THE STORY OF DAVID LIVINGSTONE

BY

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CHAPTER II

FIRST YEARS IN AFRICA

THE sea voyage out to the Cape was a new life to Livingstone, and he made the most of it. With his usual determination to know all about everything, he made friends with the ship's captain, and soon began to learn how to manage the ship.

The captain taught him how to use a sextant and chronometer, two most important instruments, by whose help voyagers can tell exactly how far they are to the north or south, to the east or west. To "take an observation," as it is called, is no easy matter; but by hard and steady practice Livingstone in time became able to find out the ship's exact position and to mark it down

neatly on the chart. And often in after life the captain's kindly teaching came to his aid when he lost his way in the wilds, or when he marked some new discovery on the map.

In his spare half-hours Livingstone would enjoy the many delights and wonders of the southern sea. He watched the dazzling little flying-fish dart like tiny rainbows from beneath the bows, glimmer over the water, and flash into the white comb of a wave. The dolphins, too, like clowns of the sea, amused him with their antics as they leapt and turned somersaults over the waves or sportively raced, two or three abreast, close ahead of the cut-water. Occasionally a monster sperm-whale would rise to the surface like a floating islet, spout his double fountain into the air, and plunge down again into his home. Sometimes, also, a grim and wicked-looking shark would prowl about the ship's wake in the greedy hope of human prey.

When at last the long voyage was over and Livingstone landed at Cape Town, he found more sights and wonders awaiting him; but he had not been very long ashore before he also found a very great disappointment. He had quite supposed that all missionaries were of course doing their best to help forward the work among the natives, and it was an unpleasant surprise to him when he saw that, in spite of the noble efforts of many good men, mission work in South Africa was almost at a standstill.

From want of more careful planning, the mission stations were mostly clustered around the Cape instead of being dotted about far into the continent, where black men were much more numerous. This was a great waste of strength and time, for hard-working missionaries had not enough to do, while the idlers could so easily neglect their duty for the pleasures and amusements of white society.

Amongst the missionaries there was much

disagreement and petty jealousy over their work, and many were full of complaint about trifling matters, while a few, but only a few, led such unworthy and contemptible lives that they often brought the good fame of mission work into bad report.

Livingstone soon made up his mind that the only remedy lay in two new plans: first, to make mission stations far up in the thickly-peopled native districts and win over the most powerful chiefs; next, to make a training college whence native teachers could afterwards be sent to educate the many tribes. It was the first of these plans that decided the course of his after life, for he now saw that he might do better service to his cause by pioneering Central Africa than by settling down in comfort to preach.

After a short stay at the Cape, Livingstone was sent into Bechuanaland to Kuruman, the most northern of all the mission settlements in South Africa. This station

was worked by a good and capable missionary, Dr. Moffat, who was then away in England, and Livingstone had been ordered to await his return. Livingstone, however, did not mean to be idle, so he decided to spend the time in exploring the almost unknown country to the north of the station.

Accordingly he made a number of journeys in many directions, travelling about from tribe to tribe until he had thoroughly learnt the nature and resources of the country, and also the language and character of the natives.

On the first of these journeys Livingstone had an object-lesson in slavery that set his noble heart aching for the freedom of Africa. One day when he had outspanned his oxen for rest and food, he suddenly noticed that a young native girl had crept into camp, and was hiding under his waggon. He gave her some food, and in answer to his questions she told him her story. She and her sister had been left orphans, and they had lived happily together till the latter

died. Then she was taken by another family, who kept her, not out of kindness, but with the cruel intention of selling her to some chief as a slave wife. On learning what was in store for her she ran away, meaning to trudge behind the waggon all the way to Kuruman, where she had friends.

While thus telling her tale, her face suddenly fell with fear, and she burst into tears. Livingstone looked up and saw that a native, armed with a rifle, had come to claim the poor child and take her back to slavery.

Livingstone could not bear the thought of giving her up, but he was at his wits' end to know the best way of saving her, till one of his native teachers, named Pomari, came to the rescue. The girl was attractive enough, with her bright eyes, white teeth, and soft, healthy skin, and her captors had loaded her in savage fashion with strings of beads. Pomari stripped the beads off the girl, and gave them to the man, who, after a little persuasion, took

the bribe and went his way. Livingstone took care to keep the girl out of sight till they were safe out of the district.

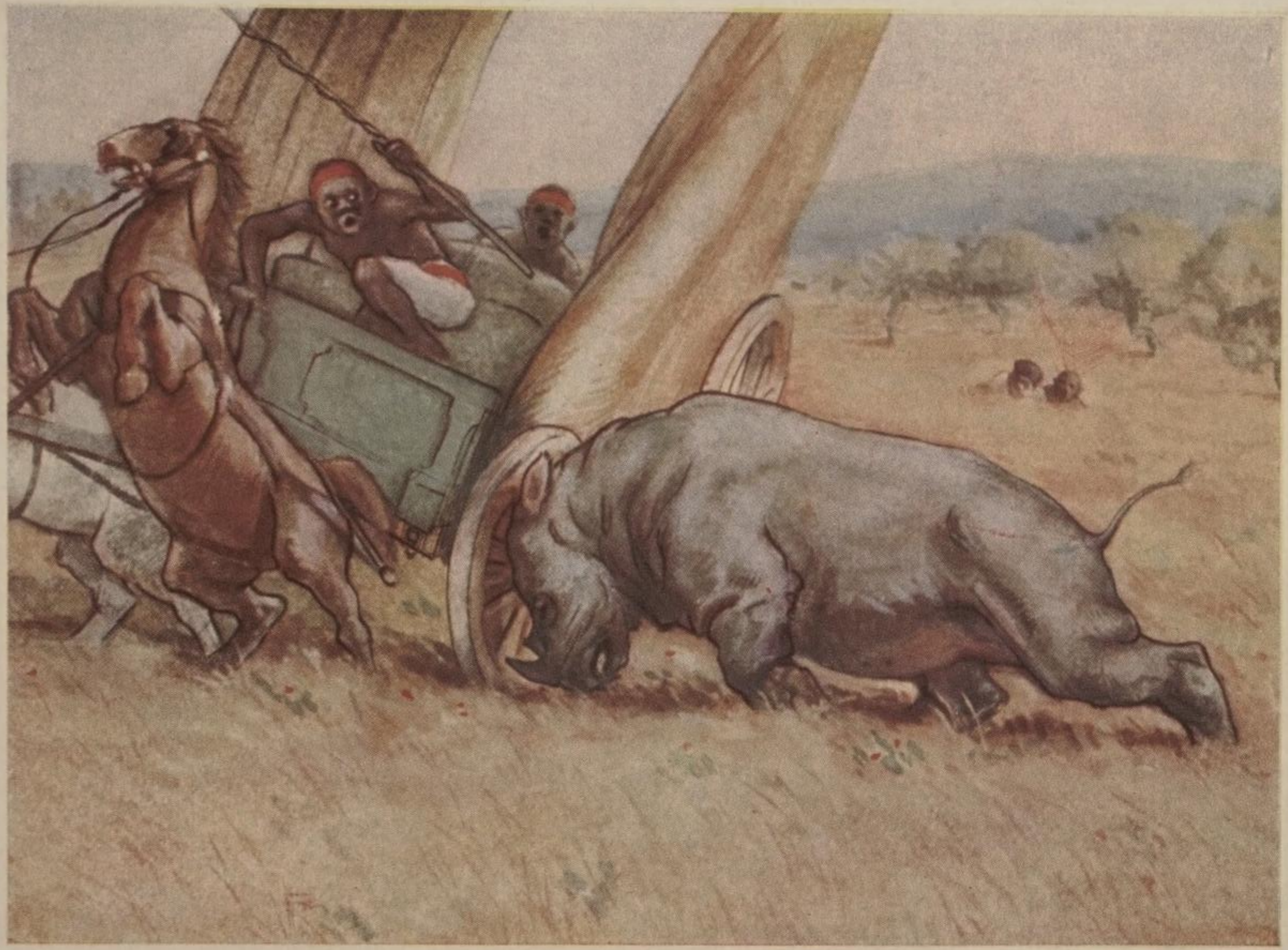
Many other adventures befell the missionary on his travels; for wild animals, drought, fever, cattle-sickness, and the deadly tsetse-fly, whose bite kills oxen and horses in a few hours, always bring risk and excitement to an African journey. Once, when he was "trekking" several hundred miles through Bechuanaland in an ox-waggon, the fatal cattle-sickness fell like a plague upon his oxen and killed them all.

There was nothing to be done but to desert the waggon and tramp home. Livingstone's native servants were afraid that their master would never be able to do it. One of them pointed to his trousers and said, half in anxiety, half in scorn, that he was not really strong enough, and only put his legs into those bags to make them look stout. Livingstone, however, proved their fears groundless, and won their respect by walking them nearly to a standstill.

Once, too, he travelled 400 miles on ox-back, and found it awkward and uneasy work to keep his seat and avoid the sweep of the poor beast's horns as it shook off the flies that clustered round its eyes and nostrils. During this journey he fell down and broke his finger, and set the bone with his other hand. Not long after, a lion sprang out of the bush and raided their camp. Livingstone frightened the animal away by firing his revolver, but the kick of the weapon broke his finger anew.

Another time he had to fly for his life and hide from an angry rhinoceros which he had disturbed while she was feeding her calf. Upon missing him, the vicious brute charged full tilt at his waggon, and with the deadly upward stroke of her horn (a stroke which has been known to kill an elephant), splintered the wheel like match-wood.

All this while Livingstone was making friends of the tribes along his track. His manly fearlessness, his good humour and



The brute charged full tilt at his waggon

keen sympathy, his kindly eyes full of honesty and truth, soon showed the natives that there was nothing to fear from him. His medical skill got him the fame of a wizard, and black patients from far and near thronged his waggon to be cured of their ills, while some spread the report that he had brought dead men back to life.

Apart from this, he had a most wonderful gift of finding his way into the hearts of men; and though the natives could not understand the reason of his coming, yet they soon saw that he had not come, like some of the Transvaal Boers, to shoot them down, plunder their cattle, and carry off their children to a life of unpaid labour.

One chief, Bubé, was in difficulty for want of water for his crops. Every tribe had a sorcerer, who was supposed to have the power of bringing down rain when required; but Bubé's rainmaker had failed to supply him. Livingstone, however, taught them a surer way than sorcery, for he induced the whole tribe to turn out and dig

a ditch from the river to their village, and by thus saving them from famine he won their love and respect. Bubé's faith in witchcraft afterwards cost him his life. His sorcerer vowed he could take the devil out of some gunpowder by the use of certain burning roots. Poor Bubé innocently went to watch the performance, and both were blown out of existence.

At last, after long waiting, Livingstone got leave from the governors to start a new mission-station, and this he did with the help of a brother missionary at Mabotsa, a place 250 miles north of Kuruman. Here Livingstone had to build a house for himself at his own expense, and as his income was only £100 a year, he built it with his own hands.

His work, however, was delayed by a misadventure that left him with a weak arm for all his days. A lion one day fell upon a flock of sheep near the village and began to kill them right and left. Livingstone went out for a little while to en-

courage the natives to surround it. The lion, however, broke away from its pursuers, and suddenly sprang out of the bush upon Livingstone: then, pinning him down with a paw on his head, it began to crunch the bone of his arm. A faithful follower, Mebalwé, diverted the beast from his master, and was himself attacked, but was saved by the lion falling dead of its wounds.

As soon as his arm was well enough, Livingstone finished his house, and then he brought home Mary Moffat from Kuruman to be his wife. The two were together so successful in their work that the jealousy of some of their fellow-missionaries was aroused, and Livingstone was accused of taking more than his share of credit so as to gain the favour of the governors in London.

Rather than live as a source of envy to a fellow-worker, Livingstone left Mabotsa, and went to all the labour and expense of building a new mission-house at Chonuane,

40 miles farther north, in the country of a chief called Sechélé. Water, however, was so scarce at Chonuane that Livingstone persuaded Sechélé's people to move with him still farther north, to Kolobeng. Here, for the third time, he built himself a house, but he did not dwell there for many years. His great mind ran continually upon the welfare of Africa, and he was losing faith in the missionary methods that were then practised.

He now believed the best plan would be for Christian emigrants to come and teach the natives useful arts and industries, and to show them by example how to lead better lives.

But where was he to make his first little colony? East of Kolobeng lay the Transvaal, and the Boers, who hated him for his efforts against slavery, kept sending him threatening messages. North and west of him was the dry and trackless Kalahari Desert. He had heard native rumours about a large lake beyond the desert.

The lion began to crunch the bone of his arm

There he might find a place suitable for his purpose; but he could not afford to pay for the waggons, cattle, native servants, and stores necessary for the journey across the desert. House-building had already cost him beyond his means. What was he to do?

The matter was settled for him by the generosity of an English gentleman, William Cotton Oswell, who had made several hunting trips in South Africa after big game, and had often been helped by Livingstone's knowledge of the country and language. Noble, fearless, and unselfish himself, Oswell had been from the first drawn into fast friendship with Livingstone; and now he offered to pay the cost of the expedition. Livingstone was overjoyed at his goodness, and on May 27, 1849, the expedition left Kolobeng. They had with them eighty oxen, twenty horses, and about twenty-five natives, and the fact that a waggon and span of oxen costs about £125 will give some idea of Oswell's generosity.