

# HUNTING AHEAD OF ROOSEVELT

## IN EAST AFRICA

### Fire Hunting with the Congo Cannibals

By Captain Fritz Duquesne

Capt. Fritz Duquesne was born of Boer parents in South Africa, educated in Europe (where he won considerable distinction as a swordsman), and has been a professional hunter of big game most of his life. At the age of 17 he was a veteran of the Kaffir wars. He served in the Boer war and also in the Congo. In the recent events of South Africa's kaleidoscopic history Capt. Duquesne took a conspicuous part. He acted in many capacities during the hostilities between the Boers and the British, being in turn spy, military detective, engineer, censor, dispatch-carrier and propagandist. He was wounded twice in the fighting around Colenso. When the British succeeded in cutting cable communication between the Boer republic and the rest of the world, Duquesne carried the news of the Boer victories over the Mozambique border, and from there he wrote his dispatches to the Petit Bleu, the official European organ of the Boer government. He was once captured by the Portuguese and thrown into prison at Lorenzo Marques. Later he was taken as a prisoner to Europe at the request of the British government. When the ship that conveyed him and his guard touched at Naples he was suffering from a fever and in consequence was placed in an Italian hospital. On his recovery he was allowed to go free. He went to Brussels and was sent back to the front by Dr. Leyds, with plans for the seizure of Cape Town by the Boer commanders then mobilized in Cape Colony. Everything was ready for the taking of the city when, a traitor having revealed the plot, Duquesne and a number of others were captured in Cape Town inside the British defenses. This was the climax of what has come to be known as the "Cape Town Plot." Some of the prisoners were sentenced to death, who later had their sentence changed to life imprisonment. Capt. Duquesne was among the latter. Ten months later he escaped from the Bermuda prisons, got aboard the American yacht Margaret of New York while she was coaling at the dock and was conveyed to Baltimore. Back to Europe he went again, as war correspondent and military writer on the Petit Bleu; thence to Africa, where he took a commission on the Congo. In East Africa he hunted big game for sport and profit, and finally he came to New York to do newspaper and magazine work.



NE of the greatest elephant hunts I ever witnessed I participated in in the northeast corner of the Congo Free State, between Senga, a Belgian traveling port, and Lake Kivu. For ruthless destruction this hunt beat anything I have ever hoped to see. Although I commenced by joining the hunt, I really became a spectator after a short time. The hunt, unlike most elephant hunts, was not conducted for ivory. It was for a more useful purpose according to African opinion, for it was for food. Of course the ivory had its value, and as I was on the spot I hoped to make a nice sum by purchasing it.

Elephants have a habit of migrating from one part of the country to another in herds of from five to 100. It is indeed strange, that, as though by arrangement, all the elephants in the north start on a long march south, or vice versa, very often with no apparent reason. I have been passed by 50 herds in a week all moving south. The way they march is peculiarly intelligent; the young and weak elephants, even if they are weakened through age, are crowded in the center, and the rest of the herd that are at the height of their vigor and have all their fighting powers, march on the outside. Some will even scout out a considerable distance ahead of the herd and on the slightest sign of danger give the unmistakable signal of alarm, which is a short sharp trumping note.

The hunt in question took place in the middle of the dry season which commences in May, in that district, and last its height about the end of June. Lookout towers were built in the open country and native watchers occupied them day and night. For at night the elephants can be heard.

After some days natives from the northern villages who were not then at war with the men of the Senga country, who are notorious cannibals and much feared, came in with the news that a number of large herds were on the way south.

There was much rejoicing on the part of the natives, for there had been many wars during the last year and human flesh was cheap and was considered no longer a luxury by the fastidious natives who really like a variety in their food. A change at least once a year is considered necessary.

One morning my "boy" called me from my hammock and informed me with a great show of glee that the elephants were coming. I jumped for my arms and joined the throngs of excited natives who were collected in clusters and getting orders from their chiefs.

#### Preparing for the Hunt.

Spears with razor edges were glistering in the sun and rifles and arrows were prepared for the hunt. Torches were made and earthenware jars were filled with burning charcoal and carried by each native. These were to burn the grass.

At the edge of the forest that skirted the open veld at least 3,000 natives from different villages collected by appointment. Men who had recently been fighting each other and eating each other's relations greeted one another with apparent friendship. Instructions were given by the chiefs and the natives formed in parties of from five to nine, then without more ado their glistering naked forms vanished into the grass, which was from 10 to 12 feet in height. I ascended a tree on the top of which there was a platform built for a lookout by the native hunters.

As far as I could see there were signs of native watch towers but not an elephant in sight, although the dull appearance of the high grass was broken here and there by multicolored herds of antelope and quaggos. All day I waited, even eating my food up in the tree, but not a sign of the quarry. I went to my hammock that night somewhat disappointed, and to add to my annoyance I could hear the dull monotone of the native women

with doctors praying for a successful hunt to a hideous felloh that was set up not far from my hut.

At sunrise my "boy" woke me and after a hearty meal of blitong (dried meat) I made my way to the lookout platform at the edge of the forest.

An extraordinary sight greeted my vision. As far as my eye could reach the huge forms of elephants, which looked really stately in their surroundings, could be seen, strolling carelessly through the high brown withered grass. Through my glasses I could see them flapping their huge ears and swinging their trunks to keep away the numberless insects that attack every living thing in that region. Not a sign could I detect of the native hunters.

The sun had passed the zenith and was sliding down the heavens to the west when, at a rough estimate, I could see with the aid of my glasses at least from 800 to 1,000 elephants before me on the veld, yet no sign of the native hunters.

The day was three-quarters gone when a slight breeze sprang up and rocked the golden grass tops and fro, far away in every direction, curling towards the blue sky, a circle of silver smoke ascended. This was the first sign of the attack. The fires described a circle of perhaps five miles in diameter. In a half-hour the smoke on the horizon increased to clouds and I could plainly see the fire eating its way through the dry inflammable grass.

The elephants nearest the fiery circumference commenced to show signs of alarm and with increased pace moved towards the center of the slowly narrowing circle.

#### Jungle Animals Flee in Panic.

Through the smoky atmosphere I could see the sun like a gigantic ball of burnished copper sink behind the gray blue mountains beyond the forest. The short tropical twilight lingered over the land and then all of a sudden darkness, with a startling contrast, enveloped veld and forest.

Far off, north, south, east and west, glared and danced the red, spear-pointed flames above the advancing fire ranks, first galloping this way and then that at the caprice of the whipping winds.

Slowly advanced the fire and smaller and more brilliant grew the terrible, livid circle. Outside the inner ring of fire, which grew smaller every minute, there was another traveling in the opposite direction and growing larger, for the fire was burning through the high grass towards a center and away from it.

About midnight, when the smoke had become suffocating, animals of every description, hastened by fear, bolted past the tree in which I was perched. Here and there a rhinoceros, grunting in its exertions and shoving its young ahead; then crowds of woodhogs, elands, quaggos, wildebeest, kudn, gemsbok, everything, went thundering by like a wild cavalry charge, which lasted well towards morning.

Lions and leopards skulked past, their eyes flaming with the reflected light from the fire, which had made a lake of red in the somber sky. The sight fascinated me; it was terrible, brutal. I felt like a fiend watching destruction in some long past epoch, and then my heart swelled and a sadness almost tearful filled my being when I thought of the horrible brutality of it all.

I was deep in contemplation of the scene, almost forgetting it in the chaos of the thoughts it excited, when a hand touched me on the shoulder. I started, and turning saw the red eyes and gleaming teeth of my faithful "boy." "The chief says you must come away from here, as this tree may be torn down by the charge of the elephants, which are making this way." "No," I answered, "I will risk it and stay here; I want to see." "I'll stay too," said the boy, who would have been willing to be burned alive with me, should it have been my fate. The circle was now very small. The loud crackling of the burning grass and the roar of the flames was deafening. Above the fire's frightful mono-

tone, like a discordant band, coming from the distance, I heard the tramp of the trumping elephants.

#### Slaughter of the Herd.

It was now early morning. The cold chill of the night had passed and the solar heat that crept through the choking smoke called my blood to life. The east grew gray, violet and red in quick succession and the sun rose out of the hills east of Lake Kivu and lit the world. What a sight met my eyes, a sight I never shall forget, for it is pressed indelibly on the film of my memory.

To the north of my watching place, forming a rough circle of at least three-quarters of a mile in diameter, stood an irresolute mob of elephants, each family forming its own cluster, the fighters on the outer edge. The hundreds of backs shining like pol-

beings. Here, standing in the cruel, slowly moving circle of fire, each waiting for a leader to take them out of danger, they stood, majestic and noble. They might have been the elephant cavalry of Hannibal's mighty army.

The fire swept on, the smoke gathered thicker about them. The mothers commenced to trump in fear and the huge trunks moved restlessly to and fro over each other, writhing like wounded serpents over a lake of pitch.

Below me, with a cruel leer on his tattooed face, and his sharpened teeth showing below his heavy lips, crept the black form of a native cannibal. He was holding a pair of heavy assegoes in his powerful hands. Others soon joined him and I knew that the slaughter was about to commence.

These little, cruel, cunning natives, crawling like snakes in the grass, filled

of pain, the elephants, in chaotic consternation, rushed to the edge of the advancing fire and then in their fear retreated. One after another fell under the terrible onslaught, their huge bodies quivering as they bled to death from the frightful wounds of the assegoes.

The cries of the natives were, if anything, worse than the screeches of the elephants. Here and there amongst the wounded and dead mammoths lay the prostrate form of a cannibal who had received an arrow that was meant for an elephant.

#### Hunters Also Meet Death.

Everywhere I could see the cannibals rushing in amongst the infuriated elephants and stabbing right and left like fiends reveling in a carnival of death. One after another the natives were tusked and crushed to



I COULD SEE BETWEEN THE CHARGING ELEPHANTS THE MANGLED FORM OF THE "BOY."

ished leather looked like the roofs of some weird city. Tusks gleamed and flared in the sun, and the mother elephants, solicitous of the welfare of the young, kept them as near as possible to them and even admired them for playing pranks on each other, which they did on every opportunity, for they did not realize the strange danger that threatened them. They seemed no less human than human

me with revulsion. I hated them and almost wished I was an elephant, so that I could fall on them and crush them.

The fire crept in and the elephants on the outer edge screeched in pain as it burnt them. A shot rang out and then a volley from the thundering flintlocks. Assegoes and buzzing arrows filled the air and fell like rain from the sky. With frightful screeches

death by the charging elephants. The bloody spirit of war had seized them, and they rushed into destruction to kill or be killed with the lightness of heart of children playing tag.

As the fire crept on the smell of burning flesh added to the horrible reality. An old bull elephant, driven mad by fear and trumping in anguish, charged over the fire and came rushing down towards my tree. As of one

accord the living elephants turned and followed him, tramping the fire out as they charged.

One after another bumped my tree and the platform swayed back and forth dangerously. I shot at some of the elephants, hoping that some of them would fall near my tree and protect it with their bodies, but none of them stopped. On they swept and the tree shook violently. Suddenly the platform, shaken from its position, fell and I grabbed a limb overhead, as did my "boy," who had stood and watched the whole scene of danger. The limb cracked and bent down out of reach of any others, almost on the backs of the galloping elephants, another minute and it was bound to snap. "My God," I cried and my "boy," without a moment's hesitation, said, "I'll let go, boss," and the next instant the limb, relieved of its weight, sprang up, almost jerking me off.

When I climbed into a safe position I could see between the charging elephants the mangled form of the "boy." I never would have died for him, yet he did for me.

An hour afterwards the last elephant passed out and I climbed down from my perch sick at heart. That day, I estimated, 30 natives took their lives and close on 100 elephants.

Then came the feast. Tom-toms were beaten and thousands of natives collected from the nearby villages. The first meal was eaten where it lay, being hacked from the huge carcasses with every conceivable form of sharp weapon. Children wallowed in the sticky blood and fought with each other over choice tidbits. Every bit of the dead elephants was cut off the bones and taken to the villages to be smoked and kept for future use. The ivory was then collected and divided with mathematical fairness amongst the chiefs of the villages that participated in the hunt.

#### Revelry Follows the Hunt.

That night the village musicians beat their tom-toms, instruments of every conceivable sort were blown and beaten till they screeched in frightful discord. The revelry was wild and the howling savages danced till they fell from exhaustion. From near by my hut rose the prayers of the witch doctors, who were on their bellies before their wooden fetich, thanking their god for his mercy and his goodness. It is strange how both the civilized and the savage thank God for being allowed to kill something, even if it be their own kind.

Far off I heard the roars of the lions, which were on the hunting grounds, devouring the corpses of the natives killed in the hunt. At any other time the corpses would have been eaten by their enemies, but as there was plenty of elephant meat they were left to the lions.

The din of the noise and the prayers and the songs made me tired and I turned over and went to sleep.

The following morning when I awoke the strange, unusual quietness of the village was broken only by the mumblings of the old witch-doctor, who was groveling before the wooden idol. In every direction, under the shade of the huts, lay the natives, who were so full of elephant meat that their bellies looked as tight as over-inflated balloons. So gorged were they that it was evident that it pained them to move. Here and there the village dogs were showing their love for their masters by licking the stale juice of the elephant meat from their faces. On every place that would support it was a bundle of elephant meat out of reach of the dogs. On the ground, covered with thousands of carnivorous insects of every imaginable hue, were heaps of rotting offal, from which rose sickening odors, that increased in intensity as

the day grew older and the sun warmer. Vultures, hook-beaked and hungry looking, which were attracted by the smell of the meat, were perched on every point where they could find room, and hyenas and jackals skulked on the outskirts of the village, waiting a chance to rush in like thieves and grab a mouthful of meat. It was a scene sickening and repulsive, but one that can be witnessed almost any time in central Africa.

About two weeks after the elephant hunt reports reached my ears that both leopards and lions were skulking around the village and that a leopard had rushed into the square early one morning and seized the chief's favorite dog, which it carried off. This was to be expected, for the fire which the natives had lit on the veld to round up the elephants had kept on burning and had driven the graminivorous animals, on which the lions, leopards and other carnivora fed, out of the district. Therefore the village, with its goats, dogs, fowls and human beings was the nearest possible feeding ground for these beasts.

#### Leopard Carries Off Goat.

A few nights after the dog was taken, just as I was finished writing up my diary, a terrible commotion arose in the village, shots were fired and natives cried that a leopard had seized and carried off a goat. I grabbed my .35 autoloading rifle and, accompanied by a dozen natives, ran in the direction the leopard was last seen. All night we beat about the village, but saw nothing but the vanishing, shadowy forms of hyenas.

In the morning traces of blood were found in the grass to the north of the village and from that we picked up the spoor of the leopard, which we traced to some rocks in an old river bed, where we found, mixed with gore and blood-stained gravel, the crushed horns and a part of the skull of the goat. After that, I decided it was my duty to sit up and get a shot at one of the marauding beasts.

Accordingly, I had the natives build me a leaf shelter, near which I tethered a young goat to act as a lure to the leopards. For two nights I waited, hidden in the leaves, from which I could see the shadowy forms of prowling animals as they crossed the sandy ground of the village that was silve under the full moon. Unfortunately, they were too far away to offer a sure shot. The third night also passed without incident and I was about tired of feeding mosquitoes and various other denizens of the insect world; nevertheless, I decided on waiting another night, for hunters are the same all over the world and they try "once more" till they get their quarry.

On the fourth night, which was somewhat cloudy, I went to my shelter with that same fascinating hope which is part of the equipment of all successful hunters. The poor little goat that was acting as bait had become tired of bleating and had gone to sleep. I, too, was dozy, almost nodding, when I heard the gentle, unmistakable brush of hair against the leaves near my shelter. I was afraid to move lest I frighten the beast, which soon passed by and crouched to spring. The moon for a second lit the scene and I saw the animal was a leopard. The goat, evidently smelling the leopard, rose and ran to the end of its tether. The leopard sprang. I fired at the same instant and the huge body struck the earth with a heavy thud. Natives, awakened by the explosion, came running from the huts. Torches were lit and when we examined the dead leopard we found that the bullet had passed clear through its brain. A lucky shot, for I aimed at its body.

(Copyright, 1929, by Ben. B. Hampton)

We publish above a most remarkable story of East African Hunting, by CAPT. FRITZ DUQUESNE, one of the most noted big game hunters in the world. The Captain tells the story in a captivating manner, always interesting for lovers of the sport of hunting. This story will be followed by others from the versatile pen of Captain Duquesne, giving our readers thereby the best series of hunting stories yet published in any newspaper.