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L I F E
IN
T H E W I L D E R N E S S ;
OR
W A N D E R I N G S I N S O U T H A F R I C A .

BY HENRY H. METHUEN.

And this our life, exempt from public haunts,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

As you Like it. Act ii, Scene 1.

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ed an object at a distance, resembling a waggon cover, and by aid of our glasses made it out to be a rhinoceros taking a nap — the first that had as yet been seen. We advanced, and found the huge brute fast asleep amongst some small and leafless thorns. I dismounted, giving my horse to Frolic, and crept stealthily up the wind to within forty yards; then, crouching low behind a bush, I aimed at the rhinoceros's* shoulder, and fired; my companions looking on. The ball struck distinctly, but, extraordinary to relate, the creature never rose up, or even did more than shake its head; — the blood began to stream from its nostrils, so after a second shot, we came up to it. The feet lay still doubled under the belly, as when asleep, and altogether it was not dissimilar, in its look, and position, to a roasting pig on a dish. The skin, which was upwards of an inch in thickness, came off in long strips when cut, like the planking from the sides of a boat: of this material, and the hide of the hippopotamus, whips are made termed sjamboks. During the flaying process, several gun-shots were heard on a steep, rocky hill, a

* Three species of African rhinoceros, two-horned, and quite distinct from the Asiatic, are known to naturalists, but the natives describe four different sorts. We were afterwards led to think that this was the rhinoceros keitloa, the new sort first described by Dr. A. Smith. The Indian and Javanese rhinoceroses are distinguished from all the African species, not only by their possessing a defensive coat of horny mail, but by having incisor-teeth.

feet high; tail five feet seven inches, with a noble black brush at its extremity; girth at shoulder ten feet four inches; at elbow three feet six inches; head one yard long; horns nine inches. The massive chest and immense bones of this animal indicated enormous strength, second perhaps only to that of the elephant. In the bull the tips of the horns are always rubbed bare, but in the female they are concealed by glossy black tufts of hair. Eight oxen dragged the giraffe's hide to the waggon. The skin of the male is beautifully marked, the spots standing in bold relief, but the coat of the female is dingy, and the spots less distinctly defined. Some savages were highly delighted with a present of the carcass. Kairt, who had ridden back to Mabotsa to inform Mr. Edwards that we had killed some buffalos, the skins of which, cut into thongs, were wanted for thatching the new school-room, returned to-day. He reported all well there, and related the following ludicrous incident. A powder-flask had, with some few other articles, been purloined from us by the Bakatlas; this, it seems, they could not quite make out the use of, and forming a circle round a fire, they commenced an examination of it;—they unscrewed the top, and then were peeping inside it by the fire light, when a spark flew in, and shivered the flask to pieces. Their legs were burnt, but no serious injury done, and looking on this as a judgement, they collected the fragments,

vultures,* as usual, closely watching the dissecting process. Hacking away with tomahawk and assegai, the savages in a little while separated and removed the entire ribs from one side of the female rhinoceros; two of them then stepped inside the belly, and standing in blood above their ankles, aided their comrades in baling the clotted, glutinous substance into the intestines, which had been previously inverted, and fastened up at one end. Thus a black pudding on a large scale was manufactured. It is needless to state that all the process was completed by hand, and that with their naked arms and legs, besmeared and encrusted with blood, all talking vehemently together, they were a savage and terrible group. The flesh was cut into long thin strips to dry, for salt is here very scarce, and all the bushes round were festooned with odious garlands of this nature.

The dainty morsels off the rhinoceros are the hump, and a layer of flesh and fat in equal proportions which lies on the ribs; their taste, when from a young animal, or one in good condition, is not disagreeable; but let those who complain of tough beef-steaks in England try the temper of their teeth on the flesh of a venerable rhinoceros, and they will thenceforth be less scrupulous in their

* I believe that the mysterious appearance of these birds, when any creature has been shot or wounded, is to be attributed solely to the power of their visual organs, and not to scent; the extreme height at which they soar, when in search of food, may prevent their being previously observed.

for hyænas, received a ball of four to the pound, which ploughed the whole length of his back, and nearly skinned him.*

26th.—We made a diligent but a fruitless search for the black-buck. Two huge rhinoceroses, which we at first sight mistook for elephants, were observed grazing in an open grassy spot, and a herd of about twenty giraffes strode across the plain; but these we left to themselves, being in pursuit of other game.

On our way home, I fell in with and shot a pallah. These graceful antelopes resemble the spring-buck in their motions; they frequent the hill-ranges of these regions in small herds; are of a red, or bay colour, with a black star in the forehead, and black patches of hair on the hind fetlocks. The females have no horns, but the males have magnificent ones, closely ringed, upright, and diverging—in size they resemble the fallow deer.

27th. Monypenny and myself, attended by Frolic, rode out together in search of elands. Coming to the dry sandy bed of a periodical stream, we descried, as we thought, two rhinoceroses asleep in the low bush and reeds which grew along the margin. Cautiously approaching to leeward, we left the horses with Frolic, and advanced on foot to within thirty yards of the drowsy monsters. We were obliged to bend ourselves

* The natives seem to consider the jackal a dainty, and whenever we kill one, always eat him.

for an hour, we found it on our return nearly devoured: nor does the quarry fare better at night, when lions, hyænas, and jackals, make the best use of their time.

A rhinoceros foot was baked in the ashes as an experiment, but proved to be no delicacy. Small green parrots are now to be seen.

2nd. Many deserted and ruinous stone-kraals are visible on the hills and defensible spots around us, now often tenanted by koodoos, rhinoceroses, or black bucks. These seem to have been once the property of Bawangketsi, but from what cause they have been abandoned, whether from drought, or hostile invasion, does not appear.

Bain plastered an Epsom-salts label on the chest of a native to his infinite satisfaction. Piet's fiddle knows no fatigue;—the variety of lively jigs, and rapid changes from one tune to another, draw vehement bursts of applause from the other Hottentots, who spend a great part of the night in dancing and cutting capers. The oxen appearing to be sufficiently recruited in strength by our sojourn at this spot, we commenced our wanderings again. Bain, Monypenny, and myself, after having had an early breakfast of *bagobi*, or millet ground and cooked like Scotch porridge, quitted the cavalcade, intending to make a shorter cut through the hills to the place where we had arranged to pass the next evening. The day was cloudy, and an unnatural stillness, such as often

veying his errand, and, intricate as was the country, that with native instinct he would steer straight back to the right spot.

Our expectations proved correct, and a party soon arrived with several oxen. Leaving them to complete the business, as it now grew late, I returned to the camp, and shortly after dark the Hottentots and Baquaines returned with their spoils on a bush sledge, and feasting commenced. *Therm.* Dawn 55°, noon 81°, sunset 65°.

11th. A new sort of partridge, about the size of the English bird, was shot in the mountains. Mr. Edwards, on his way to Sichele's kraal, joined our party with his light ox-cart, and participated in our banquet on eland-steaks.

13th. The tent having been duly greased, and the eland-flesh dried, we again advanced. The desertion of some of our horses prevented our doing this on the preceding day; happily they were all safely recovered. We noticed by the river a dense mass of sedge and flags, half a mile in diameter, in which there were snipes and much wild-fowl;—signs also of buffalos having wallowed in the mud were frequent, and large herds of them were seen at some distance on the opposite bank. A jackal jumping up from the rushes was chased and killed by the dogs. Bain and myself, in riding by the marsh, disturbed an unwieldy white rhinoceros, which ran straight towards the waggons which were then crossing an open plain. A more

some half-dozen natives, who bore our guns and kept up with us on foot, rode in quest of game. We skirted the base of a range of hills running nearly east and west, and fell in with trees uprooted, and other marks of recent devastation committed by elephants. Several small troops of giraffes were also seen; but we were not very well mounted, and the ground was not in good order for the chase, so we left them alone. A huge rhinoceros crossing our path amongst some mimosas, we fired into his side; and he thundered off, pursued by a number of curs belonging to our attendants. Hearing the dogs barking vehemently a short distance from us, we hastened to the place, and found the rhinoceros standing still in a thicket of thorns, wheezing loudly. He at length lay down, and Pearson fired a shot into him; at which he rose up, but fell again immediately on receiving another bullet in the shoulder from my Purday two-ounce. The natives fled in consternation when this creature rose, pulling off their sandals to run more lightly, and climbing trees with monkey-like agility. A slim, wiry-haired dog, in form like a greyhound, had the temerity to seize the disabled monster by the ear and shake it, some little while before he expired: this dog, Jowler by name, belonged to Bain, and in this, as well as in many other cases, showed a degree of courage which could not be surpassed. One of the Baquaines carries a puppy under each arm; the mother, a

Leaving the cavalcade, I rode with Frolic to the site of our first encampment after leaving Sichele's kraal; shooting on the way a cow eland, which was, unfortunately, very lean, and losing a fine bull from the impossibility of pursuing it over the stones, and through the thorn-bushes, where it fled. Several herds of the same animals escaped me in a similar way, and during the chase Frolic dropped his gun, but recovered it free from injury; he next, with inconceivable stupidity, lost his cap,—an accident which, in a European riding several hours under so burning a sun, might have produced a coup-de-soleil, but not so with my servant. I also wounded a fine fat rhinoceros so badly that it was reduced to a slow hobble, when another rhinoceros charged upon us, snorting like a steam-engine, and drove us off the track. Again did we attempt to follow the wounded one, and again did this clumsy and blustering creature sally after us; a ball lodged in the fleshy part of his body acting as a spur sent him away charging all the bushes in a paroxysm of rage, but we could not again find the object of our search.

Our supply of flour, though of late carefully husbanded, now failed us; and our last candle of eland's fat was burnt, with no prospect of our being able to make any more.

The savages occupy their spare time in preparing bits of skin for use;—a process which they perform by constantly rubbing it in their hands,