



THROUGH GASA LAND,
AND THE
SCENE OF THE PORTUGUESE
AGGRESSION.

THE JOURNEY OF A HUNTER IN SEARCH
OF GOLD AND IVORY.

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&c. &c. &c.

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CHAPTER XIII.

A DARK NIGHT.

A BLACKER night I seldom remember to have passed out of doors ; in fact, it was so dense, so impenetrable, that you almost imagined you could feel it, but this was all in favour of the light of our fire being seen at a distance, so for the present the absence of our chum will be dismissed.

The earlier hours of night had been very quiet, nothing more to mark them than an occasional jackal's or hyæna's voice, and once the deep ugh ! ugh ! ugh ! of a prowling leopard, but the passage of time was not destined to continue so monotonous. Just as I was coiling up in my blankets and had lit my pipe for the final smoke, Umpiqua said to Sunday, *sotto voce*, "rhinoster," which was responded to by a grunt of acquiescence. This was sufficient for Dillon's ever watchful ears. "Did you say rhinoster? Where is he? Where is he going?" And a thousand other queries. "To water, Bass, I think," said Sunday, with which Dillon seized his rifle, and went off into the darkness. The madness of some people is beyond explanation. Fancy going out of the camp to shoot an animal, however large, when you could not see a haystack five yards from

you. However, any remonstrance against my friend's proceeding would have been perfectly vain, so I desisted, and satisfied myself by listening.

Distinctly I could hear the heavy laboured breathing of some ponderous brute, still distant a hundred yards or more. That it was advancing towards our position there could be no doubt, for momentarily the noise became more distinct. At length all appeared to be hushed. Soon, however, I noted a distinct tread close at hand which caused me to lay hold of my rifle, but, to my relief, it was the "irrepressible" who came in, vowing that "he could not see a house, although he had hold of it, so there was no use trying to shoot." Thereupon we both lit our pipes and listened. Again the heavy breathing was repeated, and, so far as could be judged, it was much closer at hand; then a pause, soon followed by some heavy footsteps, and instantly afterwards, distinctly became delineated within light of our fire the head and fore parts of a rhinoceros. This was too much for Dillon; he was up like a cricket, and fired as quick as those interesting insects can jump, and in an instant after there was a *sauve qui peut* in our camp. I ran because the natives ran, and my Irish friend followed my example. To an observer the whole affair would have been most ludicrous, for the rhinoceros was evidently as frightened of us, as we were of it, for we could hear for several moments its rapid

footsteps dying away in the distance. When reassembled we both angrily enquired from Sunday what he meant by giving such a false alarm. That worthy's reply, and it was supported by all the others, even by the serious and taciturn Umpiqua, was that, he never knew a rhinoceros come up to a fire without charging into it. Fortunately for us, this one was a character apart in disposition from its race, for there was not within reach a bit of available shelter to take advantage of.

The events of that night were not yet finished, for soon after the rhinoceros had disappeared into the distance one of the big antelopes, supposed at the time to be a koodoo, took shelter in the water from the pursuit of a large party of wild dogs. The hounds, judging from their frequent complaining whimpers, seemed very loth indeed to give up the pursuit of their prey, yet did not have pluck enough to enter the pool and make an attack.* Patience, they seemed to think, would meet with its reward, so they apparently resolved to put that virtue to the test, and doubtless would have remained exercising it till daylight had not a number of buffalo arrived, who sent the *carnivora* flying; at least, so I imagined from the snorting and grunting of these formidable and irate members of the bovine family.

* When the water is just sufficiently deep to force the wild dogs to swim, the larger antelopes can beat off any number of them.

Dawn was exceedingly welcome when its advent was announced, for it is useless to deny that both were anxious about our companion; not that we anticipated anything serious happening to him, but in such a country as this, and following such an avocation as we were, who can tell when and where danger lurks? The spoor of our nocturnal visitor of last night, as soon as it became sufficiently light, attracted the attention of the people; with one accord they pronounced it to be that of the ordinary white rhinoceros (*R. sinus*), which to some extent explains why it departed so hurriedly. If it had been a "keitloa" or "borèle," I should doubtless have had another tale to tell, as both these species are far more irascible and destructively inclined than the former. Not that either are to be played with at any time, particularly when wounded. Sunday says that he once saw a fight upon the Black Umphilosi between a "borèle" and several elephants, one or two of which were powerful bulls. The engagement occurred at an open water, where there was an abundance of room and drink for all. The rhinoceros was the aggressor, and soon put to flight his more peaceful and much taller neighbours. Andersson, the hardy explorer and able naturalist, mentions having witnessed a similar scene, with the same result. It is seldom a white man has an opportunity of being present at such a combat. It must, indeed, be a grand sight, and compensation

for a deal of hardship and exposure. Like many other animals whose natural dwelling-place is the plains, the rhinoceros is a good climber, and will cross the most rugged hills and *kranzes*, when necessity or desire calls upon it to do so. The same is a characteristic of the Javanese species.

By sun up the whole party were under weigh, scattered in a long-extended line and facing towards the rising luminary. I kept the low ground. On my right hand was Sunday, the arrangement being that whoever discovered signs of the missing man was either to fire a shot or light a fire, making choice according to his means. It was a most glorious sunrise—a more beautiful I have seldom witnessed. The Indian Ocean always strikes me as the place to see these to perfection ; and had not the gorgeous luminary just risen from her embrace ? The temperature, moreover, was cool enough almost to feel bracing, while the country was simply charming.

The wandering mariner, whose eye explores
The wealthiest isles, the most enchanting shores,
Views not a realm so bountiful and fair,
Nor breathes the spirit of a purer air.

If this country could remain throughout the year as it is now it would be a perfect Paradise, for nowhere is there a greater wealth and variety of vegetation than in the bottom lands, while the hills,

CHAPTER XV.

WHO were the intruders and who disturbed the rhinoceros's slumbers the animal had not the slightest idea, but that there was danger in the vicinity the brute apparently was conscious of. The first action of the huge, unwieldy beast was to turn its head up to windward to learn if the tainted breeze could tell anything. This movement prevented me getting the shot I desired, for I had resolved to place my bullet as near to the butt of the ear as possible. After waiting a minute or two I was nearly giving up this intention, for the shoulder presented a most enticing shot, when the huge, ponderous head came slowly round, and ultimately remained motionless. As the creature's gaze was directed across our front, I pulled down my sleeve, a habit I have contracted when particularly desirous of taking an extra careful aim, raised my rifle, made due allowance for the shortness of the range, and pressed the trigger. The usual crushing sound announcing the striking of the bullet instantly followed the report, and then began a scene which beggars description, and would have been ridiculous even if a less powerful animal had been the principal actor in it.

From the moment the game was struck it commenced to spin round without altering materially its locality, at the same time squealing in the shrillest notes, alike indicating rage and a craving for revenge. This movement may have been the result of the concussion of the bullet on the brain, or it might have arisen from a desire to discover from what direction it had received its injury. I incline to the first supposition, for, if it had been otherwise, doubtlessly it would have charged into the smoke, which for many seconds hung to the ground owing to the absence of wind. All this time I had hoped to get a chance to put in the second barrel, but so wonderful was the agility that the stricken beast displayed that I really had not a chance to place a ball anywhere that I deemed to be vital. The rotatory performance now terminated; the shrill screams subsided into long-drawn, heavy breathing, and the wounded brute stood still almost exactly in the same position it had first occupied when I fired, but with this difference, that it was facing in the reverse direction.

Blood was flowing freely from the poor creature's mouth, and every respiration threw quantities of it out over the grass, so that I had little doubt but that the wound was fatal. Nevertheless, to prolong the termination of the drama would have been the grossest cruelty, and destitute of any compensating results, so I fired my left barrel, my aim being almost at the identical place of my first shot, but on

the reverse side of the head. The result surprised me ; the rhinoceros, with a bound—no other words suit better—rushed forward exactly in the direction it was heading for ten or twelve strides ; the pace, for so cumbersome a brute, was astounding ; when suddenly the whole animal machinery failed in its action, and the *borèle* fell ; dead, I believe, before the carcass was thoroughly stretched upon the ground.

I got uncommonly well out of the fray, but there was just a sufficiency of danger in the whole affair to make me mentally resolve to leave, in future, black rhinoceros alone when out in the open, and no cover or shelter within reach. Throughout the whole *contretemps* Dame Fortune wonderfully favoured me, but if the fickle jade had played me any of her tricks I feel convinced I would not have lived to get out of the scrape. It is no proof of bravery to court death in the hunting-field, nor is it a mark of cowardice to use due precautions to ensure the protection of your life. Take my word for it, reader, a wounded black rhinoceros is a truly fearful opponent unless you are well mounted, and he who accomplishes its destruction on foot performs no ordinary deed of daring, unless luck should favour him, as it did me on this occasion.

There never was a less jealous triumvirate of sportsmen than our party, but for all that I had an intense desire to kill the first rhinoceros, or, in fact, the first specimen of any description of big game

that fell to our lot. I knew that I was heavily handicapped in performing this feat, for both my companions were younger than myself, and Dillon assuredly much more active, so on my return journey I had quite a chuckle of satisfaction to myself over the victory I had obtained. The sun was setting when I reached camp, both my friends had returned, both assumed an air of mystery which I knew was indicative of some performance they had enacted, that would give them a crow over me. I naturally attempted to pump Jim and Umpiqua, but they had evidently received instructions to be silent, so my effort was unavailing. True, I noticed an extra pot upon the fire, but this did not strike me as strange, as it might contain a stew made from some bird or beast that our people had killed during our absence. At last dinner was served. The first course was excellent and satisfying. However, a second was produced. When the dish that covered it was removed, an odour greeted our nostrils that resembled the quintessence of musk *bouquet*. Summarily it was ordered to be removed.* Then naturally arose the question to my lips, What was it? I was not long detained in ignorance. The failure of the *pièce de résistance* to find favour set Dillon's tongue going with the information that, it was part of a splendid bull giraffe that he had killed on his way to camp. Although our palate had not

* The young giraffe cows are excellent eating.

been gratified by this addition to our larder, it in no way operated against my friend having a good crow over his success. So then my adventure with the *borèle* was told, which resulted in taking my irrepressible friend down a peg or two.

Over our nightcaps of brandy and water, which by universal consent were increased to a double allowance, our battles were fought over again, and we altogether had a most jovial night till "the wee small hours" had been reached.

Unanimously we had agreed to turn in without further delay, and were putting our resolve in practice, when a loud yell, followed by a babel of shouts, came from the Mantatees' camp outside our enclosure. In a moment all were on their feet, the Zulus grasped their assegais, we in turn seized our rifles, then demanded what was the cause of the disturbance. So many answers were made, and that in a language which at the best of times was far from being thoroughly understood, that for some time we were kept in ignorance. At length the Zulus, after a display of much patience, solved the enigma. A lioness, which had given no end of trouble during our absence, had walked deliberately into the Mantatees' camp, and had been discovered within a few feet of one of the natives, endeavouring to claw a piece of flesh out of a mimosa tree that grew in their midst. On detection, the intruder had retired a few paces, showed her teeth, and otherwise ex-

pressed hesitation whether she would depart or not. Such boldness, especially when a good fire was burning in close proximity, to say the least of it, augured for a renewal of the visit, and probable injury to some of the people.

Our approach had alone driven the lady back, but although out of sight she was not far distant, for at intervals we could both hear her breathe, and pass through the underbush. To prevent accidents similar to what now appeared to be threatened, I had strictly enjoined upon the Mantatees the necessity of constructing a high, impenetrable fence around their *kraal*; but, with the proverbial heedlessness of these people, they had procrastinated doing so from day to day. When one of them is carried off it is just possible that they will think it time to obey my orders.

A couple of days after that on which I killed the rhinoceros, just as breakfast was about to be served, the camp was put in a state of excitement by Umpiqua bringing the information that a party of giraffes were passing to the west of us, apparently with the intention of crossing the river at the ford. In a moment all were in a state of bustle—all I say, but should except Selwin, who was “laid by the heels” by a very severe attack of fever—otherwise our temporary home would soon have been comparatively deserted from the desire to kill or to assist at the slaughter of some of these grand animals, the

CHAPTER XXIV.

TRIP TO THE LAGOON.

ANOTHER trip to the lagoon afforded me as much pleasure as on the day of its discovery. The same amount of bird life was visible, but four species that I had not formerly seen were now conspicuous. The first, the scissor-bill (*Rhynchops flavirostris*), remarkable for its graceful flight, but awkward, unfinished, or broken-looking beak ; the white-winged black tern (*Sterna leucoptera*), heavy and slow upon the wing, and, therefore, as great a contrast as can be imagined to its near relative, our well-known British bird the "sea swallow. Pelicans and boat-bills were also numerous, the first rotund and comfortable-looking at a distance, like a well fed but overgrown goose, but gifted with a far greater air of importance than the familiar fowl of our village greens ; while the last, the boatbills, resemble cranes with the mumps, and human beings suffering from polypus. Their bills are certainly a novel-looking arrangement to the human eye, but they doubtless answer the purpose for which they were intended, and the owners, knowing no other, are perfectly satisfied with the want of grace of their boat-like appendage. As transport on our return journey is the great

difficulty that we shall have to contend with, and we have now more *impedimenta* than we at present exactly know how to deal with, it would have been barbarous to make a collection of skins, taken from the innumerable rare swimming and wading birds that surrounded me, as inevitably I should have to leave it behind, so I turned away with a sigh of regret, from the most extraordinary aquatic aviary that I am ever again likely to visit.

On leaving the lagoon we struck a rhinoceros trail leading to the southward; it had lately been traversed by two of these animals—an old and a young one. It soon took us into the open veldt country; but, although the spoor was fresh, not a sight could be obtained of the game, and this when the human eye could well have distinguished such large objects quite a mile distant. It was quite possible that the beasts had lain down in some indentation or hollow in the surface of the plain, so it behoved us to be careful that we did not, too suddenly and unprepared, come upon such irascible animals. Our tramp in pursuit was not very far. One of the Zulus led the way upon the spoor, next followed Sunday carrying my rifle, close on whose heels I trod, when our foremost man stopped, squatted, mumbled something in his own language, which my henchman translated into the information that the game consisted of a cow and a calf, and that they were just over the swell of the land in front,

drinking in a *vley*. I placed some grass around my cap, raised my head, and had a survey. The view was very attractive and uncommon from the brute life that figured so prominently in it. The old lady, who belonged to the species familiarly known as Sloane's rhinoceros (*Rhinocerus keitloa*), was standing in the water more than belly deep ; consequently her udder was submerged, which the youngster, desirous of obtaining sustenance, much resented, showing his indignation by giving his parent many a butt in the flank, which, but for her size and power, would have been deemed dangerous blows. At length the matron got angry and hit her progeny no gentle knock, which nearly sent it over, causing the youngster to retire to the margin of the water in high dudgeon. However, this humour did not long continue, for, soon after, the youth was wallowing in the mire, and giving itself a coat of mail, more than impervious to any blood-sucking flies that thought fit to attack it. This baby rhinoceros was nearly ten hands high and had simply excrescences along the front of its head indicating the position of the future horns.

Of all the African rhinoceri, Sloane's, or the keitloa, is considered to be the most dangerous, not that it is possessed of a more daring and vindictive spirit than the borèle, but from its superior weight, size, and I think speed, it is capable of perpetrating more injury. Moreover, although all this family are comparatively easily killed, I believe the animal of

which I am now writing has more vitality than any of the others. This being the case, it behoved me to be extremely careful how I approached it. The wind suited admirably from my present situation, but I deemed the range—quite a hundred yards—much too far for my two-grooved rifle to produce instantaneous death, so looked about to see how I could better my position. The *vley* was about sixty yards wide, and evidently deep, but from where I lay, there was not a bush or stone to hide behind, right up to the margin of the water.

To my left, however, there was a tall ant-hill, a straggling structure with several peaks, which, if gained, would reduce the range one third. This flank movement was easy of accomplishment, for I had but to withdraw behind the knoll, compute the correct distance, and keep it between me and the game till I reached it. The plan of campaign being decided upon, it was rapidly executed, all except Sunday being left in the original position, with imperative instructions to remain as silent as the proverbial mouse. When I had selected the best situation for making correct shooting, I aimed a few inches above the waterline on the game's flanks, and fired about a foot behind the shoulder. The response to my shot was that the rhinoceros came down upon her knees—a frequent occurrence with these animals, even when the wound is not deadly—but soon after recovering herself, when

I gave her the second barrel. It took effect, for I distinctly heard the "thud" caused by the striking of the bullet. The cow now left the water, slowly at first, for the bottom was apparently very sticky, but as she gained the margin she hastened her speed. The youngster, who had not shown the slightest alarm at the reports, hastened to meet its dam, evidently thinking the mother had come ashore for the purpose of nursing it. However, these surmises were incorrect, for no sooner did young hopeful get its head under her flank than she gave her infant such a blow as sent it reeling off several paces. The child now became rebellious and revengeful for such cruel treatment, so charged full tilt at its unnatural parent, but was repulsed so effectually that for some moments it stood still, gazing with astonishment at the cause of its discomfiture. This scene took far less time to perform than it does to describe, for, although I hurried up my loading, I had not finished this necessary operation before both rapidly took their departure, the baby trotting along, so close to the dam's side, frequently almost under her chest, that it appeared marvellous how it avoided being trod upon. From the moment the rhinoceros received the first shot till she left the *vley* she had not uttered a note, but the instant she commenced to move off she gave utterance to a shrill, plaintive note, not unlike a wail; it might have been a summons for her offspring to accompany her,

or it might have been a lament forced from her by the intense pain she suffered. *Quien sabe?*

Rapidly we followed ; not a drop of blood was to be seen on the trail ; this was not surprising, for the skin of these animals frequently closes up over the bullet hole ; however, we did not want such tell-tale evidence to enable us to follow the *spoor*, for both beasts were in sight and less than half-a-mile in advance. After a time the pair turned off to the left, and entered a quantity of high reeds, such as denote the presence of water. Here spooring became difficult, if not impossible ; moreover it was exceedingly dangerous, as we had to proceed down wind, so I called my people off, being desirous of risking neither their lives nor my own.

By this time the day was pretty well spent ; in half-an-hour more the sun would dip the horizon, and we had quite five miles to traverse before we reached camp, so the last mile or two would have to be performed in darkness. For all this I could not hurry, so beautiful appeared the landscape and its surroundings, wrapt, as it were, in a celestial repose.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN ENCHANTING SCENE.

IN no other country in the world are such evenings and mornings to be seen, while innumerable brilliantly coloured birds, and various species of doves, make the air musical with their joyous hymns of praise to the setting and rising sun. The air at those hours is so clear, bright, and sparkling, as to form a wonderful contrast to the mid-day stillness and heat. Moreover, the scene was so rich and glowing in atmospheric tints, so teeming with unbounded opulence in all that gives vigour, health, and beauty to animated nature, and inspiration to the higher faculties of man as to make it entrancing.

When the sun descended and spread over mountain top draperies of its glowing light, the valleys became more and more sombre, and the notes of rejoicing that issued from the warblers' throats ceased, as if they had sung their vesper hymn, and were now prepared to seek for rest with the disappearance of "the Sun God."

More lonesome and still became the country as we progressed, our course being frequently through wooded ravines and along watercourses. Innumerable stars glittered in the sky overhead. Their

refulgence was sufficiently strong to cast many a fantastic shadow from rocks and trees, while there was a delightful balminess in the atmosphere.

I could not help thinking that the present surroundings and mysterious light must give to the eye and brain a strong imaginary resemblance of that spirit world, many of us so often paint in our night dreams. To give strength to these suppositions, long shadows would sweep across the trail, giving evidence of the presence of some nocturnal bird of prey, while mystic forms seemed to flit through the dim distance, or stand silent and still like ghostly sentinels. Again, some stump of a tree, riven asunder by a fierce tropical storm, loomed up like a grim spectre; and even the bushes assumed curious outlines, often those of weird figures, that waved back our advance with their hands, as if indicating a wish to keep out humanity from intrusion on their own spectral world. My companions, known to the world as heathens, and savages, felt the impressiveness of their surroundings as much as I did, possibly more. This I surmise from all conversation between them having ceased, while every now and then fell from their lips a mournful cadence that might have been taken for a dirge.

I cannot help thinking that if I understood the beautiful mellifluous language of the Zulus, or they had the power to express it in writing, that it would

far exceed in describing their sensations the poetry of words expressed in our tongue.

However, the yelp of some jackals and the howl of a hyæna broke the charm, and from dreams of spirit land, and surmises of what its inhabitants resembled, I was brought abruptly back to my position and surroundings. In a few minutes after the light emanating from the camp fires was visible ; soon we gained its vicinity, and so terminated the labour of the day.

Camp is very lonely now for me, although my people do their utmost to make it otherwise. The numerous little delicate attentions that they often pay cause me frequently to compare them more than favourably with my own race, and as for selfishness, they appear to be entirely without it. One day Sunday brought me some of a delicious plum-like fruit ; it had the taste of a raisin, yet was acid. I asked him why he did not bring more. " It was all," he said ; " three or four days have more." And he brought the " more "—about a dozen—at the termination of the period mentioned.

Again, we came across some wonderful mushrooms—quite as large in circumference as fashionable ladies' parasols—my henchman fetched them all home and deposited them in my hut, although there were far more than I could possibly consume, and his people were as partial to them as myself, A dozen of these little attentions I could enumerate.

but the instances above will suffice. To exaggeration they will sometimes stoop. I believe British sportsmen, whether adepts with the rod or gun, have been known to do the same—but to tell a deliberate lie these African aristocrats never condescend. These men were essentially soldiers and hunters, and their parts as such they performed to perfection. No more would they stoop to the chicanery, artifice, and prevarication in daily use by many of our purse-proud, blatant, self-righteous citizens, than they would be false in their allegiance to their king and country. Nevertheless they are keen traders, and will lose many an hour in bartering, so that they may obtain the highest price for their wares, but once the bargain is struck they will neither deviate from it nor permit another to do so.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN UNCOMMON PET.

BUT to return to the game. I left the cow rhinoceros and her calf in a jungle of reeds, through which we could not "spoor," and exceedingly dangerous to traverse. At that time I thought that I had done with this couple. Not so! as the reader will learn. Soon after breakfast a Mantatee reached camp. He was very much excited, fatigued, and out of breath. On his way from a distant and unknown kraal, his course took him near my hunting range of yesterday afternoon, where he was pursued by a rhinoceros and her calf for a considerable distance, and only escaped by gaining a tree, after having some very close chances of losing his life. All was now bustle and excitement in the laager. Assegais were sharpened and belts tightened by the people, while I lost not the opportunity to sponge out my rifle and reload it with an extra drachm of powder to each charge. Half-an-hour's sharp walk took us to where the Mantatee had parted company with the irate beasts. I expect that here my informant had had a very narrow escape, for one of the branches of the mimosa tree in which he took shelter, about five feet from the ground, was broken short off by the trunk, while

the earth around its stem was ploughed up in many instances to the depth of over a foot. The trail here was very distinct, the country comparatively speaking level, and covered with short, crisp grass, such as is only to be found on the uplands that reach to the base of foothills. Although our view was uninterrupted for nearly a mile, nothing was to be seen of the game, so the pursuit was commenced at a swinging trot, so much too fast for me that I had to insist on a more moderate gait, as I was rapidly getting into the state so familiarly known as "bellows to mend." In encountering so dangerous a foe it was absolutely necessary for me to shoot straight, and how could I do so if blown? so I ordered a halt. Having reorganised our advance, and strictly insisted upon a more moderate pace, we soon after entered a brush-covered country. Our leader, the same man who led the race yesterday, suddenly stopped, shaded his eyes with his hand from the sun, then pointed out the game. The wind being unsuitable, a considerable detour had to be made to avoid the disadvantages that might accrue from it. Sunday then handed me my rifle, I raised my head, and in front of me, at a distance of one hundred and fifty yards, were our old acquaintances. The youngster was almost between the mother's legs, while she kept restlessly turning round as if to repel an attack of some persistent foe; what it was, at the time, I could not distinguish. That the keitloa had got our

wind, and thus become uneasy, was impossible, so I put down the beast's restiveness to her suspicious nature. Being desirous of making sure work, I resolved to reduce the distance as much as possible before shooting, so crawled in considerably over fifty yards, accompanied alone by Sunday. An observation here informed me that the game had not changed their ground, although still turning from side to side as if to offer a front to an enemy. Over twenty yards closer I crawled; now or never, I thought to myself, so raised myself to shoot. To my surprise, in front of the rhinoceros I saw a lioness; ten paces scarcely separated the belligerents, while at a short distance behind her ladyship sat a very large mature lion watching the proceedings of his wife, evidently prepared to assist her if any emergency should arise to demand his aid.

This was not a moment for deliberation; prompt action was demanded. The wounded animal was far the most dangerous to us, so I resolved to kill her first. Just as I was going to press the trigger, the rhinoceros changed her position from broadside to me, half-face to the right; I consequently aimed low down, and immediately behind the ribs; with the report my victim fell upon her knees, and immediately afterwards rolled over on her side. The lioness then joined her mate; both looked surprised, but did not evince any inclination to leave. I much doubt that they knew what had produced the noise

and demise of their late antagonist, for it was evident from the way that they looked about that they had not seen the cause of the disturbance. I whispered to Sunday to keep watch upon the movements of the interesting couple, and while he did so I hurriedly reloaded. When I had capped, the pair still retained their position, although it struck me forcibly that their manner evinced uneasiness, possibly only curiosity, so I "drew a bead" upon the old gentleman's chest; as I rose to do so he saw me, his earnest gaze attracted his wife's eyes in the same direction, and she also became aware of my presence. They certainly looked a most formidable and dangerous couple. But no time was to be lost, so I fired. The old gentleman sprang head foremost into the air, with his limbs extended to their utmost limits, grasping about with them as if to clutch some invisible foe. I knew this action was indicative of death, so I gave the lady the second barrel. I shot rather too quickly, but she got its contents, for I heard the ball strike; then off she went at her very best pace, every third, or fourth stride, uttering a deep wah! wah! a guttural note alike common to tigers and leopards when alarmed.

Now my followers rushed up, joy was in their faces, but each appeared to think that there was further work or fun in store for them, for all fingered with delicacy the points and edges of their assegais, as if to ascertain their condition for immediate ser-

vice. In a moment I comprehended their intention. It was the baby rhinoceros they contemplated sacrificing with such gusto. Now this was exactly what I had resolved that they should not do, for already I had formed a decision that it should be captured alive, and, if possible, domesticated, and ultimately taken out of the country. My attendants evidently did not at first appreciate my humanity, but I gave them to understand that I must be obeyed. As we approached the carcass of the mother we soon became convinced that the youngster would give us no end of trouble, and that he was determined, cost what it might, to defend his parent's carcass from the pollution of human touch. Certainly our new antagonist was not formidable from his height, about ten hands, but he was very heavy in proportion, and possessed of an amount of speed and dexterity that was wonderful. My people evidently knew that they had their work cut out for them to secure this creature, and so approached it with considerable caution. Not so with myself; ignorance of danger, as it often does, made me too self-confident, so when the little beast charged, the Zulus dodged on one side or ran away, for the poor little thing would not go any distance from its mother's body. I was admiring one of these chevies and thinking to myself if the "boys" would only stand their ground they would intimidate the cantankerous youngster, when, like a shot, it wheeled

to the left, made an opening for its broad carcass between my legs—which, let me tell the reader, are rather long ones—and sent me spread-eagle fashion into a bush. I have had many a fall in the hunting field and in riding steeplechases, but never before got such a severe one. Of a fact, an irate young rhinoceros is a small devil incarnate, with power enough in his body to serve all the purposes of an ordinary ship's donkey engine.

We had not with us anything to tie the little beast up with, and, without making him captive, nothing further could we do, not even approach the dead mother ; so I despatched one of the Zulus to camp for a buffalo hide which I used as a ground rug, intending to cut it into *rheims*, out of which to form a couple of lassoes, with which I had no doubt we would soon bring the headstrong juvenile to reason.

While my messenger was gone we inspected the lion ; he was a splendid beast, and in the perfection of health, condition, and coat. My bullet had entered his body just over the apex of the breast-bone, and must have caused instantaneous death. I asked Sunday if it was a common occurrence for lions to attack rhinoceri ; he assured me that he had never known an instance before, but supposed that from the smell of blood, or indications of weakness, they thought that the mother was incapable of defending her young, so intended, as the Colonists

say, "jumping it." I am convinced that the marauders would have had a more difficult task on hand than they contemplated, for the little beggar was, as our cousins across the Atlantic say, "true grit," and would have, as worthily, as any Orangeman that ever stepped over the ground of Ulster, adopted and practised the motto of "No surrender."

fastidious palates. Again, contrary to general belief, they have a small swallow in proportion to their size, so that the degeneration of the constituent parts of a body very materially facilitates digestion. This *penchant*, as may well be imagined, sometimes leads to fearful battles for the possession of a decomposing carcass, which doubtlessly accounts for so many of these reptiles being disfigured by fearful scars, or, not unfrequently, the loss of a foot, or a portion of their tails.

As we float downwards the nature of the banks becomes very much changed, for dense beds of reeds, often a hundred yards deep, margin the water, a certain haunt for buffalo and rhinoceros during the heat of the mid-day sun. As I fire shot after shot at the crocodiles, such immense flocks of birds arise from these water-loving plants as to darken the sky by their density and numbers. In their flight there is something familiar to me, and recalls very different scenes and associations. Yes! there can be no mistake, they are starlings, and, as far as I can at that moment judge, identical with our home beauties.

In Cumberland, both at Greysouthen and Whitefield, where I was in the habit of spending my juvenile holidays, enormous flocks of these birds used to haunt the adjoining plantations. In my boyish imagination, I used to think there was no place on earth that could show similar scenes, but they were not a patch on the hordes that now rose from

the reeds, growing in the wilds of distant, little known, South-East Africa. They must have been literally in millions, and flushed as we reached a distance of twenty yards from them, when their evolutions on the wing afterwards, were identical with their *confrères* at home. The sight made me home-sick ; I could not take my eyes off it, while memories that were intensely pleasant crowded my brain. Several times I shut my eyes to the surroundings, to let hearing alone be my monitor, and the result was identical, for as each flock swept down in our rear to reoccupy its temporarily forsaken resting-place, the tall reeds fairly resounded with the garrulous voices of these incessant chatterers of the feathered creation. I never see a starling now that does not recall that scene as vividly, as those I was then gazing at did the early autumnal evenings in Cumberland. In truth, it was a revelation of the past, a happy past, when the future was decked in visions of the most gorgeous beauty, and prospective life seemed to be one prolonged holiday of happiness and delight. It is sad indeed that there ever should be an awakening to such dreams.

A few days afterwards I procured some specimens of these starlings, and found that, although they were not identical with the home species in *contour* and colour, they very nearly approached them. They were well known by Andersson, the

CHAPTER XXXV.

GAME WORTHY OF A SPORTSMAN'S SKILL.

THE river that we are drifting down must be the same as that designated in W. and A. K. Johnston's atlas, the Sabi, more properly Saabia, which enters the sea by several mouths about a degree of latitude south of Sofala. This river must not be confounded with another of the same name, which has its source in Zootspansberg, and flows eastward into the Limpopo, in the vicinity of Oliphants river. As we float onwards, the scene is constantly changing, although general characteristics mark the whole, viz., hilly and undulating land on the south bank even up to the water's margin, while the northern shore is girded by a mile of "savannah" before the country begins to exhibit a disposition to gaining altitude. Thus the river at our present position is tolerably free from aquatic vegetation on its southern brink; while to the north, dense reeds fringe its course. Occupied in admiring the beauties of the surrounding landscape, my attention was called by one of my attendants to the protruding head of a rhinoceros, which was evidently taking stock of the unusual sight of a raft supporting several human beings. The game was well worthy of any hunter's skill, the range short, and a vital point prominent; but I

resisted firing, as sufficient meat had been provided for the wants of my encampment. The beast in question was a keitloa (*Rhinoceros keitloa*), a pugnacious and dangerous beast when encountered on land. It is as active as the *borèle*, and quite as vindictive in its disposition, but is superior in height and consequently in power of doing mischief.

As the sun was setting, we were near our landing place, a wreath of smoke rose perpendicularly from my encampment's fire, giving a home-like look to the scene that can well be imagined; moreover, every now and then rose and fell the mellow soft voices of the natives as they sang an accompaniment to their evening toil. Church bells ringing the call to vespers or tolling the curfew are loved by association, till you get too much of the monotonous clank, clank, clank, as, for instance, is the case in Malta, when the constant din becomes monotonous and annoying, subversive of rest, and destructive to ease; but not so with the native voice, for often as I have heard it, it ever seems to lull to repose, to speak of peace and good will.

If your attendants in Africa sing when they are about their labour, more especially when it be at the termination of the day, you can conclude that they harbour no ill will towards their employers; *au contraire*, appreciate their work, and enjoy their occupation.

An upheaval of the raft that threatened to sever

it, for the *rheims* that held it together had become stretched by submersion in the water, caused us considerable anxiety ; what occasioned this approach to an accident resulted from a hippopotamus rising beneath our craft. It was a female with a youngster on her back. The old lady when she came to the surface looked wicked, and gave every indication that she would charge the obnoxious obstacle. Her distance from us was so short that it became necessary to take prompt steps to prevent such a *contretemps*, which would only have resulted in the annihilation of our raft, and the crew being sent swimming, so no alternative was left me but to fire, the result being that our would-be assailant disappeared under the surface of the water, with such energy and dispatch as to cause the wash produced by her descent to have a similar effect to that we dreaded from her attack. We saw no more of the matron, and right thankful I felt that such was the case, for a sea-cow, in its own element, is not an animal to be trifled with. By dint of sculling and poleing the raft soon after got ashore, and it was not without feelings of satisfaction and gratitude. Few persons have had the opportunities of enjoying field-sports in the perfection that I have ; in my dreams incidents in them are often recapitulated to me, in my daily walks I frequently see—in memory, at least—the most striking occurrences of my experiences repeated, but I believe nothing ever impressed