

**THE RECOLLECTIONS
OF
WILLIAM FINAUGHTY**

ELEPHANT HUNTER

1864-1875

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man quickly stopped laughing at my apparent "greenness," and on following up the blood spoor found the old male lion *in extremis*, my bullet having gone through his lungs.

Chapman and I then walked along the road together, waited at midday for the wagons, and had the usual midday meal—a cup of tea and a sardine—and then I went on ahead alone. When I came to the tree where I had previously killed the koodoo and had hung up a leg for the previous evening's meal, I found, as might have been expected, that the vultures had cleared everything but the bones. That night at the water I got a shot at a rhinoceros, but he managed to get away, leaving a blood spoor. We followed it a little way next morning, but as it took us off our route we decided not to follow it up, and pushed on to Mac-loutsie River, where the usual practice of scraping out the sand to get water for the oxen had to be followed. In due course I will tell of an extraordinary sight I saw at this spot on my return journey.

From this stage we pushed ahead rapidly. Chapman was very keen upon getting along, and though the spoor of all sorts of game, including elephants, was abundant, we did not trouble to go after them. Next day we got to the Tati where

counter alive for the elephant, he afterwards told me, had charged him from behind, had both him and his horse down and tried to stamp the life out of them. Fortunately for the horse, it was pretty fat and the elephant was unable to get a fair down blow. It was, however, able to get a purchase on the saddle and this the angry creature had trampled into a pulp, while the girth remained intact. I never saw a saddle in such a condition. It looked for all the world as though it had been chewed. Napier, after getting trampled on the shoulders and one nasty scrape down the face, managed to crawl out between the elephant's hind legs, unobserved, leaving her to expend all her rage upon the poor horse. When I saw Napier washing he was black and blue all over the shoulders, chest and back.

This was not Napier's first experience of being under a big beast. On the third day of our journey down he had been under a little black rhinoceros and was lucky to get off uninjured. Both mishaps were due to the fact that Napier was very slow, while his horse was about the same—a rather undesirable combination when big wounded animals are charging. Furthermore, Napier was not a very good rider, and his shooting was none too good. He told me that on this occasion he had put 16 bullets into one bull, without hitting a vital part.

The bull had stuck to seven or eight cows, and as Napier was following them up through the bush one of the cows must have stayed behind and gone for him.

It took us two full days to cut out and gather up the ivory I had shot. We left two boys with the horse, which we decided should not be moved for ten days, and leaving the boys, with a gun to protect themselves and the horse from lions, we followed up the elephants. We were among them until the end of March. My total bag amounted to 38 pairs of tusks while Napier got seven.

I afterwards found out from Chief Khama that this big herd of elephants had assembled somewhere low down on the Limpopo after the marula, a fruit of which they are specially fond. It appeared that towards the end of the summer, the elephants from all parts assembled for this annual fruit revel. On this occasion the Ba Mangwato got amongst them and shot one or two, starting them off. This accounted for the large herd we encountered on the Shasha.

After we had been amongst them for some time they broke up into small herds. This suited us much better for we oftener got fresh spoor than if they had remained in one body.

We also shot quite a lot of rhinoceros. They

were easy to shoot and plenty of them and as their horns weighed about 15 lbs. and were then worth something like £4, they were well worth collecting.

After this we left for the Matabele country, and reached our destination in April. I sent my ivory out by a party just going South whose wagon was not heavily loaded.

Having obtained permission from Mzilikatse to shoot in the Mashona country, we wasted no time in studying native customs or anything else, for we did not know that the Chief might not change his mind at any moment.

Before I forget it, let me here tell of one dramatic episode concerning old Mzilikatse and the attitude of the Matabele towards the missionaries that occurred on the occasion of an earlier visit in 1866. Mr. Thomas, the missionary, had invited Mzilikatse to attend divine service on a Sunday morning and to hear a short sermon.

They all agreed to go, indunas and all, and we three white men, who were staying at the King's kraal at the time—Chapman, Clark and myself—also went.

Mr. Thomas commenced in the usual way with prayer and then started his little sermon, calculated

He said they had started according to my instructions, and outspanned the first evening. They made up a kraal in which to put the cattle, but it was of a very flimsy nature, with the result that the oxen simply walked out of it during the night and commenced grazing. This was where Mrs. Harren scored for, having tied her oxen to the yoke, she had them safe while mine and Napier's had gone off, goodness only knew where. So far as I could gather they must have been frightened soon after they got loose, and bolted, making off in the direction of the Sweswe, which they had crossed. It was quite clear that lions were after them, for I afterwards found that, on the further bank, the lions had attacked them. Five of the oxen were killed at this spot by the brutes. I followed up the spoor as rapidly as possible. The first night (Saturday) I slept close to the wagons for I found that the oxen were travelling almost in a circle. The following morning I started off about daybreak and, during the afternoon, met several of my boys returning with 16 oxen which they said they recovered amongst the Mashonas in the vicinity. The next morning I continued the search, and noticed the somewhat peculiar manner in which the oxen appeared to be crossing each other's spoor, but failed to draw any particular conclusion from it, though I afterwards was

enabled to explain it. If I had realised the real meaning at the time things might have turned out differently.

At this juncture the old Matabele guide I had with me complained of hunger, and, seeing three roan antelope not far away, I was about to shoot, and felt for my powder flask to prime the nipple, but to my annoyance could not find it, and then remembered I had left it where we slept for the night. As matters transpired I was extremely foolish in not sending back for it, for its possession would have saved me and the boys much subsequent distress. As I had only the one charge in the gun I would not fire at the antelope, not knowing how useful that one charge might turn out to be, for the wise hunter never cares to be without one last shot in case of emergency.

I soon found use for it, for about sundown we saw an old rhinoceros coming down the path to the water. I got off my horse and went to meet him, halting at a very large ant-heap, which was covered with grass. As he came near the heap he gave me his side, and I raised the gun and fired, but the weapon played me a trick that the old muzzle-loaders often did in those days—it hung fire, and there was I pointing my gun at a particularly ugly and dangerous rhino. Fortunately I kept the gun

they frequently have to be out all night in all kinds of weather, sometimes in drenching rain with nothing to keep them dry, wood too wet to burn and with the constant fear that a lion or some other animal may be on the lookout for supper. Many a black boy has been snapped up in this way, for lions are very bold and are not always deterred by a fire, while other denizens of the forest are capable of giving one a fright, if nothing worse.

I remember once, we were making a camp for the night. It was quite dusk, but the horses were still grazing under the charge of a Cape boy. Suddenly he shouted, "Bring the gun, baas, bring the gun." I immediately ran to him and he pointed to a big male lion not many yards away, the brute evidently contemplating an attack either upon the horses or the boy. It was so dark I could scarcely see the sight on my gun, but I fired and the bullet just missed the lion, knocking up the dust all round his neck. With an angry growl he made off.

We secured the horses as quickly as possible, made up some big fires all around us, and after eating the evening meal settled ourselves comfortably to sleep, Gifford, myself and the Colony boy being at one fire together. I was awakened by hearing the horses snorting and knew that this por-

tended the presence of danger. Hastily rising to my knees, I peered over a small bush that we had at our heads and looked—straight into the face of a big lioness who was not more than six feet away! She had been taking a quiet survey of the camp by the light of the fires and, evidently, when I popped up my head she got as big a fright as I did, and promptly bolted, leaving behind her a peculiarly offensive odour which compelled us to shift our quarters and kept us awake for some time.

It was about three hours later, and we were just sleeping comfortably again, when there was another scare. The fire was suddenly scattered all over the place, there was a fearful grunting noise, the horses screamed with terror and snapped their reims, the boys with howls of fear climbed the nearest trees and the whole camp was a perfect pandemonium. The cause of all this trouble was a pugnacious little black rhinoceros who, undismayed by our fire, just blundered through it in his own pig-headed way right into our midst and nearly frightened us to death. He was probably startled at the noise his little exploit evoked, for within a minute he had scuttled away into the darkness.

We had considerable difficulty in catching the horses. The poor creatures were very restless after

this second trial of their nerves in one night and we had great trouble in pacifying them. They were almost frightened to death and as by this time everybody's nerves were more or less shaken, further sleep, by tacit consent, was out of the question. The boys piled more wood on the fires and we promptly made ourselves a kettle of coffee and sat by the fire drinking till daybreak.

CHAPTER X

MR. HARTLEY'S PARTY AGAIN—A LION ADVENTURE—THE
HEAD-MAN SEIZED—MY EXPLOIT WITH AN ASSEGAÏ—
A RISKY UNDERTAKING—COWARDICE OF NATIVES—
TWO PLUCKY PICANNINS—THEIR FIGHT WITH A LION

As soon as it was light we moved off and, picking up the spoor of elephant, we started in pursuit. They took us a long way up the Ramaquabane River, the trail crossing the main road. We were somewhat surprised to find at this spot several wagons outspanned. These proved to be old Mr. Hartley's, but there were only native boys in charge at the time, the white men having also gone in pursuit of elephant. The presence of white men was too rare an occurrence for us to miss the chance of meeting them, so we left the elephants we were pursuing to their own devices, off-saddled and waited for my old friends to turn up. This they did eventually and, after renewing old acquaintance, told us that they had been unsuccessful in their particular jaunt that day but had shot a rhinoceros not very far from the camp and had left a number of boys there to cut out the eatable part and bring it along as food.

We had many reminiscences to exchange, and just as we were full of talk one of Mr. Hartley's boys came running up at full speed, crying and moaning and in a state of considerable distress. For a time it was difficult to get a coherent story out of him, but eventually we calmed him down and he then told us, with many gesticulations, that the head-man had been seized by a lion, killed and carried off into the reeds in spite of their attempts to save him.

Upon hearing this startling news we immediately sprang to our feet, caught our horses, saddled up, and with the boy racing ahead of us to show us the way, we galloped for the scene of the tragedy. We had not gone more than half way when we saw a procession coming towards us.

Leading the way was the "dead" man—walking, with a boy on either side supporting him. He wasn't quite dead; in fact he was worth half-a-dozen dead men, but there was no doubt that he had received a very bad mauling. Upon questioning him and his comrades it appeared that, being too lazy to come back by the proper path, they had taken a short cut through some river reeds, when the lion came upon the scene from behind. The king of beasts, attracted probably by the smell of the rhinoceros meat, and being in search of supper, made a

induce them to go into the reeds where the lion had taken refuge. We were determined to get the lion, but when the dogs refused to go in, there was no anxiety on the part of anyone to make a move.

Seeing that they were all diffident I, rather rashly perhaps, said I would go in, provided they all stood by with their guns ready. This they agreed to do, and as a gun was useless in a close encounter I handed my gun to one of the boys and armed myself with the big assegai that the headman had dropped.

I dropped down the bank into the thick reeds, and at the second stride I trod upon something which gave a loud scream. In an instant I stabbed with the assegai with all my might and, drawing back the weapon, found I had impaled a young lion cub, about six weeks old. The lioness, doubtless frightened by the noise of our big party, was afraid to come back and protect her offspring. This was certainly fortunate so far as I was concerned, for she would unquestionably have given me a very rough time.

At the sight of the cub the dogs plucked up courage and came into the reeds with me. They smelled out and killed two more cubs, but the parents were not to be found.

We returned to Mr. Hartley's wagons and

slept there that night. On the following morning we set off along the bank of the river, and off-saddled, while it was yet early, by the side of a small spruit. We made a fire, grilled some of the rhino meat and, having satisfied our keen appetites, stretched ourselves out in the warm morning sunlight, filled our pipes and prepared to enjoy a blissful ten minutes.

We were in the midst of a delightful reverie that the huntsman-smoker knows so well, when my day-dreams were suddenly dispelled by Gifford, who quietly touched me on the arm and pointed to a buffalo cow which was grazing not more than a hundred yards away from us. We kept perfectly still for a few seconds, but just as we were about to move we heard a fierce growl, saw a flash of a tawny something—and the buffalo cow was rolling over in the middle of a great cloud of dust.

The whole thing happened in a flash. Almost before we had recovered from our astonishment the dust had cleared away and we could see a big male lion and lioness savagely tearing at the buffalo.

Our guns were lying by our side, and it did not take us many seconds to agree as to which each of us should take. Within five seconds our guns had spoken, and both lions were lying dead by the side of their victim. Reloading, we walked over to the

three dead bodies and ascertained that it was the lion that had made the first assault. He had jumped squarely on the shoulders of the buffalo, and, holding onto the neck by one paw he had put the other over the buffalo's nose, thrust in his great claws, and broken the poor beast's neck with one mighty twist.

We looked around to see where our boys were, but, as usual when lions were about, they had deemed discretion the better part of valour, and were all of them in the topmost branches of the nearest trees. We shouted to them to come down, but they were mighty reluctant to do so. The cowards said they were afraid of something else turning up, and they were not coming down until they were sure that all danger was past.

Perhaps the cowardice of natives in such circumstances is excusable, for there have been tragedies enough among them, plenty of whom have fallen victims to the lions.

There was one very plucky feat, however, I remember, performed by two young Matabele boys, and it deserves to be placed on record, for it is one of the finest pieces of bravery on the part of two lads that I have ever heard. These picannins were herding cattle one day. It was in the wet season, there was a nasty drizzling rain, obscuring all the

though in this position I could see nothing. As might have been expected I fell into a light doze and woke suddenly to find the cavern in complete darkness. I wondered what had happened, for it was a bright moonlight night, and started fumbling about to find the "window." Groping round the walls of the little cavern I at length felt the small opening, and then a deep "sniff" suddenly apprised me of the fact that some animal had thrust his nose in from the outside and was trying to "smell us out." At this moment, however, it moved back allowing the moonlight to stream in and then I saw that my visitor was a magnificent male lion! I was thankful that our front wall was very thick and was doubly grateful when he stalked majestically down the sand in the river bed and disappeared from view. The temptation to fire was almost irresistible, but I was out for elephant, not lions, and my restraint was rewarded, for about four o'clock five bull elephants came down to drink and I got a nice young one carrying about 40 lbs. of ivory.

CHAPTER XII

CIGAR AND THE ELEPHANT—A UNICORN HORN—SIX ELEPHANTS WITH FIVE BULLETS—A NARROW ESCAPE—THE BABY ELEPHANT AND ITS MOTHER—AN AMUSING SCENE—A DISAPPOINTED BOER—BUSHMAN CATTLE THIEF AND HIS DESERTS.

WE continued our journey down to the junction of the Shasha and Simbokie to the spot where Napier and I had previously seen the enormous herd of elephant. We found elephants fairly plentiful and had some profitable shooting. This is where Cigar makes his first appearance as an elephant hunter. I overheard him talking at the camp fire to the other boys about the matter and from this it was quite clear that though he was a famous hand with a gun he did not altogether like the idea of getting too close to an elephant. I was, therefore, not surprised to find that when it came to an actual encounter he was not a success. He fired a number of shots but did not get anything, then he lost the elephants and once or twice got lost himself and had to sleep out in the bush. During the whole time he was with me he never shot an elephant, and eventually I put him on to shoot rhinoceros, sending him in a direction directly opposite to the one we took,

on account of the noise he made with continuous firing.

He mentioned one day that he had fired at and wounded a rhino with an exceptionally long horn, but the animal had got away. Curious to know whether he was "drawing the long bow" I went out in that direction and, directed by a number of vultures sitting in the trees, I soon located the carcase. It certainly had a very pretty horn, 3 ft. 10½ ins. in length and with a very small butt. In fact it was so unlike the usual rhino horn that I afterwards showed it to a man as a fine specimen of a unicorn horn.

I was away from the wagons a whole week, having shot eight elephants meanwhile. There was a nice shower of rain the night I returned to camp and in the morning the boys told me they had heard elephants down the river. I made it a rule never to hunt on Sundays, but it was such a beautiful morning after the rain that I could not resist a ride out, if only to see which way they had gone. Their fresh spoor was visible less than a mile from the wagons, and before I anticipated anything of the kind the herd was right in front of me.

Upon examining my pouch I found I had only four bullets there, with one in the gun. However, I set to work with my five bullets. With the first

CHAPTER XIII

BUFFALO DANGERS—A SAVAGE ASSAULT—A WAGON ACCIDENT—AMONG THE LIONS—MY HORSE KILLED—A DAY OF SLAUGHTER.

AFTER cutting up the recaptured oxen we had a long journey back to the wagons and did not arrive till after nightfall. A grilled steak and a long night's sleep, however, soon made amends. I woke next morning to find that the other quarantined horse was sick and by ten o'clock he was dead, so rapid is the operation of horse sickness. Next day I was among the elephants again, shot eight cows, averaging about 24 lbs. weight of ivory each, whilst I also secured a couple of bulls, each yielding 90 lbs. of ivory. Several rhinoceros also fell to my gun, giving me plenty of sjambok and rhino horn.

While on the trip, I saw a magnificent herd of buffalo. There were many hundreds of them and they offered a tempting opportunity which I did not refuse. I, however, only brought down two, for the sake of their skins and meat. Personally I was never very keen on shooting buffalo, for the exciting sport offered too much risk, both to one's self and to one's horse, and while hunting in the bush it is not wise to expose a valuable horse to unneces-

CHAPTER XV

TWO HAPPY-GO-LUCKY HUNTERS—HOW THEY FRIGHTENED THE ELEPHANTS—GIRAFFE FOR THE POT—A STARTLING EXPERIENCE—"WATER, WATER, GIVE US WATER"—DAN FRANCIS' MINING PARTY—QUARREL WITH KHAMA'S NATIVES

ON my way out I ran up against a number of hunters and others coming down from the Zambesi district. They were travelling by the Tati. I did a little trade with them, securing a fair amount of ivory in return. At a place called Gowkwe—where it will be remembered I had hung the koodoo meat in a tree—I met Mr. Hume and Sir Percy Douglas's son, who were out on a shooting trip. Nothing would do but they must make me go back with them for a few days in order that they might get an elephant.

After some demur I agreed to go back for a fortnight, only on condition that they would hold out for that length of time in the elephant country. They at once agreed. As I told them it was useless taking our wagons for such a short time, we decided to leave the heavy gear behind. Leaving my wagons at the Gowkwe, just below the old Tati drift, we all mounted our horses and turned our faces to the northward. I explained to Hume and

Sir Percy Douglas's son, that if they wanted elephant they must on no account shoot anything else, otherwise the sound of their weapons would frighten all the elephants away long before they could be seen by the hunters.

They listened to all I had to say, but shortly after we crossed the Tati and had surmounted a high ridge, a little black rhinoceros crossed our path. The two sportsmen immediately forgot their resolution. They put their new breech-loaders to their shoulders, and to me it sounded like a regiment of soldiers at work.

I promptly lost a little bit of my temper. I reminded them of what I had told them about not shooting anything but elephants and told them, without any circumlocution, that by their stupid and unnecessary fusillade they had spoiled the shooting for the day and it was now only eight o'clock in the morning. I pointed out that by this time there would be no elephants within seven or eight miles of us, for every animal within that radius would have taken fright.

However, we went on a little further when we came upon a very fine lot of giraffe. Hume could not resist the opportunity and begged me to let him have "just one." As I knew the elephant were hopeless for the day I said, "all right," and

we cautiously moved towards the giraffe which were about a mile and a half away. On our way, I showed my companions what they had missed by their noisy assault upon the rhino, by pointing out to them, right across our path, the fresh spoor of seven bull elephants—evidently started off on the run by the reports of the guns. My companions looked a bit sick over it, but they were not long down-hearted and their spirits quickly recovered at a nearer view of the giraffe. The herd was contentedly browsing on the tender buds and young leaves of the trees which were just beginning to sprout.

As a supply of giraffe meat was likely to prove a welcome addition to my larder, I went away on the right, while my two companions went straight ahead. I bowled over a fat cow and they shot two or three. They were highly delighted with themselves and could not have been much better pleased if they shot two or three bull elephants. They faithfully promised that next day they would not shoot for meat but would withhold their fire till elephant were in sight.

The boys skinned and cut up the giraffe and after enjoying juicy, grilled steaks, we had the remainder of the meat hung in the trees and protected with branches from the ravages of the birds.

CHAPTER XXIV

A FISHING ADVENTURE—WATCHED BY CROCODILES—A FOREST TRAGEDY—LIONS, ZEBRA AND CROCODILES—THE SAURIANS' FEAST

I HOPE my readers will forgive me for occasionally going back in my recollections. I have endeavoured to make it a plain, straightforward narrative, but sometimes an incident slips out of one's memory for the moment, to be revived by some chance word. Such a one was an eerie experience I had on my last unlucky trip. It was on my way southward from Lobengula's, before I got the fever. I had reached the Crocodile River, and after outspanning and having a little food to eat, I took a fishing line and hook to the river to try my luck for eel for supper.

I caught two small ones (which, however, subsequently proved remarkably good eating) and would have remained longer, but, call me a coward if you wish, the place was altogether too uncanny for my liking. Every minute or so the big ugly head of a crocodile would appear in the water just in front of me, the owner would give me a long steady stare and then sink out of sight. The place

literally swarmed with the brutes, and my nerves soon began to feel the effects of being subjected to such a keen scrutiny by a dozen or more hungry saurians who were anxious to make my acquaintance at their supper table. The people who originally named it the Crocodile River made no mistake! If I had had my heavy gun with me I would have put a few bullets into the crocodiles, but as I had only a shot-gun I could do nothing, and they seemed to know I was powerless to injure them, for in the ordinary way crocodiles keep out of sight when in the water, but these fellows were almost impudent in their keen interest in me. I did not like the spot at all. The reeds and grass were very thick thereabouts, thick enough to shelter all sorts of danger, and I kept a very close watch, not only on the water, but all around me.

Some few yards from where I was sitting I noticed an old rhinoceros footpath leading down to the water. It had been quite well worn by the rhino, but was now apparently used by smaller animals to get to the water. It was a by no means ideal drinking spot for them, for in the first place the bank was very steep, then they had to get down a ledge about a foot in depth and were at once fetlock deep in the water.

I had been sitting near this path altogether for