

TRAVELS OF ROLANDO;

OR,

A TOUR ROUND THE WORLD.

TRANSLATED BY MISS AIKIN.

NEWLY CORRECTED AND REVISED

BY

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FIGHT BETWEEN THE ELEPHANT AND THE RHINOCEROS. P. 215.

obliged, though unwillingly, to dance like the rest. He was forced to run in the ring for a whole hour; which annoyed him so much that he was almost ill with it.

“Happily the signal of retreat was now heard, and the chief of the Nubas informed us that we were about to return to the place of festival. At these words, the strength of Segnier appeared to revive, and the symptoms of his languor entirely disappeared.

CHAPTER XIX.

“The hope of reaching Gondar at length, and experiencing an honourable reception from the king of Abyssinia, animated our spirits, and made us contemplate with less anxiety, the dangerous space we had yet to cross before we could arrive at the end of our journey. Perils appeared to multiply as we advanced. Lions, hyænas, and leopards, roared at a distance, and sometimes threatened us very near. Troops of Arabs appeared from time to time on the tops of the mountains, and seemed watching for an opportunity to fall upon us. We were informed too, in the neighbourhood of Teawa, that it would not be long before we saw elephants and rhinoceroses: we resigned ourselves to our fate, and continued our journey with renewed alacrity.

At the entrance of Teawa, we saw a horseman advancing towards us, dressed in a wide robe of red camlet, or some stuff very like it, with a white turban on his head. He was followed by about twenty men who were almost naked, but all armed with lances and bucklers, and two little drums and a fife were played before him. The troop stopped at a short distance from us, and the Arab made signs that he had something to say to the chief of the caravan; upon which

he was directed to me, and we both dismounted from our horses, and saluted each other with great civility. This Arab was a man of about seventy, with a very long beard and a good countenance. I had the greatest difficulty to oblige him to mount again : he insisted on walking by my side ; but yielding at length to my entreaties, he sprang upon his horse with all the agility of a youth.

“ He then put his horse into various paces, and made him take several leaps ; which was an excess of politeness on his part, as these exercises are usually performed only by young Arabs in the presence of their elders, or by an inferior before his superior.

“ This Arab, with all his train, had been deputed to us by the scheik of Teawa ; he had orders to give us every demonstration of respect, and he acquitted himself wonderfully of the commission he had received. We were very well satisfied with so honourable a prelude, as it announced a distinguished reception ; but we were the more surprised at it, as the Abyssinian ambassadors had painted the scheik of Teawa in colours little favourable : they said he had the reputation of being a very bad man ; which made us think the favour with which he received us extraordinary.

“ Our surprise and satisfaction continued to increase as the Arab, faithful to the orders of the scheik, conducted us to his palace.

“ This was a house, or rather a group of houses, of a single story, and built of reeds. We ascended two or three steps, and entered a great hall, which was very neat. Mats were laid on the floor, and an arm-chair stood in the middle, which appeared to be the place of the chief, who was then humbly seated on the ground, reading or pretending to read the Koran. He appeared surprised at seeing us, and made a motion to rise ; but I prevented him, and catching his hand, I kissed it.

“ The scheik seemed to admire my figure, and the indication of strength which it afforded. He questioned every one of us, by means of his interpreter,

concerning the motives of our journey, and appeared much interested in our answers. Segnier, who was more disposed than any one to converse familiarly with him, complained of the extreme fatigue he felt from the journey, of the heat, the woods which gave no shade, and especially of that poisonous wind the simoom, which had almost stifled him.

“Upon this the scheik, with the politeness natural to an Arab, blamed himself for suffering us to be presented to him before we had rested ourselves, and assured us that his only motive was his desire of seeing us. We arose to retire; but the scheik, rising also, said that he had given orders to have a lodging prepared for us, and that we should disoblige him by not accepting it, as it was his intention to entertain us to the best of his power, and render our stay at Teawa as agreeable as he was able.

“We left him inspired with feelings of gratitude; and the old man who had come to meet us, walked before and conducted us to the house prepared for our reception. Scarcely had we taken possession of our lodging, when several slaves of both sexes brought us some dishes of meat with many compliments from the scheik. So far all was well; but when we had done eating, an Arabian put his lips to my ear, and said, ‘Stranger, do not trust to the civilities of the scheik o Teawa. He is a hypocrite and a villain.’

“This warning made me open my eyes. I dismissed all the slaves, and called a secret council to discuss our situation. The Abyssinian ambassadors, who were first consulted, as best informed of the real character of the scheik, said that he did in fact pass for a villain, and that many instances were related of his perfidy and cruelty; but that, in this instance, it was possible that the desire of doing honour to the envoys of the king of Abyssinia might lead him to behave well to the caravan; for, as it was his interest to conciliate this powerful king, it was natural that he should endeavour to gain his favour by lavishing civilities on his ambas-

sadors and their suite. These considerations seemed weighty, and for the moment dissipated our suspicions.

"It was determined that we should return the politeness of the scheik in the best manner possible; and the next day I waited on him, deputed by the caravan, to offer him a present, which consisted of a large piece of blue cotton from India, flowered with gold, a girdle of silk and cotton, ten ounces of civet, as many pounds of nutmeg, and twenty pounds of pepper. The scheik received the gift in a very gracious manner; after which I begged him to let us go the next day. This he opposed; 'it would be offering me an insult,' said he, 'to leave Teawa with so much precipitation. I have fixed a great elephant hunt for to-morrow, in which you must have the pleasure and honour to share.'

"The proposal of the scheik pleased some of my companions, and displeased others. The most courageous were not sorry to have an opportunity of confronting such an animal as the elephant; the naturalists were delighted to have one of adding to their stock of original knowledge; but they who were neither warmed by the love of the chase nor the fondness for science, said plainly, that the invitation was a snare, and it would be imprudent to accept it. Segnier, who was very well satisfied with the conduct of the scheik the night before, declared that he began to distrust him; that there was evident danger in acceding to his proposal; that it would have been more generous in him to send a quarter of an elephant to the caravan, than to give strangers the trouble of going themselves to provide it; and that, moreover, he had reason to believe that elephant's flesh was but an indigestible food, and that it was not worth while to expose our lives for the pleasure of eating it.

"As the opinion of Segnier was evidently dictated by fear, others thought that by adopting it they might appear to be governed by the same principle; so that the desire of giving a proof of courage led the majority of my companions to consent to the wishes of the

scheik, who testified great joy on the occasion. He had caused several bundles to be collected of those fine reeds of which javelins are made, and his whole household was occupied in pointing them in what was considered the most advantageous manner.

"The next day we all mounted on horseback, to the number of forty, and were joined by another party of horse and foot, whose principal employment was hunting the elephant. These Nubians live constantly in the woods, and are almost ignorant of the use of bread, subsisting entirely on the flesh of the animals they kill.

"Two men, entirely naked, were mounted on one horse. They go in this manner, for fear the least rag should entangle them among the trees and bushes. When they flee before their vigilant enemy, one of the riders, placed on the fore part of the horse, holds a short stick in his right hand, and in his left the bridle, which he carefully manages. His companion, who rides behind him, is armed with a long sabre, the hilt of which he holds in his left hand. About fourteen inches of the blade are closely wound over with packthread, so that he can take this part in his hand without hurting himself; and though the weapon is as sharp as a razor, it is carried without a scabbard.

"As soon as the elephant is discovered browsing, the man who guides the horse advances straight towards him, and comes as near as he can; or, should the animal run, he gallops before him in all directions, crying out with all his might, '*I am such a one; I killed your father in such a place, and your grandfather in such another; and now I come to kill you, who are but an ass compared to your father and grandfather.*' The huntsman really believes that the elephant understands these silly words, because, irritated at the noise he hears, he immediately endeavours to strike the object that offends him with his trunk, and, instead of making his escape, pursues the horse,

which continually turns backwards and forwards before him. After making the elephant turn two or three times in this manner, the horseman gallops nearer to him, and, as he passes, lets down to the ground his companion; who contrives, while the elephant is busied with the horse, to give him a blow with his sabre, which divides the tendon above the heel.

"This is the critical moment; for the horseman must immediately turn back to take up his companion, who again springs on the horse. If the sabre be sharp, and the man strikes without fear, the tendon is completely separated; or if not, the weight of the animal soon finishes the business. The elephant is then unable to advance a step; and the horsemen, turning again towards him, pierce him with their javelins till he falls and expires with loss of blood. However skilful the hunters may be, the elephant sometimes catches them with his trunk, and, throwing down the horse with a single stroke, sets his foot upon it, and tears it limb from limb. Many men perish in this manner; for, during the hunting season, the heat of the sun cracks the earth in many places, and makes it very dangerous to ride on horseback.

"As soon as the elephant is dead they cut off all his flesh in strips, about as broad as a bridle, which are hung on branches of trees, where they are soon dried by the sun; after which the hunters lay them up, without salting, for provisions during the rainy season.

"We were obliged to travel for a whole day, to encamp during the night, and to plunge the next day into thick marshy forests, before we could discover any traces of elephants. As soon as the first were perceived, they came to inform the scheik, who rode constantly by our side as a mark of respect. Joy sparkled in the eyes of all; which was much increased when an Arab came to add, that traces of rhinoceroses had also been discovered. We then divided into small troops; and in order to reconnoitre the number and

position of the enemy with which we were to contend, we ascended a neighbouring hill, commanding a valley, where we had reason to conclude that these formidable animals would be found.

"At this moment, Segnier and his son, who had separated themselves a little from the hunters to explore the country, and see whether the inhabitants of a little village on the hill were hospitable, and made good cheer, returned to us with a look of great terror. 'Do not advance,' cried Segnier, with a trembling voice: 'let us all retreat, and collect in a body to defend ourselves if we should be pursued.'

"At these words we halted, and desired our companions to explain the cause of their alarm. 'Let us fly!' continued Segnier: 'that valley is the scene of a horrid combat, of which we shall be the victims, if imprudent enough to approach. We saw at a distance an elephant engaged with a rhinoceros: they are both furious, and fill all the neighbourhood with terror. The rhinoceros strives to gore his adversary under the belly with his horn, while the elephant endeavours to throw him down with his trunk, and tear him with his tusks. What part should we take in this great quarrel? Shall we go and brave the horn and tusks of these savage creatures, now rendered unusually formidable by the furious rage which inspires them? I have heard, and I can easily believe it, that the rhinoceros is the most difficult of all animals to subdue. Steel, it is said, will not touch his skin; lances cannot pierce it; it even resists bullets. It is also said, that it roots up trees with its horn, seizes persons by the middle, and throws them over his head with such force that they are killed by the fall. Once more, let us retire! that is the only part for us to take.' The scheik having caused the words of Segnier to be explained to him, was moved with indignation. 'What!' cried he, 'shall I, the scheik of Teawa, retreat before two beasts, and cover myself with disgrace! No: were the danger still greater, by

Mahomet, I would not retreat!’ As he spoke these words, he spurred his horse and darted forwards. We followed; and Segnier, to avoid losing sight of us, and remaining alone exposed to all hazards, unwillingly prepared to attend us; crying out loudly as he went, ‘Friends, countrymen, I told you so: we are lost, the scheik is resolved to sacrifice us!’ Carried away by the perhaps inconsiderate ardour of the scheik, we arrived at the field of battle. What was our surprise to find only one of the combatants remaining, stretched on the ground and weltering in his blood! This was the elephant, who had been overthrown by a large wound in his belly, where the skin is most sensible, and most easily penetrated; the horn of the rhinoceros had decided the victory. This horn is very hard, solid throughout, and placed much more advantageously than the horns of ruminating animals. The African rhinoceros has a double horn, while that of Asia has only a single one. Montval informed us that naturalists have given it the distinctive name of *bicornis*, the double horned; and the Abbé Doloni remarked, that according to some, the first rhinoceros seen at Rome was that shewn by the Emperor Augustus in his triumph over Cleopatra; while, according to others, it was Pompey the Great who first exhibited this animal to the people. He added, that the first rhinoceros seen in France was that brought to Paris in 1748, by a Dutch captain, who had brought it to Holland by sea; thence to Germany, and from Germany to France. It was weighed at Stuttgart, and the weight was 16 cwt. Its travels by land were performed in a covered carriage, which it required twenty horses to draw in bad roads.

“Whilst Montval was displaying his science, and the Abbe Doloni his erudition, a party of the hunters were in search of the rhinoceros, who, since his victory, had disappeared.

“Dismal cries were heard at a distance, resembling the grunting of a hog, accompanied with loud hissings.

The most courageous of the men repaired to the spot whence they proceeded; and having discovered the cause, they set up a shout, and made us signs to approach. This we did, and saw that the conqueror of the elephant had been conquered himself by the cunning and address of man. He had fallen into a trap. As the rhinoceros always takes the same way to the rivers, the trace of his steps is easy to discover, on account of the great weight of his body. In this road the people open a pit, from seven to eight feet in depth, and nearly four in diameter, in the middle of which they bury a sharp stake; they then cover it so artfully, that it would deceive even the eyes of a man. The rhinoceros falls into the pit; and the stake does not fail to pierce his neck or breast, and thus stop him long enough to allow the hunters time to come up and dispatch him; which we did on this occasion. As we might now triumph in the possession of two monstrous animals, it was determined that we should here set bounds to our exploits, and take the road back to Teawa. My companions were all delighted at the happy issue of a chase they had so greatly dreaded, and Segnier insisted on having the glory of dispatching the animal which had caused him so much terror. He put one of the knots found in its skin into his snuff-box, and has kept it ever since, in commemoration of this illustrious day. Montval seized on the double horn to examine its substance, and afterwards hang it up to adorn his cabinet.

“We again took the way towards Teawa, through a country parched and rendered almost uninhabitable by the excessive heat of the sun. Several of us, mortified that we had been unable to overthrow any savage beast, wished that some opportunity might offer of signaling our intrepidity. An opportunity accordingly occurred. About the middle of the way, we found ourselves preceded by a lion, who was walking on at the distance of a musket-shot before us; and every time he came to an open place, he

stopped, looked at us, and growled as though he intended to dispute the passage. Our horses trembled, and were covered with perspiration, and we could scarcely make them proceed. As there was only one method of delivering ourselves from this enemy, I seized a long Turkish musket; and, advancing as near as I could without being perceived by him, I took so good an aim, that he fell down dead in the middle of the road.

“Returning to Teawa, we determined to take leave of the scheik, and continue our great journey on the following day. But our desire to leave the scheik, whom we were inclined to distrust, notwithstanding all his civilities, did not equal his to retain us at his court, in order to lay us under contribution.

“Having waited upon him according to his orders, I found him alone, sitting in an alcove, and smoking a long pipe. He appeared calm, but pensive. He received me with great civility, and told me, by means of an interpreter, that he had received very bad news from Gondar: that the king of Abyssinia had been compelled by an insurrection to take refuge among the mountains; and that it would be dangerous for us to throw ourselves into a city where the utmost disorder prevailed, and where new crimes were daily committed. ‘Since Providence has brought you hither,’ added he, ‘remain all with me. Embrace the Mahometan religion; I will give you my daughter in marriage, and you shall be the second person in the government of Teawa. As for me, I shall throw the weight of affairs upon you; and as it is my intention to go next year to Mecca, you will govern in my stead.’

“I could hardly avoid laughing at these proposals; which appeared to make the scheik angry: he asked me in a serious tone, whether I were laughing at him? ‘I laugh,’ said I, ‘at your proposals. How can you know me so little as to imagine I would renounce my religion? And what reason should induce me to marry and settle in a country desolated by poverty, famine,

terror, and slavery?"—"Since you refuse to follow my counsel," replied the scheik, "let us say no more on the subject. It is true, indeed, that my country is poor enough, and often desolated with famine. I know," added he, "beyond a doubt, that you are generous, and that you can now afford me assistance. You have, as I am informed, two thousand ounces of gold in your coffers, and an immense quantity of valuable articles. I think you will be too reasonable to refuse me five hundred piastres. If you consent to give them me, I will let you go to-morrow: if not, I am resolved to detain you."

"The dreadful secret, then, is out," cried I. "It was not without reason, I find, that you were represented to us in unfavourable colours! Five hundred piastres! But in order to give them it would first be requisite to have them; and it is not at the end of a long journey, when we have almost reached Gondar, that our coffers are likely to be full. Know, that we have spent all. But were we really as rich as false report has led you to believe, were our coffers overflowing with gold, be assured you should be unable to open one. I am neither a woman nor a child, but chief of a caravan protected by the king of Abyssinia with all his power. I have brave men with me too; so try your strength against me when you please." As I finished these words, I arose and left him abruptly.

"At eleven o'clock at night the old Arab, whom I never saw but when he was charged with some message, came and asked me for coffee. He drank at least twenty cups every time it was set before him. He at first assumed an air of moderation, and spoke to me, as he said, like a friend; but when he was seated, he highly blamed my manner of conducting myself with the scheik, whose courage and generosity he cried up extremely.

"I answered him in the same tone.

"I repeat to you," said I, "in the name of all my companions, what I have to-day said to your master—

he cannot rob and murder us at Teawa, but his own head, and the heads of all this nation, will answer for it.' At these words the old Arab arose; and shaking that part of his robe which covered his breast, he said 'that he was very sorry, but that he washed his hands of whatever might happen.'

"We passed the whole night in conferring on this event, and considering what we had to do. We were still assembled in the morning, when a message from the scheik informed me that he expected me at his house at six in the evening. I resolved not to go unarmed; but for fear of giving umbrage, I concealed my weapons. St. Kassian and the faithful Chiousse would have accompanied me; but I thought I ought not to permit them, and they waited for me at the door.

"I found the scheik in a spacious apartment, seated in a recess, on a large sofa, adorned with Indian curtains bound up in festoons. 'What, alone!' said he. 'Yes,' replied I; and I soon perceived that he was half drunk. 'Well,' continued he, 'have you brought the needful? Where are your piastres?'—'I have none,' answered I; and I would have retired, but he cried out 'Rolando, infidel, dog! I know that you have 200,000 piastres in gold: give me 2,000 before you leave this place, or you are a dead man. I will kill you with my own hand!' He then drew his sabre with a threatening air, and tucking up his sleeve to the elbow, said, 'I await your answer.' I retreated a step; and opening my cloak, I took out a small blunderbuss, and said in a firm voice, 'This is my answer!' The scheik hearing the noise made by the spring of the piece, thought that I had cocked it, and was about to fire; and, letting fall his sabre, he threw himself back on his sofa, crying out, 'Mercy, mercy, Rolando! I was only jesting.'

"His women ran in, terrified at his cries: St. Kassian, Chiousse, and some faithful soldiers, forced the door and rushed into his room, all with muskets in their hands, and pistols at their girdles. The scheik,