

THE MISSION:
OR,
SCENES IN AFRICA.

WRITTEN FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

BY
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VOLUME I.

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dwelling, to apprise my wife of the latest intelligence, confirming all that had been said before respecting my fate, and to comfort her under the distressing dispensation. At this affecting crisis, while both were standing in the centre of the room, the one relating, the other weeping, I opened the door, bathed in perspiration, covered with dust, and in a state of complete exhaustion. 'Oh, dear!' cried our friend; 'is it he—or is it his spirit?' I must, my dear Sir, leave to your imagination the scene which followed."

"Yes, Sir," said Mr. S., folding up the letter; "a missionary's wife, who follows him into such scenes and such perils and privations, does, indeed, 'cleave to her husband.'"

"Indeed she does," replied Mr. Swinton; but we will tax you no longer, my dear Sir. Good-night."

CHAPTER XII.

ON the following day, a little before noon, loud shouts and men dancing and calling out the titles of the king of the Caffres announced his approach. These men were a sort of heralds, who invariably preceded him on a visit of ceremony. A band of warriors, armed with their assaguays and shields, next made their appearance, and then Hinza, accompanied by fifty of his chief councillors: with the exception of their long krosses of beast-skins thrown over their shoulders, they were all naked, and each daubed with grease and red ochre. As soon as they arrived in front of the Mission-house, they sat down in a circle

on each side of the Caffre king, who was treated with marked respect by all, and by the common people in particular who assembled on his presence. Every one who happened to pass by gave what was termed a 'salute' of honour to the king, who did not appear to consider that it required any acknowledgment on his part.

Our travellers, accompanied by the missionary, advanced into the circle, and saluted his majesty. Mr. S. then explained the object of their journey, and their wish that a small party of the king's warriors should accompany them on their expedition. As soon as the speech was ended, a few pounds of coloured beads, a roll of tobacco, two pounds of snuff, and some yards of scarlet cloth were laid before his majesty as a present. Hinza nodded his head with approval when the articles were spread before him, and then turned to his councillors, with whom he whispered some time, and then he replied, "that the strange white men should pass through his country without fear, that his warriors should accompany them as far as they wished to go; but," he added, "do the strangers know that there is disorder in the country beyond?"

Mr. S. replied that they did, and were anxious to go, and return as soon as possible on that account.

Hinza replied, "It is well; if there is danger, my warriors will let them know—if it is necessary, they will fight for them—if the enemy is too strong, the white men must return."

Hinza then ordered some of his councillors to take charge of the presents, and inquired of Mr. S. how many warriors they wished to have, and when they wished to go.

The reply was, that fifty warriors would be sufficient, and that they wished to depart on the following morning. "It is well," replied Hinza; "fifty warriors are enough, for my men eat a great deal—they shall be ready."

The council then broke up, and the king, having shaken hands with our travellers, departed with his train: towards the evening, an old cow was sent to them as a present from his majesty. The Hottentots soon cut it up and devoured it. Every thing was now arranged for their immediate departure.

The next morning, at break of day, the band of Caffre warriors were all in readiness, each with his shield and three assaguays in his hand. They were all fine, tall young men, from twenty to thirty years of age. Alexander desired Mr. S. to tell them, that if they behaved well and were faithful, they should every one receive a present when they were dismissed; a notification which appeared to give general satisfaction. The oxen had already been yoked, and taking leave of the worthy missionary, our travellers mounted their horses, and resumed their journey. For the whole day they proceeded along the banks of the Kae River, which ran its course through alternate glens and hills clothed with fine timber, and as they were on an eminence, looking down upon the river, the head Caffre warrior, who had, with the others, hung up his shield at the side of the wagon, and now walked by our travellers with his assaguay in his hand, pointed out to them, as the sun was setting behind a hill, two or three large black masses on the further bank of the river.

"What are they, and what does he say?"

"Sea-cows," replied the interpreter.

"*Hippopotami!* We must have a shot at them, Wilmot," cried the Major.

"To be sure; tell them we will stop and kill one if we can," said Wilmot to the interpreter.

"We shall want one to feed our army," said Swinton, laughing, "or our sheep will soon be devoured."

The Caffres were all immediately in motion, running down to the bank of the river, about a quarter of a mile distant; they swam across, and there remained waiting till our travellers should give the word.

The animals laid on a muddy bank, at a turn of the river, like so many swine asleep, some of them out, and some partly in and partly out of the water. As they were huddled together, they looked more like masses of black rock than any thing else. Two laid considerably apart from the others, and it was towards these two that the Caffres, who had crossed the river, crept until they were in the high reeds, but a few yards from them. Henderson and Wilmot, with some of the Hottentots, descended the ravine on their side of the river, opposite to where the animals laid, and as soon as they were on the bank, being then within one hundred yards of them, they levelled and fired. At the report, all the animals started up from their beds as if astonished at the noise, which they had not been accustomed to. Three or four instantly plunged into the deep water, but the others, apparently half asleep, stood for a few seconds as if not knowing what course to take: two of them were evidently wounded, as they rushed into the water; for they did not remain below, but rose to the surface immediately, as if in great agony. They appeared anxious to get out of the water altogether, and tried so to do, but fearing the people

on the river's banks, they darted in again. In the meantime, at the first report of the guns, the two which laid apart from the others with their heads towards the river, as soon as they rose on their legs, were pierced with several assaguays by the concealed Caffres, and plunged into the water with the spears remaining in their bodies. These also rose, and floundered like the others; and as their heads appeared above, they were met with the unerring rifle of the Major and whole volleys from Wilmot and the Hottentots, till, exhausted from the loss of blood, they floated dead upon the surface.

The Caffres waited till the bodies had been borne some hundred yards down the stream, that they might not be attacked when in the water by the remainder of the herd, and then swam off, and pushed the bodies on shore. This was a very seasonable supply of provisions for so large a band of people, but those who belonged to the caravan were not the only parties who benefited: all the Caffres of the surrounding hamlets hastened to the river, and carried off large quantities of the flesh of the animals; there was, however, more than enough for all, and for the wolves and hyænas after they had taken what they chose. It was so late before the animals were cut up, that they decided upon remaining where they were that night, for now that they had the Caffre warriors with them, they had no fear as to losing their oxen, the king having stated that his men should be responsible for them.

Large fires were lighted, and the Caffres and Hottentots, all mingled together, were busy roasting, boiling, and frying the flesh of the Hippopotamus, and eating it as fast as it was cooked, so that they were complete-

y gorged before they laid down to sleep; Wilmot had also given them a ration of tobacco each, which had added considerably to the delight of the feast.

"It is not bad eating by any means," said the Major, as they were at supper.

"No; it is something like old veal," replied Swinton. "Now, what is Omrah about? He is after some mischief by the way he creeps along."

"A monkey is a fool to that boy," observed the Major, "and he appears to know how to imitate every animal he has ever heard."

"Did you hear the dance he led some of the Hottentots on Sunday evening, when we were at the Mission?"

"No; what was that?"

"Bremen told me of it; I thought he would have died with laughing. You are aware that there is a species of bird here which they call the honey bird, by naturalists the *cuculus indicator*; do you not remember I showed you a specimen which I was preserving?"

"You have showed us so many specimens, that I really forget."

"Well, I should have given you at the same time the natural history of the bird. It is very partial to honey, upon which it lives as much as it can; but as the bees make their hives in the trunks of old decayed trees, and the hole they enter by is very small, the bird cannot obtain it without assistance. Its instinct induces it to call in the aid of man, which it does by a peculiar note, like cher-cher-cher, by which it gives notice that it has found out a bee-hive. The natives of Africa well know this, and as soon as the bird flies

close to them, giving out this sound, they follow it; the bird leads them on, perching every now and then, to enable them to keep up with him, until it arrives at the tree, over which it flutters without making any more noise."

"How very curious!"

"Little Bushman knows this as well as the Hottentots, and hearing that they were going out in search of honey, he went before them into the wood concealing himself, and imitating the note of the bird so exactly, that the Hottentots went on following it for several miles, wondering how it was that the bird should lead them such a distance, but unwilling to give up the pursuit. About sunset, he had brought them back to the very edge of the wood from whence they had started, when he showed himself about one hundred yards ahead of them, dancing, capering, and tumbling so like Begum, that they thought it was her before them, and not him; he gained the caravan again without their knowing who played them the trick; but he told Swanevelt, who speaks his language, and Swanevelt told Bremen."

"Capital!" said the Major; "well, he is after some trick now, depend upon it."

"He has a great talent for drawing," observed Alexander.

"A very great one; I have given him a pencil and occasionally a piece of paper, and he draws all the birds, so that I can recognize them; but you must know that all the Bushmen have that talent, and that their caves are full of the sketches of all sorts of animals, remarkably characteristic. The organ of imitation is very strongly developed in the Bushmen, which

accounts for their talents as draftsimen, and Omrah's remarkable imitative powers."

"Do you then believe in phrenology, Swinton?" said Alexander.

"I neither believe nor disbelieve in that, and many more modern discoveries of the same kind; I do not think it right to reject them or to give blind credence. Not a day passes but some discovery excites our wonder and admiration, and points out to us how little we do know. The great fault is, that when people have made a discovery to a certain extent, they build upon it, as if all their premises were correct; whereas, they have, in fact, only obtained a mere glimmering to light them to a path which may some future day lead to knowledge. That the general principles of phrenology are correct may be fairly assumed, from the examination of the skulls of men and animals and of different men; but I give no credence to all the divisions and subdivisions which have, in my opinion, been most presumptuously marked out by those who profess, and of course fully believe, the full extent of these supposed discoveries."

"And Mesmerism?" said Alexander.

"I make the same reply; there is *something* in it, that is certain, but nothing yet sufficiently known to warrant any specific conclusions to be drawn."

"There is a great deal of humbug in it," said the Major.

"So there is in all sciences; when truth fails them and they are at fault, they fill up the hiatus with supposition; which is, as you term it, humbug."

"Well, I vote that we return to our wagons; every body appears fast asleep except us three."

Such was not, however, the case, for they had not been half an hour on their mattresses, before they were awakened by loud cries of "help," which made them seize their guns and jump out of the wagons without waiting for their clothes.

The Hottentots and Caffres were so full of hippopotamus flesh, that the noise did not awake but a small portion of them, and these only turned round and stared about without getting up, with the exception of Bremen, who was on his feet, and, with his gun in his hand, running in the direction of the cries. He was followed by our travellers, and they soon came up with the object of their search, which proved to be no other than Big Adam, the Hottentot; and as soon as they perceived his condition, which they could do by the light of the fires still burning, they all burst out laughing so excessively, that they could not help him.

That it was the work of little Omrah, there was no doubt, for Big Adam had not forgotten the former trick the boy had played him, and had more than once, when he caught the boy, given him a good cuffing. Big Adam was on the ground, dragged away by two of the largest dogs; Omrah had taken the bones he could find with most flesh upon them belonging to the hippopotamus, and had tied them with leather thongs to the great toes of Big Adam as he lay snoring after his unusual repast. He had then waited till all were asleep, and had let loose the two largest dogs, which were always tied with the others under the wagons, and not over-fed, to make them more watchful.

The dogs had prowled about for food, and had fallen in with these large bones, which they immediately seized, and were dragging away, that they might

make their repast without interruption ; but in attempting to drag away the bones, they had dragged Big Adam some yards by his great toes, and the pain and fright, for the Hottentot thought they were hyænas or wolves, had caused him thus to scream for help. Bremen divided the thongs with his knife, and the dogs ran off growling with the bones, and Adam stood again upon his feet, still so much terrified as not to be able to comprehend the trick which had been played him. Our travellers having indulged their mirth, retired once more to their resting-places. The Major found Omrah and Begum both in their corners of the wagon, the former pretending to be fast asleep, while the latter was chattering and swearing at the unusual disturbance.

At daylight the next morning, they resumed their journey. Big Adam walked rather stiff, and looked very sulky. Omrah had perched himself on a tilt of the baggage-wagon with Begum, and was quite out of the Hottentot's reach ; for Bremen had told the others what had happened, and there had been a general laugh against Big Adam, who vowed vengeance against little Omrah. The country was now very beautiful and fertile, and the Caffre hamlets were to be seen in all directions. Except visits from the Caffres, who behaved with great decorum when they perceived that the caravan was escorted by the king's warriors, and who supplied them nearly every day with a bullock for the use of the people, no adventure occurred for four days, when they crossed the Bashee or St. John's River, to which the territories of Hinza extended ; but although the tribes beyond did not acknowledge his authority, they respected the large

force of the caravan, and were much pleased at receiving small presents of tobacco and snuff.

Milk, in baskets, was constantly brought in by the women, for the Caffres weave baskets of so close a texture, that they hold any liquid, and are the only utensil used for that purpose. At the Bashee river, after they had passed the ford, they remained one day to hunt the hippopotami, and were successful; only Major Henderson, who was not content to hunt during the day, but went out at night, had a narrow escape. He was in one of the paths, and had wounded a female, and was standing, watching the rising to the surface of the wounded animal, for it was bright moonlight, when the male, which happened to be feeding on the bank above, hearing the cry of the female, rushed right down the path upon the Major; fortunately for him, the huge carcass of the animal gave it such an ungovernable degree of velocity, as to prevent it from turning to the right hand or left. It passed within a yard of the Major, sweeping the bushes and underwood, so as to throw him down as it passed. The Major got up again, it may be truly said, more frightened than hurt; but at all events, he had had enough of hippopotamus-hunting for that night, for he recovered his gun, and walked back to the wagon, thanking Heaven for his providential escape.

The next morning, Swanevelt and Bremen went down the banks of the river, and discovered the body of the hippopotamus, which they dragged on shore, and, returning to the wagons, sent the Caffres to cut it up; but before the Caffres belonging to the caravan could arrive there, they found that the work had been done for them by the natives, and that nothing was

left but the bones of the animal; but this is always considered fair in the Caffreland; every one helps himself when an elephant or other large animal is killed, although he may have had no hand in its destruction. The number of elephant paths now showed them that they were surrounded by these animals, and the Caffres of the country said that there were large herds close to them.

It was therefore proposed by the Major, that they should have a grand elephant hunt, at which all the Caffres of their own party and the natives of the country should assist. This proposal was joyfully received by all, especially the natives, who were delighted at such an opportunity of having the assistance of the white men's guns; and the next day was appointed for the sport. By the advice of the natives, the caravan proceeded some miles down to the eastward, to the borders of a very thick forest, where they stated that the elephants were to be found.

They arrived at the spot in the afternoon, and every one was busy in making preparations for the following day. The Hottentots, who had been used to the sport, told long stories to those who had not, and among the rest, Big Adam spoke much of his prowess and dexterity. Uncommonly large fires were lighted that night, for fear that the elephants should break into the camp. All night their cries were to be heard in the forest, and occasionally the breaking of the branches of the trees proved that they were close to the caravan. Begum, who was particularly alive to danger, crept to Major Henderson's bed, and would remain there all night, although he several times tried to drive her away. Notwithstanding continued alarms, the caravan was, however, unmolested.