

THE BLACK RHINOCEROS.

[From the African "Note Book" of Colonel W. Dunlop.]

ONE day, while pursuing our hunting expedition, we came upon a high piece of table-land, and I thought I saw signs of a road over it. The most distinct path, however, led off to the right, into the lower land. Tiekomy advised that we should pursue the latter course, but I wished to try the table. I asked him if he thought there would be any danger in taking the road over the higher land; he replied that he knew nothing about it. If we wished to go that way, he would go on in advance when it became necessary. So over the table-land we started, and the way gave promise of being pleasant. At night we camped near a fountain, where we shot two harrisebucks, and a small antelope, of a beautiful roan colour, the name of which I did not know.

On the following morning, as we were ready to proceed, Booboo came running in with intelligence that he had seen three black rhinoceroses, in the wood to our left. We could not lose such sport as this; so we left our teams as they were, and started off in the direction which Booboo had pointed out, selecting our best horses, and taking the precaution to have our rifles loaded with steel-pointed balls. At the distance of a quarter of a mile we struck the wood, which was composed chiefly of a sort of umbrella-topped mimosa. In a little while, Harry and I, who rode in advance, heard a loud crashing not far away, which sounded as though a young tornado had got in among the trees. We pushed on, and presently discovered the cause of the disturbance. Two black rhinoceroses were tearing away at a thicket of thorn bushes, ploughing up the earth with their horns, and hurling the bushes in all directions. The third one we did not see. If Booboo had seen him he must have left before we got there.

However, two such beasts were enough. As the wind was in our favour we came close behind the game before we were discovered, and as soon as we could bring our pieces to bear we let drive. It chanced that Harry and I both fired at the same animal; but we did not kill him, though we made two ugly holes in his thick hide. The rhinoceroses threw their snouts into the air, and started off upon the run, we dashing hotly after them; but they had the advantage in the wood, and had they been able to keep under cover we should have lost them. At length, however, we came out upon an open plain, only dotted here and there by small clumps of low bushes; and we thus had a clear field. The rhinoceroses were some two hundred yards, or more, in advance, and dashing away at a high rate of speed. The chase was now exciting enough. Abner and Ben had joined us; and with shouts of eagerness we spurred on in pursuit. Away went the game; and at one time I feared we should be distanced, for the black rascals were surely gaining; but finally one of them seemed to lag a little, and presently the other one held up for him. At this we spurred up more eagerly; and when our horses found that they were gaining they took new courage, and burst forth gradually.

The result was, that Harry, who was in advance of me, soon passed the game, and let drive at the wounded rhinoceros on the gallop. The shot was a splendid one, and the beast quickly tumbled over. I let fly at the second one, but not with very good success. My bullet struck him just about two inches too far forward, and only ploughed into his shoulder. Both barrels of my rifle were now empty, and I called to Abner, who was close behind me, to dash on and make a shot. He did so, remarking, as he passed me, that he'd bring the fellow down. He fired, as I had done, but with no better success. Ben had just come up, and had stopped his horse so as to get a better aim, when the rhinoceros performed an entirely new evolution. He stopped, turned towards us, and in another moment dashed furiously in the direction of Ben Gilroy. Ben had his rifle already at his shoulder; but he did not fire. His horse reared and turned, throwing the fat rider off upon the ground. For a few seconds Ben's position was a most critical one. He was upon the ground, shocked by his fall, and the rhinoceros, with infuriate madness, was dashing straight upon him. Had it not been for the presence of mind of Harry Rusk I imagine that old Ben would not have lived to see the setting of that day's sun. I had not yet reloaded either barrel of my piece; but Harry was in the act of returning his rammer just as Ben was unhorsed. He saw the old fellow's danger, and dashed on to his assistance, urging his horse close upon the rhinoceros, and firing as he came up.

As the beast heard the report of the rifle, and felt the new smart of pain from the ball, he stopped and turned towards Harry, who very quickly got out of his way. By this time I had driven home a steel-pointed bullet, and without stopping to load the second barrel, I pressed forward. I took the huge brute as he passed me, making a careful calculation of his speed, and I fired at a point directly back of his shoulder. At first I feared that I had missed my mark again, for the rhinoceros sped on a few steps as hotly as ever; but it was only the impetus of his own motion that carried him, for presently he plunged forward upon his knees, and fell dead, with his nose driven deeply into the ground. Old Ben recovered himself; and after trying each particular limb, he arrived at the conclusion that he had not been seriously injured; though he did not deny that he had, for a while, to use his own expression, considered himself "pretty well done

for." However, he came out all right, and when he had caught his horse, which he easily succeeded in doing, he was pleased to intimate that he would like to see one more live rhinoceros.

We had chased the game some miles from the camp, so that it was well into the afternoon when we reached our waggons; and by the time we had got dinner over, the day was about used up. However, we spent another night on the spot without complaint, considering that we had had sport enough to pay us for the time thus occupied.

As there was every prospect of extremely hot weather, and as much of our way promised to be over an open country, we proceeded early enough on the next morning to march ten or fifteen miles before breakfast, thus gaining time enough to warrant us in spending a few hours of the hottest part of the day in the shade. And it was hot enough. There was no breeze, and the sun poured down its rays with wondrous power. The leaves and the short grass fairly curled, and the oxen panted while at rest.

On the third day, after ascending the table-land, our water was all gone, and we began to be thirsty—we and our animals. We had found no water since leaving the fountain where we shot the harrisebucks, and near which we started up the rhinoceroses. On the night of this third day we travelled until almost twelve o'clock; and then, faint and weary, we stopped. Our cattle and horses found some moisture in the leaves of some thorn-bushes; but not enough to give them much satisfaction. We dug deep holes in the sand; but not a drop of water rewarded our toil. I now began to feel sorry that we had not followed Tiekomy's advice, and kept upon the lower land; but regrets could not mend the matter.

When daylight again came we held a consultation. It was evident that the oxen could not travel much further without water. They had cropped every green leaf from the small clump of thorn-bushes, and were now regarding us with anxious eyes, and begging, in their dumb way, that we would relieve them. We had taken occasional sips of wine, but that did not yield much satisfaction. It was very evident that there was no water to be found where we then were; and the question was, should we turn back, or should we keep on? Harry and Abner were in favour of keeping on. Ben would go with me. So I decided that we would push ahead as far as we could. The oxen moved lazily, and the drivers were obliged to use their jamboks freely.

The forenoon crept away, and the rays of the sun came down hot and fierce. At eleven o'clock we pulled up by a clump of thorn bushes, and allowed the animals to crop the leaves again; there was no grass to be seen, unless the crisp and yellow stuff that lay curled up upon the parched sand could be so called.

"Water! water!" groaned Ben Gilroy. And we answered him—"Water! water!"

We were faint and sick; and for the first time during our tramp we began to really wish ourselves out of Africa. We had met no danger like this before. The presence of death in the shape of the lion, or the crocodile, or the tiger, serves to give the brave man new strength and courage, and he knows that there is to be no lingering of agony. When the trial comes the end must speedily follow. But with this enemy that now faced us all was different. Slowly and surely it came, like the blight of fire, eating out our strength, and prostrating our energies; and the end we could not see. We had plenty of food, but we could not eat it. Our tongues were so parched that no moisture flowed to help us swallow the dry and tasteless portion.

But relief was at hand. While we were consulting as to what should be our next step, Tiekomy and his brothers were out on a prospecting tour; and just as Harry had suggested that he might be obliged to kill one of the oxen, Tiekomy came in upon the run, clapping his hands and shouting, "*Leroshua! leroshua!* We have found the *leroshua!*"

What did he mean? Had he found water? No, he had not found water; but he had found the next thing to it. He had told us to take the spades and follow him.

We knew not whether he would lead us; but his manner gave us new courage, and we seized the spades and followed. At the distance of about half a mile we came to a spot in the desert, where Tiekomy pointed out to me numerous small plants of a species entirely new to me. The stem was about eight to ten inches high, not larger than a pipe, with small, sharp-pointed leaves, of a bright green colour. They looked strangely, these plants, with leaves so fresh and so green, in the midst of that burning desolation.

But what of them? Tiekomy took a spade, and dug down around one of these plants, and at the depth of two feet he reached the root of the *Leroshua*. It was a tuber, as large as a man's head, with numerous fibres reaching out in all directions into the sand. The outside of this tuber was a rind; and upon removing this we found the interior to be a mass of cellular tissue filled with a fluid, cool and refreshing, which tasted something like the juice of the common white flat turnip. That first tuber contained at least a quart of this beverage, and ere long our thirst was quenched, and we were once more thankful and hopeful.

The *leroshua* is a blessing to the inhabitants of the desert, as it had proved a blessing to us. The tubers ab-

sorb moisture from a wide circuit. One of them I dug up very carefully, and found hair-like fibres reaching away into the sand to the depth of two yards.

While some of us remained to dig up the tubers, the others went and brought down the oxen and horses, and in the course of a few hours we were fit for starting again. The animals devoured the pulpy mass with keenest avidity, and the gratitude of their looks was not to be mistaken. We drove the waggons down that way, and put in a hundred or more of the tubers, digging up all we could find on the spot.

That night, just as the sun was going down, we saw a black rhinoceros; and we knew that water could not be far distant; so we gava out the *leroshua* roots to the animals, trusting the sign would not fail us. And it did not fail us. On the following morning a flock of ducks passed over our heads; and taking the clue thus given, we started in search of the water which we knew these birds would find. An hour's march brought us to the verge of a deep valley, where we beheld a fountain of bright sparkling water.

It was a blessed sight; and you will not doubt me when I tell you that the Giver of all good received from us the heartfelt offering of praise and thanksgiving.

A STRANGE WILL CASE.

[A Tale of the Law Court of Boston, United States.]

"Ah, really, Tom, I don't see that your case is such a hard one that you need be sighing about it. You have a large circle of acquaintances, good chambers here, and a comfortable income; I know a number of persons of the sex feminine who would be willing to take you and your name, at the same time thinking the act no bad speculation. You do seem, however, most unaccountably to have the blues to-night."

The speaker, Charley Thornton, was a short, good-humoured looking young man. The listener, Tom Seabrook, was tall, also good-looking, and probably thirty years of age.

"But only think of it! Here I am without a single thing to do, no way of spending my money, no friend but yourself, and, to crown all, in most wretched health. If I don't die with the blue-devils, consumption will surely kill me. As for life, I haven't seen a bit of it for at least seven years. Confound such a one-horse place as Boston!"

"Nothing to do? Why don't you let people understand that you really are a lawyer, and that you mean to practise? Billiards, and theatres, and bachelor's wine-parties, a fast horse, and trips to New York, and summers at Saratoga cost nothing—of course not. As for health, a man who practises with a hundred pound dumb-bell, throws his shoulders out like Heenan, and swims any number of miles, may be supposed to have some little vitality. I acknowledge you have no very intimate friends; but, somehow or other, every third man I meet has a good word to say for Tom Seabrook. You're only discontented. Now there are two remedies that I have to offer: either fall in love or get at hard work."

"Then, as I don't feel drawn towards the crinolized portion of the community, I suppose I shall have to begin sawing wood."

"Bah!—a man can work hard without necessarily sawing wood. Come, now, make up your mind to work at your profession, and we'll go out to-night and hunt up a client to begin with."

"Done! Oysters for two that we find none!"

"Taken!"

The two passed down the stairs and out into the street.

It was a chilly evening in December, and the wind came wandering through the streets of the great city; the lamps blinked and shone clear again, whilst the foot-travellers shrugged their shoulders or gave a shiver as they heard the hollow sound of their footsteps on the pavement. Wandering about for half an hour, well wrapped in paletots, and warmed by their active though aimless exercise, the two friends finally found themselves strolling along Brattle Street, Charley Thornton in rather a dubious state of mind as regarded the safety of his bet, and his companion wondering whether the oysters would not be very hardly earned.

"I must say that this is the most ridiculous of all ridiculous wild goose chases that I ever heard of," remarked Seabrook, as both involuntarily stopped at the corner of Carey Street. "Let us act sensibly, now that the first touches of insanity have been worked off, and get under cover. What say you, Charley?"

His companion was some three feet in advance of him, and, hearing no response to his proposition, Tom advanced to his side. With eyes somewhat dilated in a mute and motionless attitude, Thornton was gazing up the cross street. Following the natural impulse of the moment, he, too, turned his attention in that direction, and saw a shadow approaching him. In the dim moonlight it was more like a cloud than anything else, moving up the street with a steady, dreamy, vapoury motion. No sound of footfall upon the pavement struck his ears; but with a wavy, undulatory motion the figure advanced.

Faint footsteps sounded in the street behind the two young men. More clearly, through a rifted cloud, shone the moonlight, as the figure halted in front of Tom and Charley.