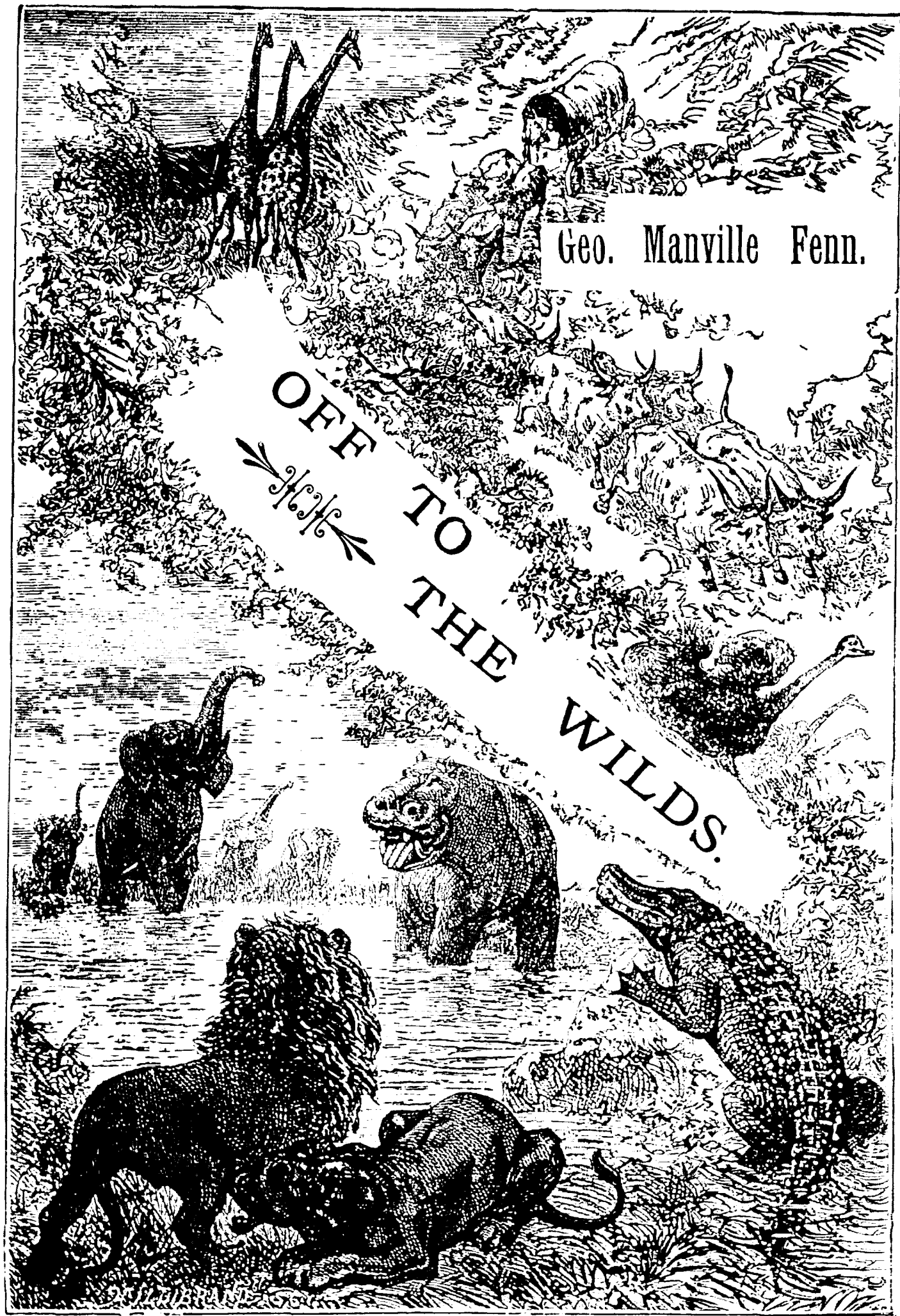


Geo. Manville Fenn.

OFF TO THE WILDS.



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BEING

THE ADVENTURES OF TWO BROTHERS

By GEO. MANVILLE FENN



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CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW DINNY HANDLED HIS GUN.

IN expectation of another visit from the rhinoceros, the greatest precautions were taken; but the days went by, and hunting and collecting took up plenty of attention, and no more visits from the rhinoceros were received.

The boys were certain that this was not the animal that had charged them out upon the grass plain, and proof of this was found one day when, in company with their father, the boys were following a honey-guide. Coffee and Chicory were with them, and eagerly joined in the pursuit, till the bird which had been flitting from bush to bush, and from tree to tree, suddenly perched itself upon one at the edge of a patch of forest.

Then Chicory ran right to a particular tree, and pointed to a spot where, about twenty feet from the ground, the bees could be seen flying in and out.

To the great disappointment of the bird, the wild hive was left for that occasion, it being a pity to waste any of the honey, so they returned by another route towards the camp, the bird twittering and showing no little excitement at what it evidently looked upon as the folly of men at neglecting the sweet treasure.

The place was, however, marked, and with the intention of returning next day, armed with hatchet, fire, and a couple of zinc buckets to hold the spoil, they rode round the other side of the forest-patch, looking out for brightly-plumaged birds, whose skins could be added to the collection already made.

"Yes," said Mr. Rogers, "it is a curious natural history fact,

but there it is, plainly enough. The bird knows that man can get at the honey when it cannot, so it leads him to the place hoping to get its share of the spoil."

"Then you don't think it is done out of love for man, father?" said Jack."

"What do you think, Dick?" said Mr. Roger.

"I think it's done out of kindness to the bird," said Dick, smiling.

"So do I," replied his father, "and that bird its own self."

"Look at the vultures," cried Jack, just then, as quite a cloud of the great birds rose from a clump of trees on their left; and upon riding up there lay a great rhinoceros, or rather its remains, for, in spite of its tough hide, the carrion birds had been busy at it; but not so busy but that the marks of a couple of bullets were seen in its neck and fore-shoulder, from the effects of which it had evidently died.

"That's our rhinoceros," cried Jack eagerly.

"You shall have your claim, boys," said Mr. Rogers drily; "my shot shall not count."

"I said 'our,' father; so let's share it amongst us."

The boys would have liked to have the horn hacked off, but the animal was in such a terrible state that their father thought it unfair to set either of the Zulus to execute the task; so they had to be content with the trophy in expectation; the boys promising to have off the horn from the next that was shot.

While they were enjoying a hearty meal after their return to the camp, Dinny suddenly began to make advances to Chicory, giving him pieces of cake, and choice bits of meat, which he had roasted, and all to the boy's great surprise, for heretofore Dinny had been anything but civil to him. But Chicory took it all in good part, and smiled and nodded; and when at last Dinny signed to him to come away from the camp, the boy followed without a word.

"Look ye here, my little naygur," said Dinny confidentially,

as soon as they were in the shelter of the trees ; "d'ye undherstand what I'm saying to ye?"

Chicory nodded eagerly.

"Yes, yes ; understand," he said.

"Then look here, ye dark-looking little image ; I want ye to help me."

"Yes ; help," said Chicory wonderingly.

"Iv ye'll help me, I'll help you, little naygur ; and ye shall always have plenty of what's good out of the pot, and roast mate, and cake. D'ye understand that?"

"Yes ; Chicory know. Give him plenty meat."

"That's right, my young son of a dark night," cried Dinny. "Well, now then, look here. Ye know that grate big pig wid the horn on his nose came and upset me fire, and run away wid me wardrobe?"

Chicory shook his head.

"Well then, wid me clane shirt. D'ye undherstand now?"

"Yes, yes," said Chicory, laughing. "Don't know big pig."

"Yes, yes, you do, my young piece of black velvet ; the big rise nosserus."

"Yes, rhinoceros, big beast, big horn. Oorrr ! houk ! houk ! houk !"

This was supposed to resemble the noise made by the great animal ; and Chicory illustrated his cry by going down on hands and knees in a clumsy gallop, which ended with a toss of the head in the air.

"Yes ; that's him," said Dinny. "Well, I want ye to find the way to where he lives by his futmarks, and then come and tell me, and I'll go and shute him."

Chicory nodded his head, and they went back to the waggon, where Dinny presented himself to his master all at once with a request for a gun.

"A gun, Dinny ? And what do you want with a gun ?"

"Shure, sor, every'body else learns how to shute, and I thought

I'd like to be able to shute a line or a hippo—what's his name, or any other of the savage bastes if they came near the waggon while ye were away."

"Well, Dinny, I have no objection, if you promise to be careful."

"But I want one o' them that shutes big bullets, sor, and not the little pishtol things that only shutes small shot, sor."

"You shall have a good rifle, Dinny," said his master. "Dick, get the Snider—the short Snider—out of the waggon, and give him twenty cartridges."

This was done, and the rifle placed in Dinny's hands.

"You must be very careful how you shoot with it, Dinny," said Mr. Rogers.

"Shure and I will, sor."

"But be particularly careful not to fire in the direction where any one is coming. Remember a Snider is dangerous at a mile."

"Is it now?" said Dinny. "But shure, sor, I want a gun, and I don't care for your Sniders at all. What's a Snider to do wid me? It's a gun I want."

"To kill wild beasts, Dinny?"

"That same, sor."

"Well, then, take that Snider-rifle; it will kill at a tremendous distance."

"What, that little bid of a thing, sor?"

"To be sure, man. Now take care, and you'll have to keep it clean and free from rust as well."

"Thanky, sor, and I will, and it will have too much to do for it to get rusty."

"Well, Dinny, I trust you, mind, so be careful with your weapon."

"Shure, sor, and I will," said Dinny; and taking the Snider very carefully in his hands, he asked Jack to give him "a bit of showing how to trim thim;" and this Jack did till he was perfect, when Dinny went off with the rifle, muttering to himself.

"Think o' that now!" he kept on saying, "that bit of a thing shooting a baste at a mile!"

Nothing more was said by Dinny, who had made his plans, and he kept his own secret of what he intended to do. On the following afternoon Chicory came to him in high glee, to claim the roast meat and cake promised, and he announced that he had found where the rhinoceros lived.

"How did you find him out?" said Dinny doubtingly.

"Track. Follow spoor," said Chicory proudly.

"Oh, ye followed his spoor, did ye?" said Dinny. "Very well thin, it's going to be a bright moonlight night, so ye can follow his spoor, and tak me wid ye."

Chicory nodded eagerly, and in the course of the evening he came and beckoned to Dinny, who took the Snider, and put the cartridges in his pocket.

"Where are you going, Dinny?" said his master.

"Shure, jist for a bit o' pleasure, sor," he replied.

"Well, look out for the lions," said Dick maliciously.

"Shure I niver thought o' the lines," muttered Dinny, "and they goo out a walking av a night. I'd better shtay at home. Bother!" he cried angrily. "Shure the young mather did it to frecken me, and it'll take a braver boy than him to do it anyhow."

So Dinny marched off, and following Chicory, the boy led him at once over a rugged mountainous hill, and then into a part of the forest that was particularly dark, save where the moon, pretty well at its full, threw long paths of light between the trees.

Enjoining silence, the boy went cautiously forward, threading his way through the dark forest, till he halted beside a fallen monarch of the woods, a huge tree of such enormous proportions, that its gnarled trunk and branches completely stopped further progress; for it formed a stout barrier breast high, over which a man could fire at anything crossing the moonlit glade beyond.

The shape of the tree was such that a branch like a second trunk ran almost parallel to the main trunk, arching over the head of whoever used the old tree for a breastwork, and forming an additional protection should the occupant of the breastwork be attacked by any large animal.

"Stop there, you see noseros," whispered Chicory.

"But shure ye wouldn't have a man shtand there by himself, and all in the dark? Faix, there's some wild baste or another shlaying me now."

"See noseros then shoot," whispered Chicory. "I stay here."

The boy caught hold of a branch and swung himself up into a tree, where he perched himself and waited.

"Faix, he's just like a little monkey, and not fit for the shociety of Christians," muttered Dinny as he took his place by the great barrier, and, resting his rifle upon the trunk, waited.

Dinny felt in anything but a courageous mood, but as he had come so far upon his mission, he strung himself up to go on with it, and watched the open space before him, lit up by the moon which shone full upon his face.

"Maybe he's only playing wid me, the black little haythen," thought Dinny, "and there's no big pig to be seen here at all. But he shan't see that I'm a bit freckened annyhow, for I'll shtand my ground till he comes down and says we'd better go."

So Dinny stood watching there till he began to feel drowsy, and this made him lean against the great trunk, his head began to nod, and twice over he was pretty well asleep.

"Shure, an' I'll catch cowld if I do that," he said to himself, as he gave himself a bit of a shake. "I don't see what's the good o' waiting here, and—murther! look at that now."

Dinny felt as if cold water was being poured over him as, all at once, he saw the great proportions of a rhinoceros standing out quite black against the bright moonlight, the animal

being as motionless as if carved from the rock that lay in great masses around.

“Shure an’ it’s a big shtone, and nothing else, and—murther, it’s moving, and coming here.”

Dinny hardly knew himself how he did it, but in a kind of desperation he took aim at the rhinoceros, and drew trigger.

The result was a sharp crack, that seemed to echo into distance far away, and mingled with the echoes there was a furious grunting roar.

For Dinny had hit the rhinoceros. In fact, aiming at it as he did, with the barrel of his piece upon the large trunk, it would have been almost impossible to miss. But as he heard the roar Dinny turned and ran, stumbled, saved himself, and hid behind a tree.

“Murther, but it’s awful work,” he muttered, as his trembling fingers placed a second cartridge in the rifle.

Then, all being silent, Dinny stole out, and peering cautiously before him, crept towards the prostrate tree.

“Shure, I belave I’ve shot him dead,” he muttered, as he peered out into the open glade; but as he showed his face in the moonlight there was a furious snort, and Dinny turned and fled; for the rhinoceros charged right at the white face behind the prostrate tree, thrusting its monstrous head between the two huge limbs; and then, in spite of its prodigious strength being unable to get any further, it drew back, charged again, placed one hoof on the tree—but its efforts were in vain. Then it wrenched its head back, and retiring a short distance charged once more, Dinny watching it from behind a tree with blanched face and hands, trembling with excitement.

A practised hunter would have sent bullet after bullet crashing into the monster’s brain; but Dinny was not practised, and it was not until he had thoroughly convinced himself that the animal could not get through, that he stole out, and bending down, cautiously advanced nearer and nearer to the huge



BICORNIS HAS AN INTERVIEW WID DINNY.

beast, which snorted, and grunted, and squealed in its futile efforts to get at its assailant.

If it had gone twenty yards to its left, it could easily have passed the obstacle ; but it was pig-like enough in its nature to keep on trying to force itself through the obstacle it had tried to pass, and seeing this, Dinny went on, gaining a little courage the while.

“Shure I’ll go close enough to make quite sartain,” he muttered ; “but it’s like having a bad dhrame, that it is. Now where had I better shute him—in the mouth or the eye ?”

He decided for the eye, and raising the rifle at last he took a long aim at not six feet distance, when the great beast uttered so furious a roar that Dinny turned once more, and fled behind the tree.

“Shure and what’d I be freckened of?” he said angrily. “Not of a baste like that.” And walking out once more he repeated his manœuvres, approaching cautiously ; and as the rhinoceros began straining, and sprang to force its way through, Dinny took careful aim at the monstrous beast, and fired.

“Shure it’s aisy enough,” he said, as the beast started back ; and placing a fresh cartridge in his piece, he fired again at where the animal stood in the full moonlight swaying its head to and fro.

It was impossible to miss ; and Dinny fired again and again, nine shots in all, growing encouraged by his success ; and the result was that the monster fell over upon its side at last with a heavy thud, just as Chicory dropped to the ground, and made the hero jump by touching him on the back.

“Ah, be aisy ; what are ye thrying to frecken a man for like that ?” said Dinny. “But look at that, ye little haythen ; that’s the way to shute. Now let’s go back and tell them they needn’t be alarmed about the big pig, for it’s Dinny himself that has done the thrick.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DINNY RELATES HIS ADVENTURE.

DINNY'S story was hardly believed when he walked into camp, but Chicory was there to corroborate his words, and the astonishment felt was intense.

"You—you shoot a rhinoceros, Dinny!" said his master.

"Shure and why not, yer hanner?" said Dinny. "Didn't I borry the gun a' purpose for that same? and didn't the big baste stale my gyarments in the most ondacent way?"

"But how? Where? Where?" was asked by father and sons, in a breath.

"Shure an' I'm the laste bit weary wid my exertions," said Dinny, "and I'll jist light me pipe and sit down and rest, and tell ye the while."

All in the most deliberate way, Dinny proceeded to light his pipe and rest; and then, with Chicory sitting in front with his arms tightly embracing his knees, and his eyes and mouth open, Dinny related his adventure with the rhinoceros.

The late Sir Walter Scott in speaking of embellishing and exaggerating a story called it adding a cocked-hat and walking-stick.

Dinny put not merely a cocked-hat and walking-stick to his story, but embellished it with a crown, sceptre, and royal robes of the most gorgeous colours. It was wonderful what he had done; the furious conduct of the rhinoceros, the daring he had displayed, the precision with which he had sought out vital parts to aim at. A more thrilling narrative had never been told, and Chicory's eyes grew rounder and his mouth wider open in his

astonishment and admiration, the hero going up wonderfully in the boy's esteem, especially as he read in Dinny's looks the promise of endless snacks and tastes when he was hungry.

But all the same, Dinny's flights of fancy grew a little too lofty for his other hearers.

"Oh, I say, Dinny, come now," said Dick, as his father sat back listening with a good-humoured smile upon his lip. "I'm not going to believe that a rhinoceros rose up on its hind legs and fought at you with its fore paws, while you stood still and aimed at it."

"Shure, Masther Dick, dear, did you ever know me say anything that wasn't throe? If ye doubt me word, there's Masther Chicory there, as brave a boy as ever stepped in—I mane out of shoe leather, and spread his little black toes about in the sand. He was there all the toime, and ye can ax him if he didn't see it."

"Yes," said Chicory, "nosros try to get through big tree, and Dinny shoot um."

"There," said Dinny triumphantly, "what did I tell you? Why, if ye don't believe me, there's the baste itself lying as dead as a hammer where I shot him."

"Then it's only a little pig or a young rhinoceros, Dinny," said Jack."

"Little pig!" cried Dinny. "By this an' by that, he's as big as the waggon there, tub an' all. Sure a bigger and more rampaging baste niver fought wid a human man, and tried hard to ate him."

"Why that shows what stuff you are telling us, Dinny. A rhinoceros wouldn't eat a man; he'd trample him to death," cried Dick, who had been a studious boy for years. "A rhinoceros is an herbivorous beast, and has a prehensile upper lip."

"A what sort o' baste?" said Dinny, staring.

"Herbivorous."

"Shure an' what's that got to do wid it? I tell you it tried to ate me at one mouthful, in spite of his what sort o' upper lip.

Shure the poor baste couldn't help having that the matter wid his lip. Why as soon as I set eyes on him, 'Ah, Dinny,' I says, 'yere work's cut out, me boy,' I says, 'for if ever there was a baste wid a stiff upper lip that's the one.'"

"But I said a prehensile upper lip, Dinny," cried Dick.

"Shure I heard what ye said, Master Dick. I know. And a pretty rampaging baste he was. Wirra! If ye'd seen him foight. If ye'd heard him roar, and saw how I battled wid him till I'd laid him low wid tin bullets in his jacket. Ah, it was wonderful. But ye shall see the baste."

"Yes, I want to see him, Dinny," said Jack.

"Shure an' I'll be glad to take ye, Masther Jack, as soon as it's light. But he was a brave baste, and fought well; and I felt sorrylike when I seen him go down."

"Did you though, Dinny?"

"Shure an' I did, Masther Dick, for I says to myself, 'Ye're a brave boy, an' I dessay ye've got a mother somewhere as is very proud of ye, just as I've got wan meself. But I must shute ye,' I says, 'for the sake of the gintlemen wid the waggon, and the mischief ye've done;' and so I did; an' there he lies, Masther Dick, stretched out on his side; and pace to his ashes. I've done."

"Well, boys," said Mr. Rogers, speaking for the first time for some minutes, "I think we ought to congratulate ourselves upon the great accession we have discovered in Dinny. In future he shall accompany us in our attacks upon the lions and other furious beasts. I should not think of going after elephant now without Dinny."

That gentleman's face was a study, as he listened to his master's words. His nostrils twitched, his brows grew full of wrinkles, and his jaw dropped, letting his pipe fall from his lips; and though he picked it up directly after, the tobacco had gone out, and Dinny looked as if all the enjoyment had gone out of his life.

Beyond the roaring of a lion or two, the night passed off very

quietly, and as soon as it was broad day Chicory stood ready to lead the party to see the rhinoceros.

“Come, Dinny, aren't you ready?” cried Dick.

“Shure an' I don't want to go, Masther Dick. I seen enough of the baste last night.”

“Yes, but you must come and show us.”

“Shure an' Masther Chicory there will lade you to the very spot, and I couldn't do any more. He lies did bechuckst two big lumps of sthone, an', as I said, he's as big as a waggin.”

“Oh, but Dinny must come,” said Mr. Rogers.

“Shure an' how will I get the breakfast riddy if I come, sor?” persisted Dinny. “I did my duty last night. You gentlemen must go and fetch him home.”

But Dinny's protestations passed unheeded, and he had to go with the party, shouldering his rifle like a raw recruit, but glancing uneasily to right and left as they went along.

Dick observed this, and said quietly,—

“What a lot of poisonous snakes there are amongst these stones!”

Dinny gave a spasmodic jump, and lifting his feet gingerly, deposited them in the barest places he could find; and for the rest of the journey he did not once take his eyes off the ground.

As it happened they had not gone fifty yards farther before they came upon a great swollen puff-adder, lying right in their path.

Chicory saw it first, and shouted a word of warning, which made Dinny wheel round, and run away as hard as he could go, till the shouts of the others brought him back, looking terribly ashamed.

“Oh, it's wan o' thim things, is it?” he said, looking at the writhing decapitated viper. “Shure I thought it was the jumping sort that springs up at yer ois, and stings ye before yer know where ye are. There was a cousin of me mother's went to live in Hampshire, and she got bit by wan o' thim bastes in the fut, and it nearly killed her. Ye can't be too careful.”

Dinny felt as if he was being laughed at for the rest of the way, and looked quite sulky ; but the sight of the great fallen tree, and the huge rhinoceros surrounded by vultures busily working a way through the tough hide, revived him, and he marched forward to examine his bullet holes with the look of pride worn by a conqueror.

It was quite refreshing to see him walk up the hind leg of the rhinoceros, and then along its huge horny-hided body to the shoulder, where, lowering the rifle he carried, Dinny placed the stock upon the creature's neck, and rested his arm upon the barrel, regarding his fallen foe in quite a contemplative manner.

"Mind that rifle don't go off, Dinny," cried Jack.

Dinny leaped off the rhinoceros and stared.

"It's a very dangerous thing to rest your arms on the muzzle of a gun," said Dick, who enjoyed poor Dinny's discomfiture.

"Well, Dinny," said his master, "I congratulate you upon having slain a monster. Where did you stand?"

"Oh, over yonder somewhere," said Dinny cavalierly. "Anywhere to get a good soight ov him."

"Stood here behind tree where nosros no get at um," said Chicory, innocently, in his eagerness to explain all he could.

"Ah, ye avil little baste," muttered Dinny. "See if I give ye the laste taste of anything I've got. Ah, yes," he said aloud, "I did get one shot at him from behind that big tree ; but I cud see him best out in the open yander. Shure an' how big is the baste, sor?" he added, as Mr. Rogers ran a measuring tape along the animal from nose to tail.

"Just over eleven feet, Dinny," said Mr. Rogers ; and leaving the General to hew off the great blunt horn, they returned to breakfast.