

Henry T. Glynn, 1935

Game and gold: memoirs of over 50 years in the
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CHAPTER XI. pp. 1-22)

*Albasini—Game—Native Customs—Rhino—
Veld Fires.*

AWAY DOWN the Sabie River, thirty five miles from my house, Joao Albasini, a Tyrolese and an educated man, built a brick house on the right bank of the Sabie River nearly a hundred years ago. He was known as "Juwawo" by the kaffirs, which was the nearest they could get to his name. He had an adventurous career and was born in 1813. He called his place Makashoel, and he was a chief over thousands of natives. He traded for ivory, and was himself an elephant hunter, and kept up communication with Delagoa Bay. The ruins of his buildings are just inside the reserve of today, and there are hopes that something may be done by the Government to preserve the old ruins of the first house built of brick in the Eastern Transvaal in those far off days—the early forties.

My father and I in 1881 opened up the old indescribable road down over the Berg and along the slopes, rugged and precipitous, to where Albasini lived. Here and there are signs that kaffir picks had been used to cut away the ground, and make the sidings usable for waggons. We had one capsized and a dozen or more narrow escapes. We shot some wild dogs going down there. Kudu, buffalo and water-buck on the river, eland, roans, sable antelope, zebras

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and lower down, rhinos, were to be found all over that country. x

In 1836 Albasini lived near Delagoa Bay, a small settlement then, and was carried off by natives under a Shangaan Chief named Manukosi. Albasini was the only prisoner who survived. All the officers and soldiers were murdered before his eyes by having wooden spikes driven through them. He made his escape from the kaffirs and with the arrival of other troops was able to drive off the next attack. After this he got a following together and settled down on the Sabie River, where the ruins are today.

I remember shooting a fine kuku bull near Albasini's house. I had broken his hind leg in two places. It was very hilly country, full of rocks and big trees, and the dog we had with us chased the kudu away. We could not find him that day so on the following day we decided to follow it up as we felt certain it could not go very far.

We sent Inglube and his father into the donga and bush and we occupied the banks on each side. We had been there about half an hour when we heard the kaffirs calling out, "Mashongalong Efeli", meaning, the kudu is dead. We left our horses and clambered through the rocks in a donga for some distance and came on the kudu, who had eventually broken its neck down over some huge rocks in rushing before the dog.

Kaffirs, when they get to know you well, have a habit of using their own special name of adoption. The name by which I am known is "Mashazmooka"

corrupted from "Umtyashyamooka" meaning, "strike as it's running." This was a name given to me by my old hunting boys. My brother Arthur was called "Makoosa" meaning little Chief. He carried and translated all my father's orders. My wife's name is "Mamagaai" "Mother of all", because she gave them all so much advice and help in sickness. At times they call her "Inyesi" (Honey).

There is a certain fascination about the expression "Big Game Shooting" which appeals to most Britishers, and a country which provides such shooting, like Africa, will invariably be sought after by a certain section of a sport-loving community, from the Old Country. When the Cape was a half-way house to India, the Indian Officers in returning to England often spent a year or so, in travelling up from the Cape, and men like Moffat and Livingstone who were in Bechuanaland rendered great assistance to these hunters and explorers. Sir Cornwall Harris first saw and bagged the sable antelope which is often called by his name. Varden and Oswell also had certain antelope called after them. All these people helped to carry out the great work of opening up South Africa and carrying goodwill from the inhabitants of the outer world. The old generation of natives is passing on and the younger generation are not the men their fathers were, where hunting and woodcraft are concerned.

Elephants and rhino travel great distances when wounded and are tedious and trying when following them up, but if one is finally bagged you will probably

in years to come look back on that period of fatigue and discomfort as the finest hunting you ever had. Always try and locate your quarry before he locates you. With a little luck you can generally get a shot. Perseverance counts a deal also. It may seem impossible in dense jungle to hope for a further chance at a beast which has broken away several times, and work in the jungle is very exhausting, but opportunity will come, and the much coveted trophy be secured in the end.

Cordite rifles are the best in jungle as the old black powder resulted in the gunner being enveloped in a thick smoke through which one couldn't see for seconds. At night once when I was firing with a .577 rifle with black powder, a hippo walked up within four yards of me. I fired into his head and couldn't see him for smoke. If he had charged I would have been badly injured.

The 12 bore Paradox gun for ball and shot is a very good weapon to have in jungle, especially for the carnivora at close quarters.

I have always found native customs a most interesting study. Their terrible practice of "smelling out", when no man is sure of his life, still exists in our day. I remember on one occasion coming across a kraal on the eastern side of Lebombo Hills, where a habitation had been almost wiped out by Gungunyan's kaffirs. He was the chief of the Shangaans under Portuguese protectorate, a tribe living 250 miles from this kraal. Owing to his illness lasting for some time, the doctors declared the illness was

caused through the unfortunate inhabitants of this kraal, and he ordered their destruction. A few escaped into the very dense bush which extended up to their huts and from the few survivors we gleaned the news. It was a terrible state of affairs to be existing in our day.

It was a common thing even down to 1885 for the Machoppees in Gazaland, who lived in dense bush country, to be attacked by wandering bands of this chief's followers. The men were killed and the women and children carried off and sold to the natives living under the Berg in the Transvaal, £20 being about the price for these captured girls, as against £80 for their own. I was offered a little kaffir boy in Portuguese territory for £10 but declined to buy him, and warned the natives against slavery.

Kaffirs buy their wives, and this old custom is still permitted by the Government. The Christian kaffir has only one wife. If the wife should run away from her husband it was an old custom amongst them for the parents to return the cattle paid for her or their equivalent in value, but nowadays it is not always done, as the Government does not sanction it, and it cannot be enforced. Many have to consider it a bad bargain and try to arrange about the children. A girl is worth more than a boy, as she can be sold.

One of the greatest lion hunters I have known was Yank Allen. As a hunter, he was associated with few things except lions, and it is said that he killed several hundred lions during his professional career as a

hunter. Allen considered lions as vermin. He hailed from the States, and became a miner in South Africa. Most of his shooting was done between the age of 50 and 60.

Elands were all over the country in the early days, and a Boer hunting at Spitzkop close to where I lived had a fall in an ant-bear hole, the horse rolling over on him and breaking his neck. It is very dangerous hunting on the Berg as there are thousands of ant-bear holes. The shafts sunk by the diggers were also a great danger. As the season got on, the grass grew round the sides of them and when in full tear on horseback there was a chance of going head foremost down a shaft of 40 feet or so and that would be the end of life. I had some narrow escapes. One day when after a ram reedbuck I charged through some high grass; I was riding my old horse Beaufort, who was always on the lookout for ant-bear holes. He could see them at 3 or 4 yards distance. A particular kind of fern grew up in these holes, a foot or so above the level of the ground and he would branch off.

I rarely had a fall in these ant-bear holes when riding Beaufort. On this day I suddenly found a deep shaft in front of me. My horse's feet were within a foot of the edge. I clapped the spurs into him, and the old horse responded most gallantly and cleared the shaft, but fell on his knees, rolling over and throwing me against a mound of hard earth. I was afraid to get up. I thought my skull was cracked and I was dazed. I remained on my knees for some time, Beaufort standing close by me. I got up and

taking the bridle in my hands led him to my home six or seven miles off. I was afraid to mount him for fear of falling off. I felt very bad and for several days suffered from the shock. Old Beaufort in a few days time was fit and well again.

It was dangerous hunting in this country where the diggers had made so many shafts and cuttings. Down below the Berg in the Bushveld we have not so many ant-bear holes, but we had decayed old trees lying in the long grass, and in racing after game a horse would put his foot on a block of wood, and go down with his rider. Hunters have often had some very nasty falls caused through game pits. I knew a man who broke a horse's neck in one of these pits. Branches of trees often took me out of the saddle and laid me up for days with a fractured rib, or badly shaken.

All kaffirs are particularly fond of snuffing, both men and women. The snuff, having been transferred to the palm of the hand, is then leisurely drawn every grain into their nostrils with an eagerness which, although followed by copious floods of tears, proves the extent of the enjoyment afforded. I only once, in the Gorongoza Country on a trek, took a sniff of tobacco—and never again. We were all tired, and as the natives were enjoying it, I ventured on having a big sniff, but the tobacco stuck under the bridge of my nose and felt like a coal of fire: I could not liken it to anything else, and could not get rid of it and had to let it burn out. I was feeling horribly sick, and it delayed the caravan a few hours.

Black rhinos were found in the rough country down below White River, Nelspruit and extending across to the Oliphants River: there were a few white rhinos also. The black rhino calf runs behind the mother; the white one guides her calf and it runs in front of her. The white is good eating but not the black. The black rhino has a bad name for charging; the white has not although Oswell had a bad accident with a white rhino. In British East Africa, rhinos are very plentiful, the writers say they are dangerous animals there, but old hunters are agreed that these were exceptions to the general rule. It is an intensely stupid animal, and marvellously blind, and up wind may be approached on a bare plain with little trouble. Their stupidity and blindness makes them a source of danger, and unless accompanied by tick birds, as they often are, which warn them of the approach of humans and make them move off, they will frequently remain unconscious of the hunters until close to them. When suddenly confronted, they will charge sometimes. They are keen scented, and if they get your wind will start early at a quick trot. I don't think there is much danger in hunting them, but still one has to be cautious of any elephant, buffalo, rhino or lion. Even when they are lying, apparently dead, approach them from the backside, in case they should still have life in them, as they may be able to damage, as has often happened to hunters. They were more plentiful then, and there were more chances of accident; and guns were of the old Sana class, when misfires often happened.

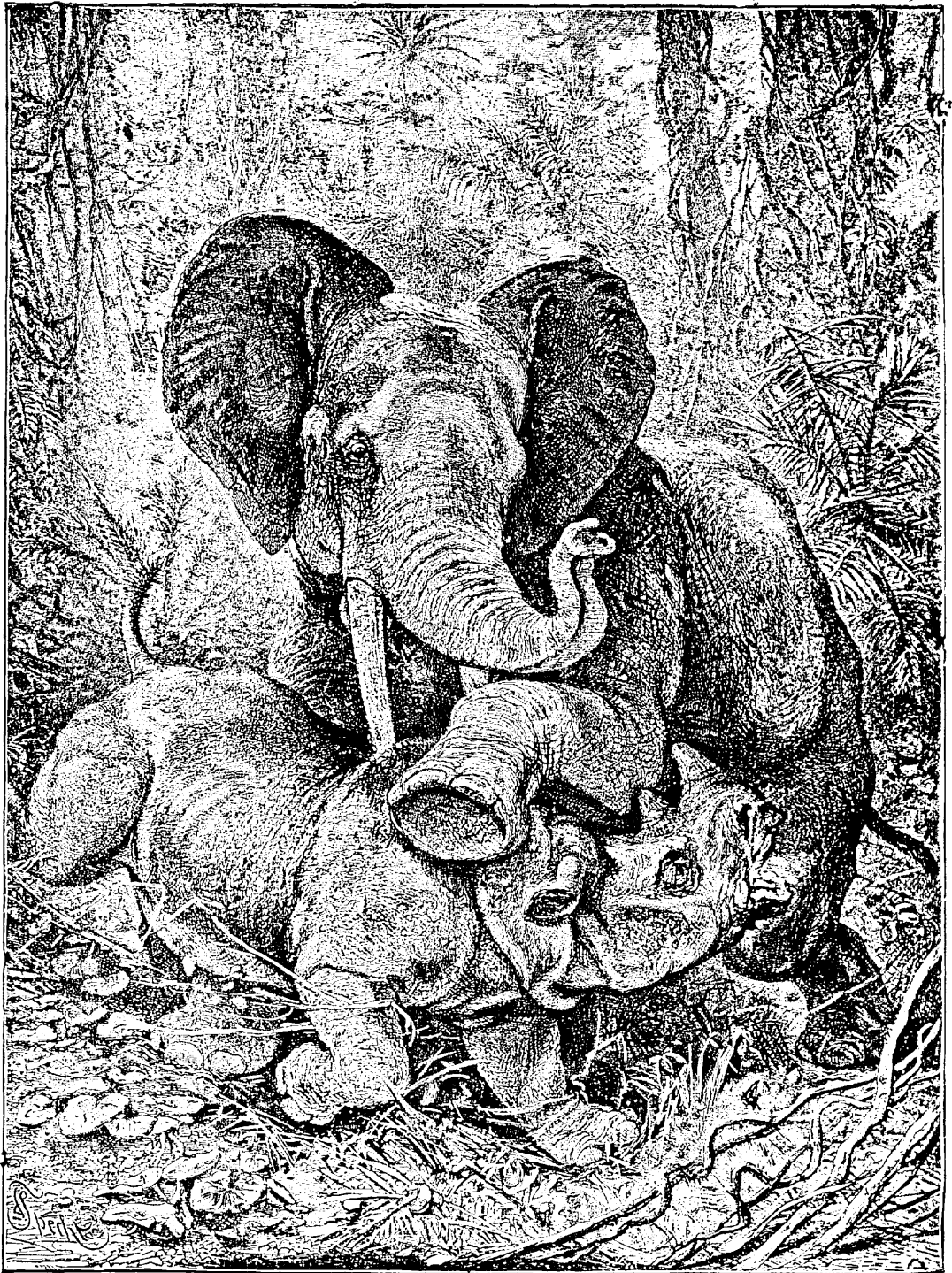
x President Paul Kruger when he was hunting down the Speckboom not far from Lydenburg, in the early days, encountered a black rhino. His Sana exploded, and blew part of his hand and thumb off. He had a very bad time with it. The Boers have a great belief in turpentine for such wounds and when he got to the waggon he put turpentine on the wound. It must have been very painful, and he had to send away and get more turpentine. Gangrene set in, and he was advised to kill a goat, and use the contents of the stomach on the wound, and after three or four goats had been killed, the wound began to heal. The President thought it was due to the different herbs that the goats had eaten in the valley.

The kudu bull is considered an inoffensive animal, but none of these animals with horns should be approached too close, for accidents will occur in the best regulated families. The rhino had a particularly bad name with the Boers in the olden days. The big game hunter of today is armed with weapons which are vastly superior. I had a rifle, a .303 single barrel, which burst very badly from the breech eight or nine inches up. Fortunately it did not damage my cook-boy Jantje in any way, but it deafened me for a time. My brother and I were once on a camping trip and I was sitting down at the table having something to eat, when we heard a shot. I called to the boy to fire three shots—our signal—for we knew it was my brother Arthur, returning to camp; he had shot two hartebeeste. Jantje held out the rifle close alongside of me when he pulled the trigger. The fore end of

the rifle was blown to smithereens and some of the small wood pierced Jantje's chest. The back sight was blown clean away. He had fortunately put his hand far forward on the barrel and escaped the part burst by the explosion. There was evidently a flaw in the material, and the makers willingly gave me a new weapon in place of it. On another occasion my father was walking along shooting birds when a large snake passed in front of him, so close that he put down his gun to push it away from his feet; he fired two barrels at the snake, killing it. On inspecting his gun he found that some earth must have got into the barrel for about two inches from the muzzle was blown off.

The Voortrekkers were practical men, they had to do everything for themselves, and every farmer had to be a Jack of all trades, as the community was too small to carry on any particular trade. With the exception of iron, which was bought in Natal, all materials were obtained locally. Timber from the forests, felled and after being seasoned, sawn into planks and beams. The country abounded in game of all descriptions, the hides of which provided leather for "veldschoens" for themselves and family, and reins were cut off and used for many purposes. No clergymen, doctors, teachers or vets were there in those days, and the farmer and wife had to attend to the spiritual, intellectual and bodily wants and welfare of the household.

We once made a big mistake by camping in long grass, although at the time we could not get out of



ELEPHANT AND RHINOCEROS IN BATTLE

Both these animals were found in the course of Roosevelt's travels, and both belong to the class called Pachyderms, or thick-skinned animals. The tusks of the one and horn of the other are dangerous weapons.