

## THE JOURNAL OF AN ELEPHANT-HUNTER.

The next morning we inspanned at about three a.m., and trekked on by the light of a glorious full moon till sunrise. At this season of the year the nights are very cold (any water left in a panikin or tea in the kettle being invariably frozen), though the sun is extremely powerful during the day. After breakfast, Captain B. and myself rode out to look for game, and, coming across a large troop of zebras, Captain B. shot a fine stallion. As for myself, on jumping off to fire, my horse, though usually very steady, jerked the bridle off my arm and ran away; and it was only after a long chase, on my friend's horse, and after receiving a severe kick on the shin, that I managed to catch him again. On the following day we crossed the Tati river for the last time, near its source, and trekked on towards the Makalaka kraals of Beri-Re-Ma. We all went out hunting again, Captain B. and myself taking one side of the road, and Mr. B. and W. the other. We saw nothing; but our friends were more fortunate, and bagged a fine fat zebra mare. Many people will not eat the meat of the zebra, alleging that it is too strongly flavoured. For my part, I consider it very palatable, if the animal is in good condition; the fat certainly has not a very prepossessing appearance, being of a dark yellow colour, rather suggestive of rancid butter; this is rather remarkable, as the fat of every other wild animal with which I am acquainted is quite white.

The next day's trek brought us to within a short distance of Jantje's, the head man of the first Makalaka kraal, which we reached before daylight on the 11th, and from where a short inspan took us to Umporce's, another sort of very petty chief, where we were delayed for a couple of days, buying native corn, sheep and goats, and hiring more servants, Makalakas and Masaras (the bushmen of the interior). Between here and the Zambezi game is usually very scarce, and it is seldom possible to kill sufficient to keep one's kaffirs and dogs continually

in meat, so that, as a good deal of corn is also required for the horses, a hunter must always take care to lay in a good supply; indeed, if he has a large party of natives in his service, one wagon ought to be loaded exclusively with it, by which means a great deal of trouble and anxiety will be avoided. We bought altogether for our whole party about 4000 lb. weight of corn and maize and eighty fine goats and sheep for our own use on the road and for the return journey at the end of the hunting season. For the corn and maize we had to pay 1½ lb. to 2 lb. of beads per muid (200 lb.), beads being worth at the Tati about 4s. 6d. per lb.; the price of a fine goat or sheep was about 1½ lb. beads, or 2 lb. of brass wire, value 6s. The best beads of the small sizes for these people are transparent sky-blue, dead white, lavender, and "red white eye," and almost any large kind. Brass wire is also in great demand amongst them.

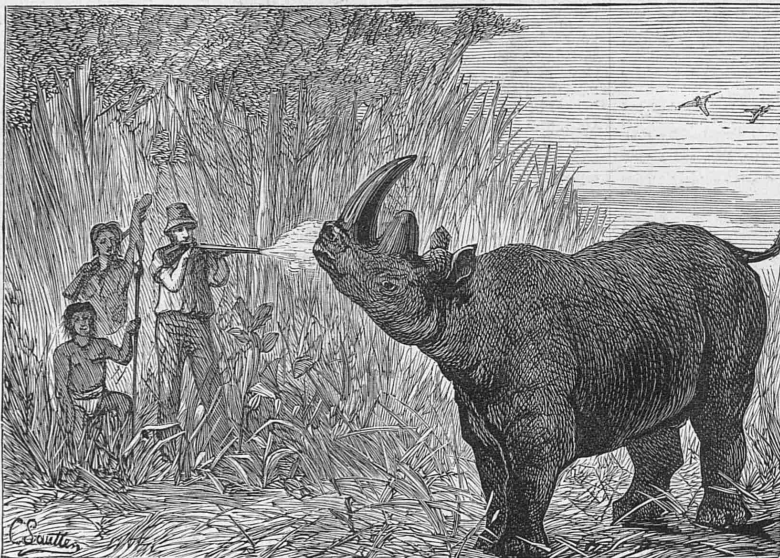
At length, on May 14, we once more resumed our journey. We had now quite a small army of retainers—about a hundred, all told, Makalakas and Masaras, exclusive of the five wagon-drivers. Another day's trekking took us beyond the last Makalaka kraal, and we outspanned for the night on the banks of a broad sand river, with pools of water here and there along its course, the name of which I cannot call to mind.

I may as well say a word or two here about these Makalakas. They are now living under the rule of, and pay tribute to, the Matabele, by whom they were conquered, some thirty-five years ago, when Umzilikazi, with his murderous band of Zulu warriors, passed like a destroying angel through the land on his journey northwards. At that time they must have been a very numerous tribe, for the whole country between Beri-Re-Ma and the present headquarters of the Matabele, and thence along the river Gwai to the Zambezi, is full of the remains of their towns and corn-fields. When invaded they offered but a slight resistance to the well-trained soldiers who had already fought their way

through a thousand miles of hostile country, from the distant shores of Natal, and who, sparing neither age nor sex (except to take slaves), soon possessed themselves of the flocks and herds of their victims, and once more rendered desert the greater part of this populous country, driving the remnant of the inhabitants either across the Zambesi or into the hills along the course of the rivers running southwards into the Limpopo, where they are now allowed to live as a subject tribe.

Their villages are at the present day invariably situated at the foot of the peculiar rocky hills or "kopyes," which are so common a feature in South African scenery. This custom, as in the case of the Mashunas, living to the south-east of the Matabele country, has no doubt been adopted in order that if suddenly attacked they may be able to escape into the hills, where they would stand a better chance of eluding pursuit than on level ground. Though they are now living under the protection of the Matabele, they evidently do not trust their masters; and they are right, as the massacre of a large section of the tribe, living in the hills bordering the Shashani river, at the end of January, 1875, amply proves.

They are rather an industrious people, growing great quantities of corn, maize, beans, sweet potatoes, ground-nuts, &c., and are good workers in iron; they also make very fair karosses, though in this they are far excelled by the Bechuana tribes further south. In appearance the Makalakas are a tolerably good-looking race, and, as a rule, excessively black. They are, however, terrible thieves and liars, cowardly and cringing if the weaker party, but insolent and brutal if they think they have the upper hand. Like all, or at any rate most, of the natives of South Africa, they are mean and stingy to a degree that cannot be comprehended by a European who has never lived amongst them. They nevertheless are, as a rule, very good servants, especially in the hunting-veit, as most of them seem to have a natural taste for the chase. But to resume. Our route now took us along the banks of the



MY FIRST RHINOCEROS.

river above mentioned for a couple of days, when we left it and struck off towards the Nata, a large sand river running from east to west, into the great salt-pan, where, after opening out into a chain of vlees, it finally sinks into the earth. The country between Beri-Re-Ma's and the river Nata is covered almost entirely with forests of Mopani-trees, relieved here and there by large open turf flats. Game was very scarce and wild, though we saw individuals of a good many species—viz., giraffe, zebra, koodoo, impala, tsaby-tsaby, and a few odd blue wildebeeste and roan antelopes. All we managed to bag, however, were one giraffe and two zebras, all in very good condition. I also rolled over a very fine koodoo bull, with a magnificent head, but he recovered himself immediately, and, getting into some very thick bush, through which it was impossible to penetrate on horseback, I lost him, much to my regret. As we neared the Nata elephant spoor (some not more than two days old) became more and more frequent, but we saw none fresh enough to follow. During the heavy rains which fell about a month ago elephants must have been here in great numbers; but the bushmen (Masaras), many of whom have been supplied by the King of the Matabele with large-bore guns to obtain ivory for him, have now driven them all away towards the dense thorn-jungles which lie to the eastward, near the river Gwai, the more recent spoor being those of elephants, trekking hastily through the enemy's country, all making for the thick bush. We also observed some black rhinoceros spoor, but none absolutely fresh.

At last, about midday on the 18th, we reached the broad, park-like valley through which the Nata runs; runs is, however, scarcely the correct word, as this river never absolutely does run, except after long rains. Still, at this time of year there are always lots of pools along its course; but towards the end of the dry season no water can be obtained except by digging to a considerable depth, when it filters up through the sand. The elephants are well aware of this, and the

enormously deep holes which they sometimes dig in the beds of these dry sand rivers in search of water are quite astonishing.

On the morning of the day we reached the Nata Mr. G. and W. rode out to look for buffalo, which are usually to be found at this season of the year in its neighbourhood; and, coming across fresh spoor and following it, before long overtook two cows, both of which they killed. On their return to the waggon they rode right on to another large herd; but, as all the Kaffirs were behind cutting up the two they had already shot, did not molest them.

## A RIDE FOR LIFE.

I can remember, some four winters ago, I was roused at midnight, in bitter weather, to give immediate attendance to a peasant's wife, living in the forest of Huelgoed; the case was an urgent one, and delay would have been fatal, so in ten minutes I was dressed, mounted, and off to the poor sufferer's aid. I had scarcely ridden half a league from the town before I became aware, by the snorting of my mare, that a wolf was paying rather more attention to both of us than the mare at least seemed to think agreeable. One wolf, however, did not disturb me; for, as yet, but one had shown himself, springing ever and anon on the hedge-bank within six feet of my head, and instantly disappearing behind the fence, as I cracked a fusee on my saddle-bow. I spurred my mare into a quicker canter, and hoped by the pace to choke off the pursuer; but, so far from this being the case, I soon found, as we sped by a broad gap in the fence, that not only was he holding his own, head and head with the mare, but that four other wolves were close on his quarters, joining hard in the chase. In another second or two two of the brutes again bounded on the hedge-bank; and, growing bolder as the chase grew hotter, kept stride and stride with us so closely that I could absolutely

smell the breath of the brutes as it tainted the air. The Brittany lanes, as you well know, are simply tunnels hollowed out of the land, and flanked on either side by high, broad banks, from the top of which the wolves with ravenous eyes were now looking down upon us, measuring my strength, and the mare's probable endurance. Had she fallen or even stumbled in her gait, the pack would have been on us in one bound; but, luckily, the little mare was safe as Notre Dame; and I took care to keep the lucifers going, flashing them in their faces, and frightening the skulking brutes ever as I did so into the adjoining field. For two long leagues did we travel on in this perilous fashion; till at length I began to fear that the mare would drop from exhaustion. She had been going from the first fetlock-deep in clay, and was now so terrified by the wolves that any unusual impediment would, I felt sure, bring her headlong to the ground. My lucifers, too, were running short; and, as I had a good half-league further to ride, I economised my stock by only flashing single matches, and that, too, when more than one wolf traversed the bank in such dangerous proximity. My old hunting-whip now served me in good stead; hitherto I had carried it between my thigh and the saddle, but, drawing it forth, I stood up in my stirrups, and with all my force brought the heavy thong down over the head and eyes of the leading wolf. The success of this manoeuvre was instantaneous; not another wolf dared show again till I reached in safety the peasant's hut, into which I rode the little mare with a thankful heart. No fox ever gained his earth more opportunely, for another ten minutes must have been fatal at least to the mare. The cowardly brutes, however, though baffled, were not beaten. There they still were, watching the hut, and prowling around it with dismal yells, denoting their disappointment, so I deemed it prudent to carry a mass of burning embers just outside the door, and to feed them until daybreak; and this alone, I am quite confident, kept them off the broom roof, and saved my little mare from certain destruction.—"Wolf-Hunting in Brittany." Chapman and Hall.