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My First Rhinoceros.

"WELL, Antoni, when are we to fall in with these terrible creatures that you have been trying to frighten me with ever since we left Kuruman; I mean the rhinoceroses and lions?"

I put this question to my Hottentot wagon-driver as we sat at our bivouac fire one dark night in that part of the Transvaal now called the Marico, but which, at the time I write of, about thirty-six years ago, was in the possession of the Bawansketze tribe, under the Chief Sebigo. I had travelled to this distant part, which up to that time had never been visited by any European, in order to fall in with the larger game, which at that time abounded there.

We had had almost a surfeit of sport with elands, palas, hartebeestes, and blue wildebeestes, having our wagon loaded with their skins and horns, and were anxious to tackle the larger and nobler game such as elephants, cameleopards, buffaloes, and rhinoceroses which were not to be met with nearer home.

"*Mijn lieve Baas*, I can't say exactly when we shall meet with them, but from certain footprints and other marks I met with to-day while looking for the oxen, I should not be surprised if we see some to-morrow, as this pretty park-like country with numerous springs of water and very thinly-peopled is just the veld those creatures delight in."

Antoni was right for once; for that same evening the voice of the King of Beasts was distinctly heard, first in the far-distance in a low guttural growl which came rolling along like distant thunder, becoming more and more distinct every time it was repeated. It soon became evident that the creature had "spotted" our encampment and was making straight for us. As a precautionary measure we had, in forming our camp, made a kraal of cameldoorn-trees ten or twelve feet high sufficiently large to hold all our oxen and cattle. We drew our wagon into the only gap left, which was the gateway, lighted our camp-fire close to and on the inner side of the wagon and thus made things, as we thought, as snug and safe as possible for the night.

In a little while another voice was added to the first—"but more gruffer and louder," as Antoni said; and then a third and fourth, until we appeared to be surrounded by these formidable creatures. Our horses, which were tied to the wagon, became very restless, and started and tugged at the riems in their terror, pricked their ears, and looked about them in all directions. The cattle started, fitfully rushing from side to side and would have taken to flight if their fence had readily allowed of their bursting their bounds. In order to scare the lions away we set fire to all the dry stumps about us and kept throwing blazing faggots about. After the animals had approached to within half a mile or so of us, an ominous silence succeeded; judging doubtless that the object that they had in view

would be best obtained by creeping up with as little noise as possible. We concluded rightly that the unwonted quiet portended a storm. We got our guns ready and were, with eyes screened from the light of the fire, peering into the dark about, to see any object that might be approaching, when one of our men, a little Bushman named Platjie, exclaimed in great terror, "*Och! Hemel seur! daar is hij —moet niet praat niet, stil zo mij lieve seur.*" His woolly hair seemed almost to untwist itself and stand on end. He closed his eyes with his hands and seemed to have resigned himself to his apparently unavoidable fate. His great fear had entirely unnerved him, and rendered him perfectly helpless. None of the rest of our party could see anything; but just as we began to think that Platjie was frightened at nothing, a slight noise of cracking twigs was first heard, and then the sound of a large object rushing through the air which was succeeded by the bellowing of the cattle in the enclosure, the fence of which was burst through and a regular stampede of the cattle followed for a minute or two, after which the clatter of their hoofs was heard as they tore away for their lives. To follow in the dark was of no use, so we took things as coolly as we could, and after coffee turned in under our "*veld kombersen,*" not, however, before piling abundance of dry wood upon the fire to scare off any other unwelcome visitors that might come. We heard no more of either the lions or the cattle that night. When daylight broke no sign could we see of either, but about three yards from our camp-fire was the spoor of the lion from the spot at which Platjie had first seen it and from which it had bounded over the fence into the kraal. Where he alighted there was a pool of blood and marks of a severe struggle. In looking about we came upon the spoor of the drove, which we followed up until the evening and then found them on the banks of a flooded river. Two of the cattle had been badly torn by the lion but none were killed.

After an early cup of coffee and an eland carbonaatje, we started at daylight next morning in quest of large game. Our party consisted of an old elephant-hunter, a runaway slave from the old colony, Platjie, and three other coloured men. We were all well armed and amply supplied with tin-hardened bullets and other ammunition. We had not been out half-an-hour when from the top of a little kopjie we espied two large rhinoceroses, quietly grazing, less than a quarter of a mile off. The ground between us and the game was covered with long grass with here and there a little clump of bush. The question with us was how best to get to within 100 yards of our quarry without being seen or scented. Fortunately for us the little wind that was stirring was from the animals towards us; some slight inequalities on the ground enabled us to get unobserved to within half the distance, but from that to within 100 yards of the nearest rhinoceros was without any cover for us. The grass was about eighteen inches high, only just long enough to conceal us when lying down, so we were obliged to go on all fours the remainder of

the distance, occasionally dragging ourselves along in the grass on our stomachs. By this toilsome and anything but graceful or agreeable means of progression we reached a little cluster of wachteenbeetjie bush, which was sufficiently large to conceal us whilst crouching.

Here a whispered council of war was held, the order in which our fire was to be given decided, and our guns examined and fresh capped. Fortunately for us the nearest rhinoceros was quietly grazing away from us quite unaware of our proximity to him and of the marks of attention that were being prepared for him. He was a huge black bull of the single-horned kind. As Antoni was an old sportsman, and said to be a dead shot, he was told off to open the ball with a salute from his old "Beesloop," carrying eight to the pound; the order in which the others were to fire was finally arranged, I reserving my double-rifle charge for the last. Antoni took steady and deliberate aim at the back of the shoulder, but just as he drew trigger the animal turned his huge body a little more "tail on," which, as we afterwards found, had caused the well-hardened bullet after striking the blade-bone, to glance off and to run along between the skin and the flesh and lodge under his ear. This tickling thoroughly woke old pachederm up. With a loud shrill scream, he wheeled round to find out from whence the marked compliment came. He was not long in finding out, and when he did he lost no time in responding to our challenge. The bush was too small entirely to conceal our party. On seeing us he charged direct, ploughing up the ground with his horn and with a deafening scream made straight for us. The three men who were to have fired next in order ran for their lives, making for the nearest cover. In vain I called out "Fire! fire!" They did not stop till they found themselves perched on the branch of a tree a safe height from the ground. My coat had got entangled on the formidable wachteenbeetjie bush, or I don't know whether I should have stood my ground as well as I did. However, whether through my own bravery or under compulsion, there I was, alone, within twenty yards of the huge enraged beast. I concealed myself as well as I could, when to my great relief the rhinoceros stopped short when within ten yards of me, having apparently lost sight of us. With a snort and a scream he pawed the ground while sniffing the air in search of us. Here was a chance for me! With as little noise as possible I cleared the twigs away with the barrel of my gun, and took steady aim at the back of the shoulder, as near as I could guess at the region of the heart, as I knew well that unless my shot killed him on the spot I should, in all probability lose my life. Breathless with anxiety I drew my trigger, when, to my horror, the cap snapped. The noise made by this discovered my whereabouts to him. He was in the act of turning towards me, when, quick as thought, I bethought me of my last chance, my other barrel. Click! click! went the hammer to full cock, and with a great bang the hardened bullet was planted just where I wished it to be. Wheeling

several times round on his heels he fell down dead. "Hip! hip! hurrah!!" called out my brave (?) companions from their perch in the tree.

Upon cutting the game up, we found that my bullet had pierced the animal's heart and had dropped into the cavity of the chest. After cutting off the thick part of his hide for sjamboks, and taking off his horn, we left his carcase to the vultures; and thus I met and disposed of my first rhinoceros.

P.

Waiting.

THOU, like a cedar-tree,
 Didst cast thy shade upon me.
 Wearied and worn,
 Beneath thy spreading boughs
 My soul found shelter;
 Refreshed and strengthened,
 She at length pursued her way,
 Through life's drear desert;
 Thinking of thee she toiled along,
 The noon-day sun
 Poured his hot rays upon her,
 She cared not, for she thought of thee;
 Turning at length she looked,
 And, looking, longed for thee;
 Then backward sped
 To reach thine outstretch'd arms.
 O'ercome she sinks
 Upon the burning sand and fainting cries,
 "Oh! come beloved!
 Stretch forth thine arms and shelter me!"
 Thou hearest not. I pine, I die for thee.
 Vain is my cry! thou canst not come;
 And I must weary out my days alone.