

A Forgotten South African Hunter.

AMONG those brilliant and adventurous sportsmen who have made themselves famous in South Africa, Charles John Andersson will, in the estimation of those conversant with the subject, always occupy one of the foremost places. Bold and fearless, possessed of that extraordinary patience which counts for so much in African travel, one of the keenest of explorers, a great hunter, and a great naturalist, Andersson has, for various reasons, never yet been known and appreciated by the British public as he ought to have been.

In company with Mr. Francis Galton, who has long survived him, and is still one of our prominent scientists, C. J. Andersson in 1851 explored much of Damaraland and penetrated to Ovampoland, then an utterly unknown country. After Galton's departure in 1852, Andersson pursued his work alone. He was the first white man to reach Lake Ngami from the West Coast (in 1853); he discovered the Okavango River, and made many laborious and most adventurous journeys in other regions of South-West Africa, still very little known and travelled by Europeans. During these explorations he had the good fortune to encounter vast quantities of great game in veldt which had hitherto remained undisturbed by the white man and his firearms. He was possessed, since his earliest youth, of an undying passion for the chase. Andersson enjoyed some of the finest and most enjoyable sport in the world, encountered innumerable adventures, and had many hairbreadth escapes. A first-rate ornithologist, he made a splendid collection of birds, and has enriched the South African avi-fauna by observations on no fewer than 428 species.¹

Andersson died at an early age—in his forty-first year—worn

¹ He left behind him materials for a book on this subject, and in 1872 Mr. J. H. Gurney edited and published the work, which is entitled *Birds of South-West Africa*.

out by fevers, hardships and anxieties, in the wilderness towards the far and still little known Cunene River.

Owing to the fact that his explorations and adventures took place in regions of South-West Africa which were less known and appreciated than other parts of the Dark Continent, his name has been far less well remembered, even by those interested in Africa, than it deserves to be. Livingstone, Speke, Grant, and other explorers were more in the public eye, and Andersson himself, dying and being buried in the wilderness at a comparatively early age, passed out of human ken and human sympathy. Yet Charles John Andersson's name deserves to be treasured by all good Englishmen; he did much for this country in the fifties and sixties, and no more heroic or more unselfish soul ever yielded up his last breath in Africa. His bones lie in the distant desert, if, indeed, they have not long since become dust, yet his name and fame should be assured of lasting remembrance in Great Britain's temple of explorers, even if the niche he occupies be a retired and humble one. Andersson has never yet received his due. It seems to me not unprofitable to recall some of the achievements and adventures of one of the most modest and yet one of the bravest of all African travellers.

C. J. Andersson was born in Wermeland, Sweden, of mixed English and Swedish parentage, in 1827. By his twenty-second year he had become already a keen naturalist and sportsman, and was devoured by the ambition to travel in Africa. Coming to England towards the end of 1849, he met with Mr. Galton, then preparing an important expedition, and, sailing with him for South Africa, reached Walfisch Bay in June 1850. Adventures are to the adventurous. Andersson was always ready to accept the highest risks in search of sport, and it was not long before he had to record his first engagement with a lion. After many fruitless attempts to dislodge the brute from some dense tamarisk brake, in which the timidity of the Damara and Namaqua natives lent him little assistance, Andersson determined to make one more effort. He re-entered the thicket and suddenly put up, at a few paces distance, a huge black-maned lion. He fired a shot at the retreating beast, when the lion at once turned and, with a terrific roar, charged in his direction. Drawing his hunting knife and dropping on one knee, Andersson coolly awaited the attack. Within a few paces the lion halted, and, crouching as if to spring, raised clouds of dust by lashing the sand with its tail. Just as the hunter was about to fire a second shot the savage

brute made its leap; but, miscalculating the distance, passed clean over Andersson's head and alighted a few paces beyond. Without rising from his crouching attitude, Andersson swung round his rifle and gave the beast a good shot in the shoulder, which the bullet completely smashed. Again the lion turned and made its rush; owing to its disabled shoulder, however, Andersson was enabled to evade this charge by a hair's breadth, and the sorely wounded beast retreated into the thicket, and was picked up dead a day or two later.

Having reached Ondonga, the capital of the Ovampo tribe, in May 1852, and made the acquaintance of these somewhat remarkable people and their chief Nangoro, Galton and Andersson trekked on a shooting expedition in the direction of Lake Ngami. Reaching Tunobis, a permanent fountain in the Kalahari region, they found there so enormous a quantity of game that their party shot no fewer than thirty rhinoceroses, black and white, in the course of a few days. This prodigious holocaust was achieved mainly by night shooting, the watchers being sheltered in a scherm of loose stones, 'a small circular enclosure, six or eight feet in diameter, with walls about two feet in height.' One night at this place Andersson himself slew eight rhinoceroses in the space of five hours; he remarks that if he had persevered he might have destroyed probably double the number. At that time the quantities of game seen in South Africa must have produced the impression that the supply was inexhaustible. But the fact was overlooked that these animals, especially rhinoceroses and elephants, were collected during the dry season near the few permanent desert waters from an immense area of country. No wild animal life in the world, however plentiful, could resist such slaughter, and rhinoceroses have become extinct in all these regions for nearly a score of years past. The wonder is, indeed, that they held out so long. At the same time, as Andersson points out, he never even at this time shot wastefully; they were supplying a large number of natives with food, and, even at Tunobis, no portion of the flesh remained undevoured. Some of the big-game hunters profess to regard with disfavour night shooting. Yet Gordon Cumming, one of the first and boldest sportsmen of his time, was exceedingly fond of it, and practised it constantly during his five years of life in savage Africa. Andersson was enthusiastically in its favour. 'A moonlight ambush,' he says, 'by a pool well frequented by wild animals, is worth all the other modes of enjoying a gun put together. In the first place

there is something mysterious and thrilling in finding oneself the secret and unsuspected spectator of the wild movements, habits and propensities of the denizens of nature's varied and wonderful menagerie. . . . And then the intense excitement between each expected arrival! The distant footstep, now heard distinctly rattling over a rugged surface, now gently vibrating on the strained ear as it treads on softer ground; it may be that of a small antelope or an elephant, of a wild boar or rhinoceros, of a gnu or a giraffe, of a jackal or a lion. . . . What opportunities present themselves of observing the habits and peculiarities of each species, and even of individuals, to say nothing of the terrible battles that take place and can so rarely be witnessed in the day-time. I have certainly learnt more of the untamed life of savage beasts in a single night's *tableau vivant* than during months of toilsome wanderings in the broad light of the sun.'

It is not to be imagined that night shooting is an easy way of slaying wild creatures. It is a method that abounds with risk, and every hunter who has pursued it has had to undergo his fill of hazards and escapes. Gordon Cumming had round him one night five or six lions, and being himself attacked by a lioness of the party, only saved his own skin by shooting her dead. Andersson, during his career, had many hairbreadth escapes. At Tunobis a wounded rhinoceros charged his scherm and battered it down, and the hunter only escaped the monster's horn by throwing himself backwards and breaking down the other side of his shelter.

One night at Abeghan, south of Lake Ngami, while ambushed in a very exposed position, he was approached by three mighty bull elephants, which, before he knew of their presence, were well within ten yards of him. Saluting one of them with two barrels of his rifle, they turned and fled, and a brace of fine tusks afterwards rewarded him for his temporary scare. Once, having wounded a huge white rhinoceros, she charged for the flash of the gun, and actually stood over the prostrate hunter, who had thrown himself on his back, without being aware of his proximity. The saliva from the great brute's square-lipped mouth actually dripped upon Andersson's upturned face! He lay motionless in an agony of suspense, and the rhinoceros presently swinging round went off at speed.

Andersson was a very successful elephant hunter, and had many adventures with these animals. While watching one night

the pool at Kobis, another fountain of the Northern Kalahari, he heard a sound which he likens to the passage of a train of artillery, and, looking up, saw a troop of nineteen of these immense mammals. They were all males. 'It was a splendid sight,' he says, 'to behold so many huge creatures approaching with free, sweeping, unsuspecting, and stately step. The somewhat elevated ground whence they emerged, together with the misty night air, gave an increased appearance of might and bulkiness to their naturally giant structures. Crouching down as low as possible in the "skärm," I waited with beating heart and ready rifle the approach of the leading male, who, unconscious of peril, was making straight for my hiding place. The position of his body was, however, unfavourable for a shot; and knowing from experience that I had little chance of obtaining more than a single good one, I waited for an opportunity to fire at his shoulder. . . . This chance unfortunately was not afforded until his enormous bulk towered above my head. The consequence was, that, while in the act of raising the muzzle of my rifle over the "skärm," my body caught his eye, and before I could place the piece to my shoulder he swung himself round, and, with trunk elevated and ears spread, desperately charged me. My own life was in imminent jeopardy; and seeing that, if I remained partially erect, he would inevitably seize me with his proboscis, I threw myself on my back with some violence, in which position, and without shouldering the rifle, I fired upwards at random towards his chest, uttering at the same time the most piercing shouts and cries. The change of position in all human probability saved my life, for at the same instant the trunk of the enraged animal descended precisely on the spot where I had been previously encouched, sweeping away the stones (many of a large size) that formed the fore part of my "skärm," like so many pebbles. In another moment his broad forefeet passed directly over my face.'

The troop swerved off and Andersson's gun, which he had meanwhile snatched up again, missing fire, they passed away into the night. The escape had been a sufficiently thrilling one, but it was by no means the conclusion of the night's adventures. Presently there approached the water a bulky white rhinoceros—next to the elephant the biggest of all land mammals. This Andersson fired at and hit within a dozen yards, the mighty beast bolting off into the veldt to die.

Scarcely had the hunter reloaded his piece when a black

rhinoceros cow was perceived drinking at the pool. She was not in a favourable position for a vital shot; but Andersson fired and broke her leg. She rushed wildly away into the dim night, and Andersson determined to wait till daylight before finishing her. After a long pause, as no more game appeared, the hunter made up his mind to go in search of the white rhinoceros. There is no more perilous business than wandering about in the veldt at night, especially in a wild country where lions and other dangerous beasts abound. Andersson, however, was tired of inaction, and, quitting his hiding place, presently found the white rhinoceros lying, as he had anticipated, stone dead. 'Stone dead,' as the ancient saying has it, 'hath no fellow,' and it would have been well for the hunter if the black rhinoceros had been equally surely disposed of. On his way back to the scherm he blundered by accident right into the wounded black rhinoceros, and as she stood in a position in which he could not deal her a fatal shot, he took up a stone and hurled it at her. 'Snorting horribly,' he says, 'elevating her tail, keeping her head close to the ground, and raising clouds of dust with her feet, she rushed at me with fearful fury. I had only just time to level my rifle and fire before she was upon me; and the next instant, whilst instinctively turning round for the purpose of retreating, she laid me prostrate. The shock was so violent as to send my rifle, powder flask, and ball pouch, as also my cap, spinning in the air; the gun, indeed, as afterwards ascertained, to a distance of fully ten feet. . . . Having tumbled me over (in doing which her head and the forepart of her body, owing to the violence of the charge, were half buried in the sand) and trampled on me with great violence; her fore quarter passed over my body. Struggling for life, I seized my opportunity; and as she was recovering herself for a renewal of the charge, I scrambled out from between her hind legs.

'But the enraged beast had not yet done with me! Scarcely had I regained my feet before she struck me down a second time, and with her horn ripped up my right thigh from near the knee to the hip; with her forefeet, moreover, she hit me a terrific blow on the left shoulder near the back of the neck. My ribs bent under the enormous weight and pressure, and for a moment, I must, as I believe, have lost consciousness. . . . All I remember is that when I raised my head I heard a furious snorting and plunging amongst the neighbouring bushes. . . . Either in the *mélée*, or owing to the confusion caused by her wounds, she had lost sight of me, or she felt satisfied with the revenge she had taken.

Be that as it may, I escaped with life, though sadly wounded and severely bruised, in which disabled state I had great difficulty in getting back to my "skärm." Later in the morning, Andersson renewed his assault, saved the life of a native boy whom he had despatched to finish off the rhinoceros, and finally killed her.

'I have since,' he wrote, 'killed many rhinoceroses, as well for sport as food; but several weeks elapsed before I could again attack those animals with any coolness.'

Andersson seems to have had great success with rhinoceroses—both the *Witrhinoster* and *Zwartrhinoster*,¹ as the Boers call them—as, indeed, he had with all other kinds of South African game. In one season he shot no fewer than sixty of these gigantic beasts. This seems a terrible slaughter, but Andersson was not alone in his enormous bags. Oswell and Vardon, who hunted purely for sport and pleasure in Middle Bechuanaland during the forties, shot no fewer than eighty-nine of these animals in a single trip. Moreover, Andersson, who was a poor man, shot to some extent for profit, to enable him to bear the cost of his expeditions. Ivory was valuable to him, and for the horns and hides of his rhinoceroses he could always obtain hard cash.

Soon after this rhinoceros adventure, Andersson, after great toil and privation, reached Lake Ngami, and thereafter explored the lower regions of the Teoughe River,² for eleven days from its junction with the lake, until, being prevented by the jealousy of the chief Iechulatebe from obtaining any further assistance in boats, native paddlers, or a guide, he was compelled to turn southward again.

Quitting the lake, he undertook a most fatiguing journey of a thousand miles to Namaqualand and back to procure a waggon with which to transport his ivory and natural history collection to the coast. He had reached Lake Ngami from Walfisch Bay, it is to be remembered, with pack and riding oxen. During this journey, undertaken for the most part through burning and inhospitable deserts, the traveller had many adventures. One night while watching at a pool of water, having slain a white rhinoceros, he fell asleep. Like most great land travellers and nearly all sailors, however, he slept very lightly, and retained a certain consciousness of what was going on around him. Suddenly it seemed to him that he was in danger. He woke to find the breathing of some animal close to his face, 'accompanied by a purr like that

¹ Burchell's or the white rhinoceros, and the common or black rhinoceros.

² Now better known as the Okavango.

of a cat. I knew,' he says, 'that only one animal existed in these parts capable of producing such a sound, and at once came to the conclusion that a lion was actually stooping over me.' It was a sufficiently desperate situation. Andersson, however, always had his wits about him in such emergencies. He stealthily picked up his rifle, eliciting a warning growl from the fierce beast above him. Then, getting the loom of his adversary's body, he quickly levelled his rifle and pulled the trigger. The rocks rang out with the report of his weapon, mingled with the enraged roarings of the wounded lion, which was now tearing up the ground in its death agonies.

During this desert journey to Great Namaqualand, Andersson constantly endured the cravings of hunger and the agonies of thirst. He travelled with only a horse and a native guide; they had few supplies, and the expedition was made with almost every circumstance of discomfort and hardship. Once his horse and himself went down together on a scorching plain, under the burning sun, and lay for hours in a state of semi-consciousness and exhaustion. Well might the traveller in the forbidding deserts of South-West Africa exclaim that to overcome them it required 'the endurance of a camel and the courage of a lion.'

Andersson set eyes on Ngami in 1853. In 1854 he visited Europe and published his first work, *Lake Ngami*, which met with much appreciation. In 1856 he assumed for a time the managership of some tentative copper-mining works in Great Namaqualand. These proving a failure, he set about the exploration of the unknown interior, and, after a long and harassing expedition, during which he traversed the then unknown Kaoko Veldt,¹ shot large quantities of game, and collected much ivory, he finally reached, in 1859, the upper waters of the Okavango River, his greatest and most important discovery. Before reaching this great river, he and his followers passed through a country which fairly swarmed with elephants. The whole veldt, in the neighbourhood of a large vlei of water, was literally one immense network of their footprints. At night their shrill trumpeting constantly started the travellers from their sleep. If, instead of pushing on with his exploration, Andersson had devoted himself exclusively to ivory hunting, he could at this period have ensured a most remunerative journey. Like Livingstone, however, he was bitten with the passion for discovery, and, leaving the elephants, pressed on. A noble stream, 1,200 feet in breadth, presently rewarded his enthusiasm.

¹ North-West Damaraland.

But he and his men were now too reduced by fever to follow up the discovery of the Okavango, and, after a brief sojourn on its banks, they were compelled to beat a retreat. It was a bitter moment indeed for the discoverer.

During this memorable expedition Andersson enjoyed some wonderful sport and had his fill of adventures. He was at times very successful with elephants. Once he had before him the strikingly majestic spectacle of nearly one hundred and fifty of these great beasts while drinking by night at the water near which he lay concealed. He had already shot two of the mighty pachyderms from another troop. 'The moon was just then nearly at its zenith, and shed a glorious and dazzling light on the huge creatures below. I felt no inclination to disturb so striking a picture; and indeed, if I had been disposed, it would little have availed me, as the vlei, in the direction occupied of the elephants, was totally destitute of cover. So all I could do, and did, was to look on, sigh, and admire.' However, as the troop, having quenched their thirst, moved away, Andersson went after them, and, after a sharp encounter, brought down yet another, which made his bag three for the night. From this same troop he had an exceedingly narrow escape for his life a few days later. Elephant hunting on foot is, beyond all doubt, one of the most hazardous of sports, and Andersson agrees with Selous in characterising it as the most exhausting of any occupation in the world.

At Omanbonde, a large vlei, or temporary sheet of water, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles in extent, prodigious numbers of game were seen, including elephants, rhinoceroses, elands, koodoos, gemsbuck, zebras, pallahs, lions, and so forth. Near here happened a fatal encounter with a black rhinoceros, by which one of Anderson's Damara servants lost his life. Andersson had wounded the animal, while watching the water the night previously. The beast rose, as they approached it next morning, and came straight at them. All scattered, and, after a brief flurry, Andersson, creeping cautiously up to the monster, which now stood again, dropped him dead in his tracks. Returning for his men, he discovered them vehemently discussing some exciting event, some lamenting, some holding their sides as if in pain. He asked for Kozengo. 'Dead, sir!' was the reply. Kozengo had, indeed, by some extraordinary mischance, been slain, as he lay crouching under the shelter of a bush, by a single stroke of the rhinoceros's fore-horn. 'His forehead was split in two, . . . and part of the brains were mingling with the dust.'

This same rhinoceros had, before being killed, been attacked, in its wounded state, by a pair of lions, which, after a desperate scuffle, had been beaten off. No doubt these carnivora had been emboldened beyond their wont by the smell of blood, as in the ordinary way the lion never dreams of interfering with a full-grown 'rhinoster.' Andersson mentions this as the only instance in which he had ever heard of lions meddling with these gigantic creatures.

Here, too, Andersson encountered a troop of lions during one of his night watches, and, severely wounding one, bagged it next morning, after an exciting scene in which a number of his dogs and about a hundred Damaras were involved. It would be impossible within the limits of this article to linger further over the innumerable adventures of this daring and stout-hearted explorer. On his retreat from the Okavango he encountered innumerable hardships and many dangers. At one time, held fast in the wilderness by an appalling drought in front of him, there seemed every possibility that he and his people would be attacked and overwhelmed by the Ovampo, who had a short time previously come to blows with another European party. Happily, he was rescued in the nick of time by his friend and comrade Mr. Frank Green, another famous hunter and traveller during the fifties in South-West Africa.

Andersson once more returned for a brief spell to civilisation, reached the Cape in 1861, published his second book, *The Okavango River*, and married in the same year, and thereafter established himself as a trader in the Damara country. Unfortunately, the Damaras were nearly always at war with the quarrelsome and raiding Namaqua Hottentots, and as the latter were almost invariably well equipped with firearms and mounted, the spear-using Damaras, who boasted few guns, got the worst of the encounters. Andersson sided with the Damaras, and in defending his trading station at Otjimbique received a musket-ball which shattered his knee and crippled him for the remainder of his life. The Namaqua raids practically destroyed his business in Southern Damaraland, and, after another visit to the Cape, Andersson determined once more to take the field and make a journey of exploration towards the Cunene River, with the idea of establishing a new trading station in that country, far removed from the assaults of the plundering Hottentots. He was now in but poor health, his constitution shattered by fevers, hardships, wounds, and hard work, and, although no more than forty years of age, he

was but the shadow of the strong and tireless hunter and explorer of the early fifties. He reached the Cunene River, but his health had by this time become steadily worse. On his return journey he died, on July 6, 1867, in the Ovampo country, in the arms of his devoted friend and fellow-traveller, a young Swede named Axel Ericson, to whom fell the sad and pitiful task of burying his dead comrade in that lonely wilderness. Ericson himself afterwards became distinguished as a keen hunter and explorer, and succeeded in establishing the most lucrative and famous trading business in this part of Africa, where, I believe, he still survives.

Charles John Andersson, with the slenderest personal resources and no aid from rich patrons or societies, accomplished much during his career in South-West Africa. Energetic, prudent, unwearying, ever full of courage and of hope, a bold hunter and a great naturalist, he deserves to be far better known than he is. His work was done for England, his books were published in English, and though, through the folly of our rulers, Germany was suffered in the year 1884 to lay hands upon the vast country which he did so much to open up, his explorations, his labours, and his sacrifices ought never to be forgotten by men of British blood.

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