

## AMONG THE WILD ANIMALS OF EAST AFRICA

*True Experiences Related by a Young Traveler*

### VI. A TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE WITH WILD ELEPHANTS

ONE EVENING I was sitting with several friends in the airy lobby of the hotel in Nairobi, East Africa. Here many a hunter, adventurer, and business man has sat and listened to the stories told of experiences in the jungles. On this occasion among the men in the lobby was one of the oldest hunters of elephant ivory in Africa. As I listened to his tales of herds of wild elephants, I decided to go and see a herd for myself.

The next day my friend and I talked to old hunters in Nairobi to get some information about a *safari* in the Belgian Congo. We learned that it would be possible, but not advisable, to make this *safari* in our Ford sedan. Nevertheless, we decided to go, and to go in our trusty Ford.

During the next few days we were busy getting food and other supplies, canteens of water, and a spare tire for our auto. At the end of the third day we had everything ready and neatly stowed away in the back seat of our little car. We were ready to leave at an early hour next morning.

The following morning we left at four o'clock and headed northwest. There are no good highways in East Africa. Most of the roads are across sandy and dusty plains, and are full of holes and deep ruts. These holes and ruts were often deeper than the radius of the wheels of our Ford car. The effect on the springs and on ourselves was very bad.

We traveled all day and reached Kampala, the capital of Uganda, late at night. Here we found lodging. After a long

and tiresome ride, we were happy to get a good night's sleep.

The next morning we started down the jungle road to Kamande. The burning tropical heat was intense. We were always on the watch for wild animals, but during the heat of the day the animals keep in the shade. We were making good progress in our journey until all of a sudden we were interrupted by the sound of a blowout in the rear tire of our auto. Although the sun burned down without mercy, I had to change that rear tire at once. We had to reach Kamande before nightfall, as it would not be safe to be in the jungle after dark. We were in the midst of a world of wild animals, where, as soon as darkness falls, every animal starts out in search of its prey.

Presently I got the tire changed, and we proceeded on our way to Kamande. Up hill and down, around curves and over ravines we went. Sometimes an antelope or a hart would spring from the side of the road, run across to the other side, and disappear in the jungle.

Once a herd of five giraffes came from the plain toward the road. We drove slowly in order to watch them. It was interesting to see these brown and yellow spotted animals with their long necks fifteen to eighteen feet in the air as they crossed the road. A giraffe has long legs, and can run as fast as forty miles an hour. He is very shy and easily frightened. When I sounded the auto horn, this herd took to the jungle with long strides. We could see their heads up in the air for some time after they disap-

peared.

We drove northward through dense jungle. The road was getting darker from the shadows of the trees. Just as we came to the top of a small hill, I saw something moving ahead of us. As I came closer, I saw directly ahead of us a herd of elephants. How many there were, I could not tell.

I stopped the car and turned off the engine. A few hundred feet ahead of us, there were, by actual count, fifteen great African elephants. They were standing in groups, looking, for all the world, as if they were talking to each other. It was a wonderful sight to see these immense creatures in their native habitat. It seemed so unreal that I thought I must be dreaming. But I was soon to realize that it was not a dream.

As we sat in our little Ford car looking at the immense beasts before us, I thought how easy it would be for them to upset our auto and trample it to pieces. We watched the herd. They were moving slowly forward.

Suddenly they stopped. They began to show signs of excitement. One of them raised his trunk into the air. His great ears stood straight out on both sides. This is the usual position of a charging elephant.

We had been advised not to sound the auto horn when we saw wild elephants. The noise might frighten them into a mad frenzy and cause them to charge.

We sat very quietly in our car, wondering what would happen. It seemed as if they had not noticed us. The wind was blowing against us, so they had not caught our scent. The elephant and the African buffalo do not like the scent of human beings.

My friend asked, "What shall we do

now?"

I said, "We cannot go ahead, and we cannot back up. We will just wait and see what happens."

We sat there for quite a while. Finally the elephants turned around and headed directly towards our car. One of the larger ones, who seemed to be the leader, had his trunk upraised. We could easily hear him as he took deep breaths. His small eyes were watching our car, but as he saw no movement, it did not seem to disturb him.

My friend and I were watching every movement of the animals before us. Our hearts were beating so loudly we could hear them. These were minutes of life or death. All depended upon the sense of the old elephant before us, and upon our ability to remain perfectly quiet and not give the slightest sign of movement.

The herd came up to our car. The leader of the herd stood directly in front of our engine. We could hear the trunk of another, as it scraped across the roof of our auto. Four other elephants were loitering nearby our little Ford, looking over the top. One of them struck a glass window with his yellow ivory tusk. We feared that he might break the window in; then it would be bad for us.

Several of the huge animals bumped against the sides of our auto. We expected that they would grasp the car by their trunks and tip it over. Sometimes the car would shake and rock violently. I hoped they would not try to lie down against it.

Suddenly one of the elephants seemed to have a new idea. He went to the back of the car and pushed it slowly forward against the elephant in front, who was the leader. Then the leader pushed it back again. Then they began pushing

it back and forth. It was not a pleasant sensation to be powerless in an auto which was being pushed backward and forward by wild elephants.

This went on for about half an hour, during which time we were nearly petrified with fright. Suddenly, without any apparent reason, the entire herd raised their trunks and let out a mighty roar. Then they started off into the jungle. We felt sure they had got the scent of another elephant herd, and had gone off to join them.

Although my friend and I were so frightened we could not speak, I lost no time in getting our little Ford started. Soon we were going as fast as possible, as we hoped to

reach Kamände before nightfall. It was dark when we finally arrived at that little native village. We went at once to the rest house on the shore of a lake. We were welcomed with colonial hospitality by the old keeper who had built this comfortable rest house for the weary traveler.

After we had enjoyed a dinner of native *posho* (mush) and roast antelope,

meat, we sat on the porch and told of our harrowing experience with the elephants. The old keeper listened carefully. After we had finished, he turned to us and said, "I consider you lucky to be alive tonight."

#### A REVIEW

1. What and where is Nairobi?
2. What is a *safari*?

3. What did the writer and his friend wish to do?

4. Tell of their preparations.

5. Tell of the roads in East Africa.

6. What do African animals do in the daytime?

7. Tell all you can about the giraffe.

8. Tell all you can about the elephant.

9. What did the writer and his friend see?

10. What did the two men do? Why?

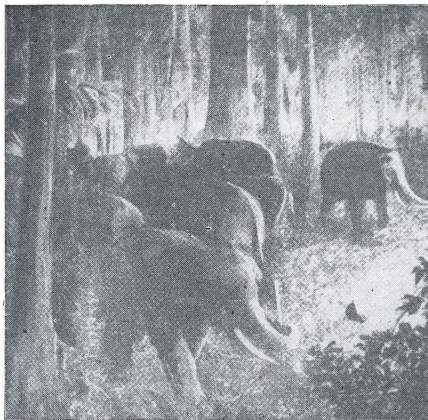
11. What did the elephants do?

12. Were the two men in danger? Why?

13. What peculiar thing did the elephants do?

14. Was this "a terrifying experience?"

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*Fifteen big fellows like these came around our auto.*

## MOUNTAIN BOYS

*(Continued from page 196)*

sap squeezed out of the cane. When it was being boiled into brown sugar, they sometimes had a taste of the thick molasses.

The month went by all too soon, and it was time for Acoy and Nanding to return to their home in the Mountain Province. They said goodbye to their boy friends, and in a short time were back in Baguio.

"What did you like best?" their father asked them when they returned.

"I liked to drink the milk from a young coconut," said Nanding.

"I liked to eat molasses made from sugar-cane sap," said Acoy.

"Did you enjoy your stay in the lowlands?"

"Yes," replied the boys, "but Negros is very different from our home in the Mountain Province. It is very hot in Negros—not cool like Baguio. And just think! We didn't see a single pine-tree!"

## QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

1. Where did Nanding and Acoy live?
2. Is it cool or hot in Baguio?
3. What did the boys' father do?

4. What things did he grow?

5. What fruit did he grow?

6. Can those things grow in the hot lowland? Why not?

7. Is sugar-cane grown in the Mountain Province? Why not?

8. Are coconuts grown in the Mountain Province? Why not?

9. Do pine-trees grow in the Mountain Province? Why?

10. Do pine-trees grow in the lowland? Why?

11. Where did the boys go to visit?

12. What things interested them on the *hacienda*? Why?

13. Have you ever been in the Mountain Province?

14. If not, would things there interest you?

15. Have you ever visited an *hacienda*?

16. If not, would things there interest you?

17. Did you like this story? Why?

18. Do you know the elevation above sea level of Baguio and other parts of the Mountain Province? (Baguio, 5,000 feet. Other parts of the province from 5,000 to 8,000 feet.)

19. What are the different Filipinos of the Mountain Province called?

20. What can you tell of the Mountain Province?

## TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE

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Why?

15. What did the keeper say after the men told their story?

16. How many of these East African animal stories have you read?

17. Can you tell what each was about?

18. Do you enjoy them?

19. Do you want more to be published in THE YOUNG CITIZEN?

20. Have you learned things from these stories?

21. Why are many large wild animals found in East Africa?

22. Make a list of the large wild animals found there.

23. Write a paragraph or tell as much as you can about each one.

24. Which of these wild animals are found in other parts of the world?

25. Which are found only in East Africa?

26. Have you ever seen pictures in the movies of any of the wild animals of East Africa?

27. Did such pictures interest you? Did you learn anything from them?

28. Where are some of these wild animals kept in captivity? (In the "circus" and in the "zoo.")

29. Does the East African government protect any of these animals? Why?