miles below Kaiundu, and the forests on the left bank of the river in this region are called the elephant forests. Signs of elephant, though never plentiful, became more numerous as we went down river (on the Portuguese bank at least, which was the only one we examined carefully). Spoor was seen between Diriko and Libebes, and particularly between Bunja and Sambio. In the country between the Kubango and Loengi, only one spoor, that of a small bull, was met. The natives said that this animal had lived alone apparently for

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some years, and was the only elephant they knew of. The spoor of a small herd was seen on the Kwando near Sepango, and that of a very big bull just across the river. It appears that while in the area between the Kubango and Kwando there are but few elephants, which are much hunted and move about a great deal, across the Kwando these animals are much more numerous, possibly owing to the better protection afforded them in British territory. The destruction of elephants in Angola was formerly great; but as the Portuguese have now declared elephant royal game, and protect them wherever possible, it is to be hoped that they will increase again, or at least be saved from extermination.

Elephants have been divided into races by the rather rough test of ear shape. The West African (Cameroon race), which I have often hunted, have an oval-shaped ear, the Addo bush (East Cape race) one that is more square. In the East African (Masai and Sudan races) the ear is triangular, a smaller equilateral triangle in the first case, a large and long, acutely-pointed triangle in the second. The Angolan elephant (of which the photo shows a young male from the Kubango) has an ear which appears intermediate in character between the West African and Rhodesian type, which is itself akin to the Masai race.

BLACK RHINOCEROS. The black rhinoceros, *R. bicornis* (Ocimanda in M'bundu; Fumé, East Angola), probably once numerous in the region of our journey, is now becoming very rare in the scrub region near the coast, though occasionally found on the Bero and Koroka rivers, in the upper reaches of the Ocingau and between it and the Kakoluar, while I met with occasional spoor between Lubango and the Kunene and along this river and its Chitanda tributary. No spoor was seen between Kassinga and the Kubango,

but the rhinoceros is known to be present in this region, especially to the south of our route and in the Kolui valley, near Dongo and Kuchi river to the north of it. The rhinoceros is now rare along the Kubango, and no spoor was seen till the Kwito was reached, and here there was one animal so well known in the neighbourhood as to exclude the probability of there being many others. No rhino spoor was seen in the Kubango-Loengi region, but if now exterminated these animals were present here not many years ago. Along the Loengi I saw tracks of five and killed one. The rhinoceros extends from the Kwando through Rhodesia into East Africa.

WHITE RHINOCEROS, *R. simus* (Gava on the Loengi). From the accounts of Andersson, Galton, Baldwin and many others, this large, long-horned and square-lipped rhinoceros must have once been very common in South-West Africa, but persistent hunting and perhaps the rinderpest exterminated it. There may be some of these rhino left in the scrub country of the West Angolan coast through which we passed, but no specimens have been obtained from here for a great many years, nor was the animal known to the natives till we reached the lower Kubango, Loengi and Kwando, where it was spoken of by the Mambukushu and Bastard bushmen. The chief Likoma of the Loengi told me he had killed several, the last quite a dozen years before, and that they were called Gava and well known as distinct from the black variety, which were known as Fumé. They were formerly found on the Loengi, Kwando and between that river and the Kubango, and to the south and south-west of that river. Schulz and Hammar met white rhino spoor on the lower Kwando (south of the Loengi junction) as late as 1884. Though persistently searching for white rhino, I never saw any trace of them.

HIPPOPOTAMUS, *Hippopotamus amphibius*, was found on the Kunene, Kubango, Kwando and Zambezi, and some of their larger tributaries. Nowhere numerous, except in the swamps of the lower Kubango and Kwando, this animal is fast disappearing owing to persistent hunting, and within a few years will probably be exterminated, except in swampy rivers where reeds and papyrus afford protection against man's attack. As I have mentioned in the narrative, some of the remaining hippo, possibly owing to old wounds, are a distinct danger to navigation.

WART HOG, *Phacochoerus æthiopicus* (Ongulve in M'bundu, Gidi on the Loengi), is found from the west coast scrub region to the Victoria Falls, but its distribution is patchy and it was nowhere numerous.

BUSH PIG, *Potamochoerus chæropotamus* (Combo in M'bundu), was met on the Kunene and Chitanda, and its spoor was seen on the Kubango, Loengi and Kwando. The Angolan race is larger than usual.

GIRAFFE, *Giraffa camelopardalis* (Onduli in M'bundu, M'dinde and Bashi of the Mambukushu and Hukwe), is probably found from the South-West Angolan coast to the Kwando river, though the distribution is patchy.

In the west the race is the Angolan giraffe, *G. c. angolensis*, found along the lower Kunene and eastwards towards the lower Kubango. This race has a rudimentary frontal horn; the ground colour is dirty white, on which are large brown spots with indistinct margins continued to the hoofs, but limited on the face to the region below a line from the angle of the mouth to the eyes. The next race to be met with to the east is probably *G. c. capensis*, which differs from the Angolan race in its lighter ground colour, more net-like and less patch-like pattern of coloration and browner colour of the patches, which also extend