

## READING TIME FOR YOUNG FOLKS

### AMONG THE WILD ANIMALS OF EAST AFRICA

*True Experiences Related by a Young Traveler\**

#### I. CHARGED BY A RHINOCEROS



*Head of the African rhinoceros.  
This species has two horns.*

IT WAS  
just past  
noon  
when we  
stood on  
the porch  
of the lit-  
tle rest-  
house in  
Kaman-  
de, Bel-  
gian  
Congo  
in Afri-  
ca, and

said goodbye to our old friend and guide. Then, getting into our little Ford sedan, we headed for the northern road towards Uganda in central East Africa.

Uganda is about one hundred miles from Kamande. For the first fifty miles our little car behaved wonderfully well. There were tall trees on both sides of the road, and it was cool and pleasant driving through their shade.

We passed many antelopes, waterbucks, and gazelles, but as soon as they heard the sound of our motor, they would start to run. We had to be quite careful not to run into any of them. Many times when they were frightened they did not look where they were going, but would run directly into the path of our

on-coming car. Some of these antelopes weighed as much as five or six hundred pounds, and it would have been tragic both for an antelope and our little Ford if we had had a collision.

As we looked over the plains, we could see many giraffes in the far distance eating from the tree tops. They seemed very shy and always kept a long ways off. It was not until we came into the wide, open plains that we saw zebras. They, too, are shy animals. A zebra looks much like a donkey; he looks just like a jack-ass with a striped coat. They usually feed in the open country in order to have plenty of room to make a getaway whenever they are stalked by a leopard or a lion. It is a well-known fact that the zebra in Africa is the main diet of both the lion and the leopard.

Once I had to stop our auto very quickly. Before us was a group of about fifteen baboons scattered over the road. But when I sounded my horn they became frightened and ran. They made a great chattering noise. Sometimes they looked around at us and showed their big white teeth. We could not go very fast in our Ford, for those baboons were continually blocking our road, but by constantly sounding the horn, we were able to get through.

The high trees soon disappeared behind us, and the endless plain lay before us with some hills in the far distance. The tropical sun burned everything exposed, and the heat and the dust were very annoying.

Soon we experienced a hardship of African travel. Just as we were reach-

\* The author of this article, a young man now living in Manila, has written a number of true stories especially for THE YOUNG CITIZEN. In these articles he tells of his experiences among the big wild animals of East Africa. One of these stories will appear in each number for some months to come.—THE EDITOR.





*Map showing a part of Belgian Congo and Uganda in Africa*

ing the foothills of the mountains and I was thinking how delightful the cool shade would be, one of our front tires blew out with a terrific bang. I was glad when we got that tire changed, for the mid-afternoon sun was unbearable.

We got back into the car and started on our way. Soon the main road ended, and the rest of the way could not be called a road. It was just a dried-up riverbed filled with rocks and stones which had been washed down from the mountain-side. We played criss-cross in avoiding the rocks, and hop-scotch in jumping over the bumps.

Finally we encountered a large rock which we could not get over. Our little Ford struck against it with considerable force. I heard something snap. Upon investigation, I found we had broken our front spring. This meant that we had to go still slower, or we would have to remain in this leopard and lion infested country all night.

We started slowly down the hill, carefully choosing our way. My eyes were fixed upon the road, while my friend was watching the scenery. Suddenly my companion grabbed my arm and said, "What is that ahead of us?"

I stopped the Ford and looked. There, about one hundred yards ahead of us, were two great African rhinoceroses. That sight brought terror to my heart, for a rhino is a two-ton killer with a terrible disposition. He will charge anything that crosses his path. I knew that if those rhinos would hear us or get our scent, they would charge at once. Now I wished I had my high-power rifle, but that was back in Nai-

robi. All I had was a small pistol, and that would have no more effect on the tough hide of a rhinoceros than an air rifle.

Our Ford sedan would afford little protection against the rhinos, and then there was that broken spring. While we sat there in the Ford, our eyes were fixed on every movement of the rhinos. Soon we saw them put their noses to the ground. Then they started off on a dog-trot. This could mean one of two things: either they had gotten the scent of an enemy, or they were contentedly going on their own way. We hoped that it was the latter.

Now was our opportunity to get by. We drove along slowly, and when we were a little distance away, suddenly the rhinos turned and started on a run. We looked ahead and there on the side of the road under the shade of a tree was a large red truck. The rhinos headed directly for it. Both of them plunged their heads against the side of the truck with terrific force, and knocked it over on one side.

Just then we saw two natives jump out of the truck on the other side, and run for their lives through the high



grass. The two natives had been asleep in the truck and had not seen the charging animals.

We sat breathless in our Ford sedan and watched those furious beasts while they pounded away at that truck. They would back away a few feet and then come crashing down with all their weight tearing, crushing, and pounding all parts of the truck.

The metal hood of the engine was thrown high into the air. One of the rhinos plunged his head through the windshield and tore the whole cab away. One of them attacked the steel disk wheel and ripped the tire off. He got the tire fastened around his neck and that made him more furious than ever. He turned around and pawed the ground until

finally he tore the tire in two and got it off his head. This attack by the rhinos lasted for nearly an hour. When they finally stopped there was nothing left of that truck but a mass of crumpled steel and splinters.

The two rhinos seemed quite satisfied with the job they had done and started off into the bushes. We waited a few minutes, and then decided we had better hurry on. We certainly hoped that the rhinos would not reappear.

We drove slowly by the truck in order to get a closer view of the damage that

those two huge beasts had done. The scene was very fascinating and the rhinos had disappeared in the bushes, so we decided to stop our car and look to see, if possible, what had happened to the two natives.

While we were standing there, we heard a breaking of branches and a snorting sound. We quickly looked toward the bushes and there we saw those rhinos both headed in our direction with their eyes fixed on us.

We made a leap for our car. As we

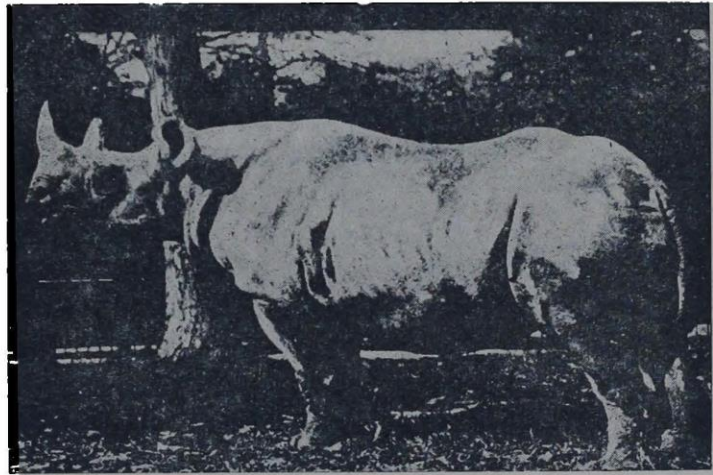
did so, both rhinos started on the charge. I turned the key, and stepped on the starter. I expected every second to feel the crash of the great weight of the beasts against our little Ford.

I stepped on the gas and the car leaped forward with a

speed that had never been shown before. We stirred up a great cloud of dust as we started off. This cloud of dust may have saved our lives. Whether or not it was the dust or the smoke from the exhaust which frightened the animals, I do not know. We were so scared we did not dare to look around. All that we knew was that we had escaped the charging rhinos. To this day we believe it must have been a miracle.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Where is Belgian Congo? Uganda?  
(Please turn to page 34.)



*The African rhinoceros weighs two tons and has an ugly temper.*