

It is a source of great delight to the Kaffirs to finish successfully a buffalo-hunt, for they are exceedingly fond of the flesh. They make a great feast upon such occasions with their retainers, wives, and friends. And although abstinent in the matter of drink, they may be said almost to intoxicate themselves with the amount of raw meat they swallow. It is worthy of notice that in honour of their guests they cooked the steaks. Fire, which has not yet appeared in the shape of a tinder-box, or patent lucifers, is yet not difficult to obtain, as a light can always be procured by a due exercise of patience and experience in woodcraft, by rubbing two jagged pieces of Umsimbiti wood together for about twenty minutes, when they will ignite, and a grand roast is the result.

All through this district you may see natives laden with monkey skins, for they are one of the most popular exercises of native speculation. Travelling from kraal to kraal in the hope of disposing of them, the traders recommend their wares, and hundreds of them are sold as clothing to form aprons. The animals are of little value as monkeys, because, both large and small, they are so exceedingly numerous in the vicinity of this river. I have without any extraordinary exertion, and within a limited space of ground, killed as many as twenty a day myself, which a Kaffir skinned for me in an incredibly short time. Another commodity in which they deal, and which are easily procurable about these woods, are porcupine quills, in

which a brisk trade is driven. The uses to which they are put are not of the most delicate or refined kind, as I have often seen the Kaffirs amuse themselves by scratching their heads; or, when in an indolent mood, which is not an uncommon case with the Kaffir, a wife has to perform this duty for her husband. These animals are easily destroyed; for their burrows are at no depth below the surface of the ground, but generally among the roots of the trees. It is common throughout Africa, as well as in the other quarters of the globe. It resists attacks from dogs, whom it is able to wound severely with its quills; but the story of its capability to shoot them forth like arrows is untrue. The quills serve the purpose above mentioned, but are also wrought into various ornamental devices for belts, pouches, and the appendages of uncivilised dress.

All over the country large game is to be procured, and ivory is plentiful. The ubejane, or black rhinoceros, is found in some parts of the country; but they are not seen near villages, and their feeding-grounds are the far-off solitudes on the banks of rivers. Civilisation has driven them far from their original haunts. I once witnessed a remarkable fight between two of these brutes; the roar they uttered was terrible to listen to, their continued stamping and bellowing echoed round the mountains, and could have been heard for miles, and the water in which they indulged their propensity perfectly foamed as if boil-

ing. This fight was one of the grandest displays of animal life I ever beheld, and it was of long duration, as I heard their roaring during the whole night, only ceasing when I had myself sunk into a fitful and uneasy slumber towards daybreak.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Umzimkulu.—I live as a Kaffir.—Bathing.—Hair-dressing.—A Marriage.—Missionaries.—Superstitions.—Burials.—A Trial.—Witchcraft.—Kaffir Doctor.

My adventures up to this point must have appeared to the reader extremely commonplace; and the constant succession of mere traveller's difficulties, and the accounts of sport, which pictures only the realities of a rough country, must have palled upon the appetite. I come to a time when my acquaintance with Kaffir life became far more intimate, and more interesting than it had been.

Upon the banks of the Umzimkulu I took up my quarters under an unwonted pressure of hospitality, which I felt was not artificial, with a Kaffir chief who had a large kraal and fine herds. Community of tastes had something to do with the beginning of our intimacy, no doubt; for I still had some few beasts remaining, which had escaped the ravages of disease, the dangers of travel, and the eye of the dealers, which the "inkosi" was anxious to purchase. I let him have them (and should have willingly parted with more, for I was almost tired of commerce) at a

Charles Hamilton

1870

Sketches of life and sport in

South-Eastern Africa

edited by F. S. H. Price

London, Chapman and Hall

pp. 1-xii, 1-268