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MISSIONARY TRAVELS
AND RESEARCHES IN
SOUTH AFRICA

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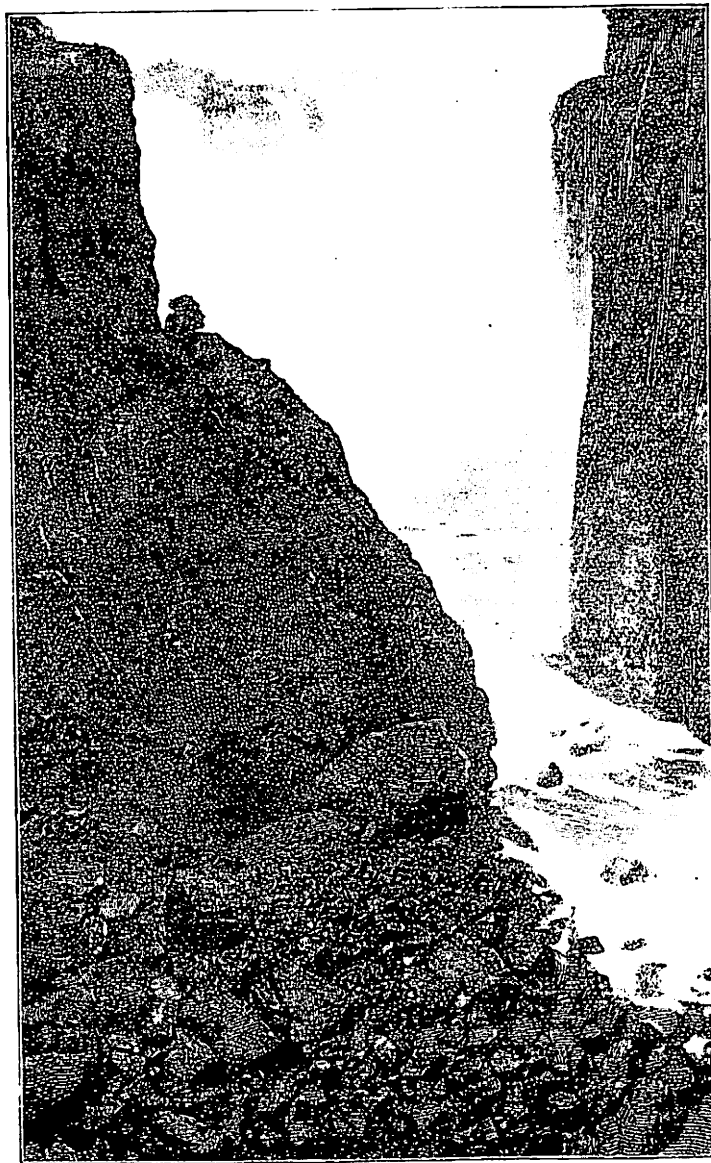
WITH NOTES BY FREDERICK STANLEY ARNOT

ILLUSTRATED



Mode in which the female Hippopotamus carries her calf while young

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Frontispiece

THE VICTORIA FALLS, ZAMBESI RIVER.

My principal object was to visit Sebituane, the great chief of the Makololo, who was reported to live some two hundred miles beyond Lake Ngami. The day after our arrival I applied to Lechulatebe for guides. He objected, fearing lest other white men should go thither also and give Sebituane guns; whereas he hoped by obtaining a monopoly of firearms to get the ascendancy. He at last unwillingly promised to give us guides, then again declined, and sent men to the Bayeiye with orders to refuse us a passage across the river. I tried hard to form a raft, but the dry wood was so worm-eaten that it would not bear the weight of a single person. I worked many hours in the water, for I was not then aware of the number of alligators in the Zouga, and never think of my labours without feeling thankful that I escaped their jaws. The season was now far advanced; and as Mr. Oswell volunteered to go to the Cape and bring up a boat, we resolved to make our way south again.

Coming down the Zouga, we had time to look at its banks. They are very beautiful, and resemble in many parts the river Clyde above Glasgow. The side to which the water swings is perpendicular, the other is sloping and grassy. The Bayeiye dig pitfalls on these declivities to entrap the animals as they come to drink. The holes are seven or eight feet deep, about as long at the mouth, and three or four feet wide. They gradually decrease as they descend, till they are only about a foot in width at the bottom. This occasions the animal to wedge himself firmly in by his weight and struggles. They are usually in pairs, with a wall a foot thick between the ends of each, in order that, if the beast, when he feels his fore legs descending, should try to save himself, he may spring forward into the second. All the excavated earth is removed to a distance, so as not to excite suspicion in the animals. Reeds and grass are laid across the top; and are then strewn with sand, which is watered, that it may appear exactly like the surrounding ground. Some of our party plumped, more than once, into these pitfalls, even when searching for them that they might open them and prevent the loss of our cattle. Old elephants have been known to precede the herd and whisk off the coverings of the traps on each side the whole way down to the water.

The trees which adorn the banks of the Zouga are magnificent. Two enormous baobabs (*Adansonia digitata*), or mowanas, grow near its confluence with the lake. The largest was 76 feet in girth. The palmyra appears here and there. The mokuchong or moshoma bears an edible fruit of indifferent quality, but the tree itself would be a fine specimen of arboreal beauty in any part of the world. The trunk is often converted into canoes. The motsouri, which produces a pink plum containing a pleasant acid juice, resembles an orange tree in its dark evergreen foliage, and a cypress in its form. It was now winter-time, and we saw nothing of the flora. Wild indigo abounded, as indeed it does over large tracts of Africa. It is called mohetólo, or the "changer," by the boys, who colour their ornaments of straw with the juice. There are two kinds of cotton in the country, and the Mashona, who convert it into cloth, dye it blue with this plant.

We found the elephants in prodigious numbers on the southern bank. They come to drink by night, and throw large quantities of water over their bodies. While enjoying the luxury they may be heard screaming with delight. They evince their horror of pitfalls by proceeding in a straight line to the Desert, and never diverge till they are eight or ten miles off. At the Limpopo, to the south-east, they are upwards of twelve feet high; here they were only eleven; and further north they are only nine feet. The koodoo, or tolo, seemed smaller than those to which we had been accustomed. We saw specimens of the *kuabaoba*, or straight-horned rhinoceros (*R. Oswellii*), which is a variety of the white (*R. simus*); and we found that, from the horn being projected downwards, it did not obstruct the line of vision, which enables this species to be much more wary than its neighbours.

We discovered an entirely new and beautiful species of water-antelope, called leché or lechwi. It is of a light brownish-yellow colour. The chest, belly, and orbits are nearly white. The horns, which are exactly like those of the *Aigoceros ellipsiprimus*, the water-buck, or tumoga of the Bechuanas, rise from the head with a slight bend backwards, and then curve forwards at the points. From the horns to the withers the male has a small mane of the same

the forest there is heard a faint but distinct hum, which tells of insect joy. One may see many whisking about in the clear sunshine among the green glancing leaves; but there are invisible myriads, all brimful of enjoyment, working with never-tiring mandibles on leaves, and stalks, and beneath the soil. Indeed the universality of organic life seems like a mantle of happy existence encircling the world, and betokening the presence of our benignant Father's smile on all the works of His hands.

The birds of the tropics have been described as generally wanting in power of song; but this was certainly not applicable to many parts in Londa, though there birds are remarkably scarce, while here the chorus, or body of song, though not so harmonious, was not much smaller in volume than it is in England. Some of the notes resemble those of the lark, and indeed there are several of that family; two others are not unlike those of the thrush. One brought the chaffinch to my mind, and another the robin; but their songs are intermixed with several curious abrupt notes unlike anything English. One utters deliberately "peek, pak, pok"; another has a single note like a stroke on a violin-string. The mokwa reza gives forth a screaming set of notes like our blackbird when disturbed, then concludes with what the natives say is "pula, pula" (rain, rain), but more like "weep, weep, weep." Then there is the loud cry of francolins, the "pumpuru, pumpuru" of turtle-doves, and the "chiken, chiken, chik, churr, churr" of the honey-guide. Occasionally near villages we hear a kind of mocking-bird imitating the calls of domestic fowls. These African birds have not been wanting in song so much as in poets to sing their praises. In hot dry weather, or at midday when the sun is fierce, all are still: but with the first good shower all burst forth at once into merry lays and loving courtship. The early mornings and the cool evenings are their favourite times for singing. The majority have decidedly a sober plumage, though collectors, having generally selected the gaudiest as the most valuable, have conveyed the idea that the birds of the tropics for the most part possess gorgeous plumage.

15th.—Several of my men have been bitten by spiders and other insects without any worse result than pain. I par-

ticularly noticed a large caterpillar, called lezuntabuea, having a dark body covered with long grey hairs, resembling a porcupine in miniature. If it is touched the hairs run into the pores of the skin, inflicting sharp pricks. Some others have a similar means of defence; and when the hand comes in contact with them, as in passing a bush on which they happen to be, the effect resembles the stinging of nettles. From the great number of caterpillars a considerable variety of butterflies is produced, none of them, however, being remarkable for the gaudiness of their colours.

In passing along we crossed the hill Vungue or Mvungwe, which forms the watershed between those sand-rivulets which run to the N.E. and others which flow southward, as the Kapopo, Ue, and Due, which run into the Luia. We found that many elephants had been feeding on a black-coloured plum called Mokoronga, having purple juice and a delicious flavour. It grows most abundantly throughout this part of the country, and the natives eagerly devour it, as it is said to be perfectly wholesome, or, as they express it, "pure fat." Though hardly larger than a cherry, we found that the elephants had stood picking them off patiently by the hour. We observed the foot-prints of a black rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros bicornis*, Linn.) and her calf, an animal which is remarkably scarce in all the country north of the Zambesi. The white rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sinuatus* of Burchell), or Mohóhu of the Bechuanas, is quite extinct here, and will soon become unknown in the country to the south. It feeds almost entirely on grasses, and, being of a timid unsuspecting disposition, falls an easy prey on the introduction of firearms. The black possesses a more savage nature, and from its greater wariness keeps its ground better than its more timid neighbour. Four varieties of the rhinoceros are enumerated by naturalists, but my observation led me to conclude that there are but two; and that the other supposed species consist simply of differences in size, age, and the direction of the horns, just as if we were to reckon the short-horned cattle a different species from the Alderneys or the Highland breed. I find, however, that Dr. Smith, the best judge in these matters, is quite decided as to the propriety of the subdivision into three or four species. The absence of both these rhinoceroses among

the reticulated rivers in the central valley may be accounted for by the circumstance that they would be such an easy prey to the natives in their canoes at the periods of inundation; but we cannot so readily explain the absence of the giraffe and the ostrich on the high open lands of the Batoka, north of the Zambesi, unless we give credence to the native report that another network of waters exists still further north near Lake Shuia, which has prevented their progress southwards. The Batoka have no name for the giraffe or the ostrich in their language; yet, as the former exists in considerable numbers in the angle formed by the Zambesi and Chobe, they may have come from the north along the western ridge. The Chobe would seem to have been too narrow to act as an obstacle to the giraffe, supposing it to have come into that district from the south; but the broad river into which that stream flows seems always to have presented an impassable barrier to both the giraffe and the ostrich, though they abound on its southern border, both in the Kalahari Desert and the country of Mashona.

We passed through large tracts of Mopane country, and my men caught a great many of the birds called Korwé (*Tockus erythrorhynchus*) in their breeding-places in holes in the mopane-trees. On the 19th we passed the nest of a korwe, just ready for the female to enter: the orifice was plastered on both sides, but a space was left exactly the size of the bird's body. The hole in the tree was in every case found to be prolonged some distance upwards above the opening, and thither the korwe always fled to escape being caught. The first time that I saw this bird was at Kolobeng; as I was standing by a tree, a native exclaimed, "There is the nest of a korwe." I saw only a slit, about half an inch wide and three or four inches long, in a slight hollow of the tree. Thinking the word korwe denoted some small animal, I waited with interest to see what he would extract; he broke the clay which surrounded the slit, put his arm into the hole, and brought out a *Tockus*, or red-beaked hornbill, which he killed. He informed me that when the female enters her nest the male plasters up the entrance, leaving only a narrow slit by which to feed his mate, exactly suiting the form of his beak. The female makes a nest of her own feathers, lays her eggs, hatches them, and remains with the

young till they are fully fledged; during all which time, stated to be two or three months, the male continues to feed her and the young family. The prisoner generally becomes quite fat, while the poor slave of a husband gets so lean that on any sudden lowering of the temperature he is benumbed, falls down, and dies. This is the month in which the female enters the nest; she comes forth about the end of April, at the period when the corn is ripe; indeed, her appearance abroad with her young is one of the signs for knowing when harvest ought to commence. She is said sometimes to hatch her eggs at intervals, the second couple of young ones making their appearance just when the first are ready to leave the nest; in this case the female comes out with the first couple, the orifice is again plastered up, and both male and female attend to the wants of the young which are left.

The honey-guides are very assiduous in their friendly offices, and enabled my men to get a large quantity of honey; but though bees abound, the wax of these parts forms no article of trade, as it does in Londa. It is probable that the good market for wax afforded to Angola by the churches of Brazil led to the gradual development of that branch of commerce there. The reports brought by my other party from Loanda of the value of wax induced some of my present companions to bring small quantities of it to Tete, but, not being properly prepared, it was so dark coloured that no one would purchase it; I afterwards saw a little at Kilimane, which had been procured from the natives somewhere in this region. Though we were now approaching the Portuguese settlement, the country was still full of large game. Lions and hyenas abounded; the former are never destroyed, as the people believe that the souls of their chiefs enter into them, and that a chief may even metamorphose himself into a lion, kill any one he chooses, and then return to the human form; whenever therefore they see one they commence the usual salutation of clapping their hands. As an evidence of the numbers of these animals I may mention that we saw little huts made in trees, indicating the places where some of the inhabitants have slept when benighted in the fields. As my men frequently left the line of march in order to catch korwes, or follow the honey-guides, they