

About Man-Eating Lions

By THEODORE ROOSEVELT

MAN-EATING lions have always been fairly common in East Africa. The most noted, but far from exceptional, case was that of the two man-eaters which for a time stopped the building of the Uganda railroad by their ravages among the workmen, until they were finally shot by the engineer in charge, Mr. (afterward Colonel) Patterson. Another lion, after killing several men around a station on the railroad, carried off and ate the superintendent of the division; the latter had come down in his private car, which was run on a siding, and he sat up at a window that night to watch for the lion; but he fell asleep and the lion climbed on the platform, entered the car by the door, and carried off his would-be slayer through the window.

Near Machakos-boma a white traveler was taken out of his tent by a man-eater one night, a good many years ago; a gruesome feature of the incident was that on its first attempt the lion was driven off, after having seized and wounded its victim; the wounds of the latter were dressed, and he was again put to bed, but soon after he had been left alone the lion again forced his way into the tent and this time carried the man off and ate him.

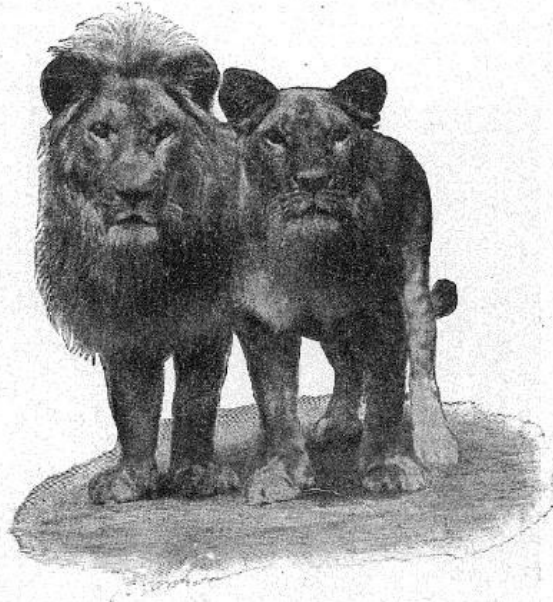
Every year in East Africa natives are carried off from their villages or from hunting-camps by man-eating lions.

The attack of a man eater is always delivered at night, and is practically always by surprise; but, if the first attack fails, a bold lion will sometimes persevere and do his best to seize another victim.

Even a man-eater thoroughly realizes that men are dangerous; he is no more apt to make a hard fight when himself hunted than is any other lion of like vigor, and when he is the hunter he always retires with his victim, as soon as he has caught it, out of reach of vengeance, although he may only go for a distance of a few hundred yards, being confident in the shelter yielded by a dark night. This is entirely unlike the lion's conduct with other prey; if a zebra or hartebeest is killed, the lion stays on the spot with his victim, and may eat it where it has fallen or drag it a few yards to a more convenient spot.

During the last twenty years scores of white hunters have been killed by lions, elephants, buffaloes and rhinos in East and Middle Africa; and the lions have killed much more than half of the total number. Except Mr. Rainey, who worked with dogs, Lord Delamere has killed more lions than any other man I know—fifty-three; he was badly mauled on one occasion, and has now given up hunting them, stating that no man can count on killing more than fifty lions without himself being killed or fatally injured.

Kermit and I killed only seventeen lions between us, two being cubs and two not



LION AND LIONESS FROM NAIROBI, BRITISH EAST AFRICA.
Presented to the Washington Zoological Park, by W. N. McMillan.
From a Photograph by Herman F. Carl

THE stories told by Colonel Roosevelt on this page of Boys' Life are, as he has explained, based mainly on first-hand information gathered in his explorations in the African wilds, but are also in part based on the cumulative observations of many other men. They are from "The Life History of the African Lion," published in a recent number of Scribner's magazine, to the editors of which we are indebted for permission to reproduce both stories and illustration for American boys.

much more than half-grown; and thirteen full-grown lions are too few to permit of free generalization as to their fighting capacity. Three of these thirteen lions—two big-maned males and a lioness—charged with the utmost resolution from a distance of nearly two hundred yards when wounded and brought to bay by the pursuing horsemen; three others (all male lions) were at bay and were about to charge—one had begun to trot forward—when killed; five were killed or disabled under circumstances that gave them no opportunity to charge; two (both lionesses) were killed close up, after being wounded, under circumstances which seemed to invite a charge, yet they made no effort to charge. Only one other lion was shot by any other member of our party, a lioness killed by Alden Loring; she charged with the utmost resolution when mortally wounded, and died while still charging. A beginner might readily kill three or

four lions without danger; and he might be charged and killed by the first one he attacked. If the sport is persevered in, the man who achieves success must possess coolness, wariness, resolution and reasonable skill with the rifle; and now and then he will need to show all these qualities.

Except when resting, and in the breeding-season, the whole career of a lion may be summed up in the single word, rapine. For all the creatures of the wilderness, save the full-grown elephant, rhinoceros, and hippopotamus, he is the terror that stalks by night.

His prowess is extraordinary. His tactics are stealth, surprise, and sudden overwhelming fury of attack. Occasionally he hunts by day, but in the great majority of cases by night; and the darker the night the bolder he is and the more to be feared.

If an animal passes close to his resting place in the daytime he will often attack it; and in wild regions he may, if hungry, begin to hunt early in the afternoon or continue to hunt late in the morning; but that this is not common seems to me to be shown by the fact that if lions are

abroad in the daytime the game does not seem especially disturbed by their proximity; hartebeests, zebra, and gazelle will keep a watch on a lion thus moving by, and will not go very near it, but show no special alarm or excitement. Where game swarms, and beasts of prey are abundant, and therefore, often seen, the animals that are preyed on are so constantly exposed to assault that although always on the watch and often very nervous if they suspect the presence of a lion or leopard without being able to place it exactly, they yet grow to reckon their chances with coolness if the creature they dread can be seen, and show a curious indifference to the presence of the marauders if they believe themselves safe; their moments of mad and panic terror are only when the foe actually charges, especially if he has been hitherto unseen.

Unquestionably a party of lions will sometimes drive game; they spread out and those on one side, by grunting, or merely by their smell, stampede the game so that those on the other side may catch it. Ordinarily, however, the lion crouches motionless as his prey grazes toward him, or himself crawls toward it, with almost inconceivable noiselessness and stealth. The darker the night the bolder the lion; under the bright moonlight a lion is apt to be somewhat cautious, whereas there is almost no limit to its daring in black, stormy weather.

No matter how pitch dark the night, the lion seems to have no difficulty in seizing its prey in such manner as to insure it well-nigh instant death.

Except full-grown elephant, rhinoceros, and hippopotamus, there is no animal in Africa which the lion does not attack.