AN

EXPEDITION

OF

DISCOVERY

INTO THE

INTERIOR OF AFRICA,

THROUGH THE HITHERTO UNDESCRIBED

COUNTRIES OF THE GREAT NAMAQUAS, BOSCHMANS, AND HILL DAMARAS.

PERFORMED

Under the auspices of Her Majesty's Government,

AND

THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY;

AND CONDUCTED BY

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EXPEDITION OF DISCOVERY,

ETC.

CHAPTER I.

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THE black rhinoceros, whose domains we seemed now to have invaded, resembles in general appearance an immense hog; twelve feet and a half long, six feet and a half high, girth eight feet and a half, and of the weight of half a

dozen bullocks; its body is smooth, and there is no hair seen except at the tips of the ears, and the extremity of the tail. The horns of concreted hair, the foremost curved like a sabre, and the second resembling a flattened cone, stand on the nose and above the eye; in the young animals the foremost horn is the longest, whilst in the old ones they are of equal length, namely, a foot and a half or more: though the older the rhinoceros the shorter are its horns, as they wear them by sharpening them against the trees, and by rooting up the ground with them when in a passion.

When the rhinoceros is quietly pursuing his way through his favourite glades of mimosa bushes, (which his hooked upper lip enables him readily to seize, and his powerful grinders to masticate), his horns fixed loosely on his skin, make a clapping noise by striking one against the other; but on the approach of danger, if his quick ear or keen scent make him aware of the vicinity of a hunter, the head is quickly raised, and the horns stand stiff and ready for combat on his terrible front.

The rhinoceros is often accompanied by a sentinel to give him warning, a beautiful green-backed and blue-winged bird, about the size of a jay, which sits on one of his horns. When he is standing at his ease among the thick bushes, or rubbing himself up against a dwarf tree, stout and strong like himself, the bird attends him that it may feed on the insects which either fly about him, or which are found in the wrinkles of his head and neck. The creeping hunter, stealthily approaching on the leeward side, carefully notes the motions of the sentinel-bird; for he may hear though he cannot see the rhinoceros behind the leafy screen. If the monster moves his head slightly and without alarm, the bird flies from his horns to his shoulder, remains there a short time, and then returns to its former strange perch; but if the bird, from its elevated position and better eyes, notes the approach of danger, and flies up in the air suddenly, then let the hunter beware; for the rhinoceros instantly rushes desperately and fearlessly to wherever he hears the branches crack.

Thick and clumsy though the legs of the

rhinoceros are, yet no man unless possessed of the powers of my chief huntsman, Henrick Buys, can hope to escape him by fleetness of foot on open ground; once he has a man fairly in his wicked eye, and there is no broken ground or bush for concealment, destruction is certain. The monster, snorting and uttering occasionally a short fiendish scream of rage, bears down in a cloud of dust, tearing up the ground with his curved plough-share, kicking out his hind legs in a paroxysm of passion, and thrusting his horns between the trembling legs of his flying victim, he hurls him into the air as if he were a rag, and the poor wretch falls many yards off. The brute now looks about for him, and if there is the least movement of life, he runs at him, rips him open, and tramples him to a mummy!

In general, the moment a hunter fires at a rhinoceros, or hurls a lance at him from behind a rock or tree, he runs off as fast as he can, and if his gun is heavy, he drops it the better to escape to a place of safety, and from whence he can watch the movements of the rhinoceros.

By Behemoth, "the chief of the ways of God,"

is meant the rhinoceros. "Surely the mountains bring him forth, where all the beasts of the field play; he lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reeds and fens. Behold he drinketh up a river and hasteth not; he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth." But the rhinoceros "which eateth grass as an ox" is the white rhinoceros, (which we had yet to see), larger but not so dangerous as the black species with which we had now to do.

When the elephant and the rhinoceros come together and are mutually enraged, the rhinoceros avoiding the blow of the trunk and the thrust of the tusks, dashes at the elephant's belly and rips it up. The lion of course never thinks of attacking the rhinoceros; and the Boschmans say that although found in the same haunts, they give way to one another. I thought then that the rhinoceros had no superior; none that he need fear save all-destroying man; when the Buys said—"Once at the Great Fountain, where we had gone to hunt, we found a rhinoceros which had just been killed by a hyena.

The hyena is in general a cowardly animal, and is scared even by a cow when it threatens with its horns in defence of its calf; but when the hyena is very hungry it seems desperate, and will attack any thing. The one which had killed the rhinoceros had followed it for some time, (as we saw by the footmarks), and had bitten it behind with its terrible jaws, till the rhinoceros fell and painfully died."

Having thus sufficiently introduced the black rhinoceros to my sporting reader, let us repose for a little under the refreshing shade of the trees of the Chuntop, before we endeavour to fight our way through the Bull's Mouth Pass.

* * * * * *

Many of the people were employed during the remainder of the 30th of March in *vleking* or cutting the meat of the game we had killed into thin flaps or steaks, and hanging it on the bushes to dry; and as "the ox is not muzzled whilst treading out the corn," so these fleshers' jaws were as fully employed as their hands. The most useless as hunters had the best appetites;

and old Aaron, the (so called) chief guide and butcher, ate till he could hardly waddle from bush to bush to cover them with red meat.

Aaron had a ten-pound appetite, or one of two ostrich eggs-calibre, and one ostrich egg is equal to four-and-twenty hen's eggs! If the reader is sceptical about the capacity of stomach of the Namaquas, let him see what the Esquimaux can do in the eating way, in the very interesting narrative of my friend Captain Back, and of other heroes of the pole.

In the evening I went with "oud Jan," Magasee, and three Namaquas into the pass to reconnoitre, and to look out for the best means of dragging the waggon through it. The valley at first was very narrow and rugged, with loose stones and bushes. Pathways cleared through the stones by the feet of wild beasts, led along the course of the river; and here and there, close to these paths, were circular enclosures of loose stones, about three feet high only, behind which the Boschmans had been in the habit of concealing themselves to hurl their lances into the bodies of the rhinoceros and other animals

as they passed. We started steenboks, and saw zebras grazing on a slope before us on our right, and passed over the fresh prints of lions. The valley then opened, and became romantic and beautiful. It was of an oval shape, and three or four miles in extent before it again contracted, and it was full of various species of acacia, standing singly and in groups, whilst the mountains of indurated sandstone which hung over it presented bare cliffs among scattered foliage.

We passed every instant the favourite resting-places of the rhinoceros, whose disposition is so spiteful that it kicks to pieces even what it deposits; and it seems always to return to the same place for the purpose.

We crossed the Chuntop, and looking to the left, I saw, eating its evening meal off a thorn bush, a rhinoceros within one hundred yards of us. I whispered to Jan Buys, and we made ready; but the watchful monster did not charge as we expected, being young, and made off before we had time to *becreep* it. After an hour's progress through this first Valley of the Pass, (the entire length of the Pass is about forty miles,) we

returned towards the outspan place. Two of the men in lagging behind, were pursued close up to us by a couple of old baboons, which had descended from some caves in Mount Michell.

In my absence in the Pass, many of the hunters had resumed the sport on the plain, and two more rhinoceroses were mortally wounded. The people ate apparently ten pounds of flesh each in as many hours; talked of their day's adventures, and how this one had ran off behind rocks or bushes, or how another had got into a tree, for fear of the rhinoceros; and with smoking, and pounding the bones on flat stones to lick the marrow, by drawing the stone across their lips: they were awake all night, made a noise like that in a shoemaker's shop with hammering the bones, and effectually kept off the lions or other nocturnal prowlers.

> "While the grim satyr-faced baboon
> Sat gibbering to the rising moon,
> Or chid with hoarse and angry cry
> The hunters who beneath him lie."

As we had plenty of wild meat for some days, I did not occupy myself next day on the plain in

assisting to destroy wild animals, which we could not have carried off with us. I was very anxious to get through the Pass, to imprint its wild vallies for the first time with a waggon spoor, and to reach the sea as soon as I could, where, at Walvisch Bay, I expected to communicate with a ship of war, which had been kindly promised by Admiral Sir Patrick Campbell, for the assistance of the expedition.

In the morning of the 31st (having no time to lose in mere sport, though the temptation was strong), I mustered forty of the people, and proceeded with them to the left of Mt. Michell, to clear a road for the waggon. We cut down trees, lopped off branches, and removed stones for several hours, till the sun drove us in a fever of heat back to our "lay place." In the afternoon we inspanned, crossed the Chuntop, dragged the waggon down the first valley, again crossed the river, ascended a rugged slope, crossed a neck, and descending again on the other side, found ourselves in another beautiful valley, but of many miles in extent, running east and west, two or three miles broad, and enclosed with lofty

mountains. At sun down, whilst outspanning beside a pool of the Chuntop, there was an alarm of a rhinoceros near the waggon; a few hunters ran to where he was; hunting frocks, jackets, and shoes, were cast off, and leather trousers were rolled up to prevent noise; the rhinoceros was *becrept*, the hunters sat down behind the bushes, long guns were rested on them and presented at the monster, which, unconscious of danger, was quietly eating from a bush, and three balls through the backbone and jaw, stretched the rhinoceros kicking in the dust—

"Procumbit humi bos."

In the night the dogs saved us from being run over by a rhinoceros, which was passing right through our lairs on its way to the water, but which, crashing through the bushes, was turned off by our watchful guardians. Next morning we proceeded with sharpened knives to cut up our mighty prize. The gastronomic powers of my people were so extraordinary that it seemed a rhinoceros only could satisfy them.

The huge grey and mud-covered mass of flesh

we now dissected, and whose hide we carefully removed and preserved, was a female, with two perfect horns of equal length, and she measured twelve and a half feet including the tail; inside we found a fœtus the size of a pig a month old. Aaron and his assistant butchers made slashing work, and we were soon in the midst of a great shamble; flesh, flesh was on every side, and the apparently insatiable stomachs of the Namaquas were at last content.

I went on in the afternoon with the head men, to reconnoitre our way in advance. We went west for some miles, and still following the course of the Chuntop, we turned north, and rode at a walk altogether eight miles. I found the passage for the waggon tolerably clear. It was quite beautiful—the great valley of the Chuntop: the mountains were between two and three thousand feet high, and of various colours and fantastic outline; smooth cliffs were on their faces, marked with white streaks, as if occasionally cataracts dashed over them. We saw some caves high up on some of the mountains, and the footmarks of a few Boschmans, but we saw no people. There

was an impressive air of solitude in this part of the Pass, and an awful silence, interrupted occasionally by the strange cry, as of a lamb, of the large blue and long-tailed colly.

We returned in safety, and passed the evening beside the people.

"Tell me a rhinoceros story," said I to oud Jan, the best story-teller of the party, and handing him at the same time a well filled stone pipe, "we have had enough of lions for a time, now let us discourse about even a greater than a lion, the black rhinoceros."

Jan, as was the custom in the land, gave the pipe to Saul, the Little Damara, to light (by which practice boys early acquire the bad habit of smoking), and then, after a few satisfactory whiffs, he commenced.

"Once on a time my father took his sons out to hunt; he only had a gun, and we had assegaes and knives. At first we were very unsuccessful; we found nothing till the second day; we were very hungry, when we came on a rhinoceros. The old man soon wounded it in the leg, and he then told us to throw stones at it, to make the

wound worse. You know how Namaquas can throw stones; so we crept upon the rhinoceros, followed it, and threw stones with such effect, that at last it lay down from pain. I being armed with a knife, then approached it from behind, and commenced to hamstring it, while my elder brother, who is now dead, Cobus, remarkable for two strange rings round his eyes, tried to climb over the back of the rhinoceros to thrust his lance into its shoulder (it would have been very dangerous to have gone up to its shoulder on foot); he had just begun to climb, when the rhinoceros rose suddenly with a terrible blast or snort, and we all ran off as fast as we could to a tree, and there held a consultation about our further proceedings.

"We had not been long at the tree, when the rhinoceros observing where we were, rushed towards us with his horns at first in the air, and then as he came near, he tore up the ground with them. We scattered ourselves before him, when Cobus getting in a passion, stopped short in his flight, called the rhinoceros an ugly name, and turned and faced it. The rhinoceros, asto-

nished at this unexpected manœuvre, also stopped and stared at Cobus, who then commenced calling out loudly and abusing the monster; it now seemed to be seized with fear, for it sidled off, when Cobus, who had a heart like a lion's and was as active as an ape, immediately pursued the rhinoceros, seized the tail, sprung with its assistance on its back, rode it well, and plunging his assegae deep into its shoulder, it fell, and was despatched by the rest of us. Hungry men can do extraordinary things—and this is a true story."

"I do not doubt it in the least," I said, "for I know that all the Buys have first-rate courage."

We retired to rest; but were roused in the middle of the night by a savage buffalo, which came from the eastern or upper part of the Valley, and attempted to run through us whilst asleep on the ground; but the ever watchful and faithful dogs turned it off also, and it was no more seen.

I had already picked up in the Pass the head and horns of a buffalo, which last, curved in a

semicircle over the eyes, are very remarkable for meeting at the roots, and lying like a mass of rock over the forehead of this fierce and malevolent animal. Of greater size and strength than an ox, its body thinly covered with black hair, with a bristly beard about its mouth, its withers rising in a ridge, and with a short tail, the South African buffalo lurks in the thickets, and rushes out without previous warning on the passing hunter, and gores him to death. Some of the people had soles made of its enduring hide. I knew a man in Caffer land, a Hottentot hunter, Barber by name, who has gone up alone to a wild buffalo in a bush, and killed it with his assegae.

On the 2nd of April, we continued our progress through the Pass, first travelled west and then north, crossed the Chuntop three times, and after four hours, ascended a hill to the right, to cut off an angle of the river. We then went over some high ground among the mountains, passed some remarkable trees, eight feet high only, but six and a half feet in girth; the bark smooth and silvery, and the leaves oval. We

descended again, after some very rough shakings for the waggon, and outspanned, after two and a half hours of the mountain road, on the banks of the Chuntop, where I was agreeably surprised by finding many lofty fig-trees, fifty or sixty feet high, and covered with ripe fruit, growing along the course of the stream.

The stems of these trees were thick, numerous, rather tortuous, and covered with a pale shining bark; the leaves were entire, like those of the *ficus religiosa*, and unlike those of the fig-tree of gardens, divided into three parts; the fruit was of the size of a Smyrna fig, and was very palateable; though I warned the people against indulging their appetites, for I was afraid of their eating unripe fruit, and thereby producing dysentery.

On the following day, Elliot shot a dog-faced baboon, five feet high; and four hours more along the river and over a plain, freed us entirely from the Poort, which we were very glad of, for the labour we had undergone in getting the waggon through was very great, accompanied with the constant fear of seeing it shivered to pieces on

the broken ground it traversed; for it was more unmanageable than before, being now loaded with a rhinoceros' hide.

In looking back towards the Pass of the Bull's Mouth from the north, its savage aspect was very striking. The deep red precipices on either side seemed to enclose mysterious recesses full of danger from lurking Boschmans, lions, rhinoceroses, and buffaloes, whilst the conical summits of the mountain range rose high in the air, their sides deeply wrinkled with the water-worn furrows of ages.

I named two of the mountain peaks after my valued friends Dr. John Murray, Deputy Inspector of Hospitals, and principal Medical Officer, Cape of Good Hope; and Mr. George Thompson, the author of Eight Years in South Africa.

We discovered the traces of Boschmans, and set out in pursuit to catch them, to be our guides in advance. After a short time we secured a young man and a young woman, both very handsome! The man wore round his neck, attached to leather strings, a couple of pieces of ivory like paper folders, intended for eating a new fruit

called 'Naras, which we had not yet seen. On his right arm, above the wrist, were many rings made of the hide of rhinoceroses, lions, kudus, and other wild animals, and worn as trophies; amongst them were distributed some teeth of the hyena apparently; and over his little apron, in front, was a disc of stiff leather, about three inches in diameter, and edged with iron, which looked like a miniature shield. He was armed in the usual manner, with bows, arrows, and lance. The young woman had a dangling bunch of red seed at the back of her head; she wore also the ivory scoops, and some leather rings on the left arm, also the common skin petticoat and fringe.

The Circassians, to defend their right arm, and to make it heavier in striking with the sword, wear a steel armlet; the Boschman, to make his arm heavier for throwing the assegae, wears his trophy rings.

The Boschmans having been freed from alarm by the grand succedaneum, the pipe, led us towards the river, where, beside some noble fig trees, in a hole in the bank, sat about a dozen

more of the tribe, men, women, and children, eating figs and roasted locusts, whilst the flesh of a young giraffe hung on a bush opposite the den.

The water was in a deep hole under a wall in the bed of the river, and the place where we now outspanned is called Ababies, or Calabash Kraal. The Boschmans here saw three new things, white men, horses, and a waggon. Of white men, they thought that they were not particularly handsome, but, I fear, "rather the contrary;" that is, we were thought to have been flayed! My horses, they imagined were a sort of ox without horns, and said they supposed they would eat very well; the waggon they believed at first was alive, and afterwards, that it was one of the strange white things (ships) which had come out of the sea, and was now travelling over the land.

The Boschmans in the neighbourhood of the Great River even, used lately to be very much afraid of waggons: thus, Mr. Schmelen's people once caught a Boschman, and he told them that the first time he and his people saw the missionary's waggon they ran away from it for a

whole night, thinking it was some terrible monster, and that they always jumped over its spoor, and would not touch the wheel tracks on any account.

On another occasion, Mr. Schmelen sent out an old waggon with a hunting party, when one of the fore wheels was broken, and the waggon remained standing in the field for two months, at the end of which time a Boschman came to Mr. Schmelen's place, and said that he had seen the missionary's *pack ox* standing in the field for a long time, with a broken leg; and that as he did not observe that it ate any grass, he was afraid that it would soon die of hunger if it was not taken away!

I distributed small presents among the Boschmans of Ababies, and they seemed to put perfect confidence in us, and promised to show us, for a few beads and sticks of tobacco, certain watering places among the hills, known only to themselves, and lying between us and the Kuisip (or Root) river, for we had yet nearly three days journey to the river, and our road lay over an arid desert of sand, without any watering place

with which Aaron, the chief guide, was acquainted.

This old animal, a tall and thin Bastaard, with a little flat hat like a crow's nest, and a long-backed leathern jacket, afforded a good deal of amusement to the people, from his appearance and habits. I said before he was a ten pound man as to appetite, and he was dirty and useless as he was voracious; his face had not been washed since we left Tuais; perhaps that the mud on it might preserve his complexion. His leather crackers hung like a bag between his legs, and so as to impede him in getting on his ox; and it was said, that if he ever went to the Cape, the first smith who saw him would strip him to make a pair of bellows of his trowsers. Once on his ox, he never got off either to hunt, to walk, to pack an ox, or to assist the waggon, but with a skin bag of dried meat behind him, he lingered behind and ate ever and anon during the march, and at the end of it he sat down by the flesh pot.

To prevent a repetition of the proceedings at the Great Fountain which had annoyed me so much, I told the men of the Boschmans to come

with their families, at night, and to sleep within sight of me, and that I would prevent their women being troubled by the Namaquas, as they might be, if they remained under the bank of the Chuntop. To my exceeding surprise, imbued as I was with notions of Oriental jealousy, the Boschmans said, "Take the women; the people may do with them as they please; what else is the use of them?" Seeing the Boschmans' feeling on this point (beasts could not have been worse) I now thought that the occurrences at the Great Fountain were not of so serious or disgraceful a nature as I had at first imagined they were.

Can any state of society be considered more low and brutal, than that in which promiscuous intercourse is viewed with the most perfect indifference, where it is not only practised but spoken of without any shame or compunction! Some rave about the glorious liberty of the savage state, and about the innocence of the children of nature, and say that it is chiefly by the white men that they become corrupt. The Boschmans of Ababies had never seen white

men before, they were far removed from the influence of Europeans; the only thing they had ever seen of them were their ships, from the hills skirting the ocean, and yet observe what innocent notions they had!

Surely, all the restraints of civilized life are to be preferred to the licentious and shameless habits of the savage, and to such a state of moral degradation as was found to exist among the Boschmans with whom we had now to deal. Much need have these degraded beings to be taught better things; and though there might have been some excuse for their bartering their property in their wives and daughters for food, when they were starving, yet our Ababies acquaintances had not even this excuse, for they were well supplied with food, and were all in good case.

The locust clouds were about us again, and my people got sacksful of locusts from the Boschmans. The insects are caught at night by making circles of fire, within which the locusts fall; their legs and wings are then pulled off, and they are roasted and ground up fine. In the evening the Namaquas played at Hous in the bed of the river,

squabbled over the game as usual, and skins being spread, they ate roasted locusts by handsful. I tasted them also, and they were sharp and bitter to my palate; it appeared like eating snuff. They would doubtless support life *at a pinch.* In the song of the wild Boschman he says,

> "I plant no herbs nor pleasant fruits,
> I toil not for my cheer,
> The desert yields me juicy roots,
> And herds of bounding deer.
>
> "Yea, even the wasting locusts'-swarm,
> Which mighty nations dread,
> To me nor terror brings nor harm,
> I make of them my bread."

I asked the Boschmans to dance, at sundown, by the light of a large fire, and they readily consented. The women drew up in line opposite the fire, and began, in a low voice to sing *ei oh! ei oh!* Clapping the hands at *oh!* they sang louder, when two of the men, stamping the ground for some time with one foot, and then changing for the other, circled in front of the women, and sang *oh, wawaho,* as an accompaniment, and their hands supported the body, which was occasionally twisted about; they also pointed at

one of the women with their jackal's tail *handkerchief*, when she came away from the rest, stamped like the men, clapped her hands, and seemed to try and escape from them, whilst they continued to stamp and follow her round the fire. Several of the young Namaquas, excited by the wild strains, joined in the dance, threw their bodies into all sorts of contortions, and a scene of dust and noise ensued.

Not seeing the long nose of my Portuguese youth, Antonio, which was usually poked into any place where there was play going on, I inquired if he had come back from shooting: nobody had seen him since three in the afternoon, when he had been noticed some distance down the river, with his gun, and alone. I had repeatedly cautioned my Europeans never to go any distance from the outspan place without one or two Namaquas with them, in order that they might easily find their way back again, and for their greater security in every respect. I was very desirous that no accident should happen to the poor fellows who had trusted themselves with me so far; and, besides, it was my duty to care

for them, in sickness or in health, in every possible manner.

Now it appeared that Antonio had left the Namaquas with whom he had gone out after midday, and had evidently lost himself, or some worse accident had happened to him. The dance was therefore immediately broken up, and parties went along the river for some distance, shouting and discharging guns; several fires too were made; but no tidings were heard of him all night. In the morning I mounted a horse and rode in the direction where he was last seen, extending the people across the country to "cut his spoor," and expecting to find his lifeless remains. But, at a distance of two miles from the waggon we saw him approaching us; and it turned out, that though we were on an open plain, with scattered trees only along the river, he had, as some other Europeans would also have done, noticed the outspan so little that he had gone past it the previous afternoon, and wandering about looking for the waggon down the river, it fell dark, and seeing two of our fires at a distance, which he mistook for the eyes of a

lion glaring at him, he had got up into a fig tree, to a branch of which he tied himself with his sash, and thus remained all night; but he could get little sleep in consequence of the cold, and had not heard our guns or shouting.

Next, in looking for our Boschman guides, we found, to our vexation, that the whole party had fled the moment the firing began as signals for Antonio. They imagined that they were about to be killed (as we afterwards learned), and accordingly took to the mountains, men, women, and children, leaving their giraffe's flesh on the bush, their locust sacks, jackals' skins, sandals, wooden hand troughs for drinking out of—in short, every thing they had except what was on them, and their arms, in the extremity of their terror: and now we experienced the painful consequences of carelessness.