

ADVENTURES
IN THE
FAR INTERIOR OF SOUTH AFRICA

INCLUDING A
JOURNEY TO LAKE NGAMI
AND
RAMBLES IN HONDURAS

TO WHICH IS APPENDED
A SHORT TREATISE ON THE BEST MODE OF SKINNING AND
PRESERVING BIRDS, ANIMALS, &c.; Also RECEIPTS
FOR MAKING PRESERVATIVES

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length, though not quite so thick, and placed so close and opposite each other, that looking at them sideways gives the appearance of one horn only. These horns are formidable weapons of defence, and have been known to overpower the Lion; if the grip of the Lion be not deadly, the Oryx thrusts its horns back, piercing the Lion with serious wounds. Instances have been related to me by the natives, of both having perished in deadly combat, and their dead bodies found on the same spot.

We left the village next morning, and arrived at night at a small Griqua village, in the thick of the wood. In this forest country so beautifully adorned by nature, were to be found Camel-leopards or Giraffes, Rhinoceros', Buffalo's, and numerous kinds of other smaller game. The former are so much hunted by the natives that they are very wild; good horses are required in order to be successful in shooting the larger animals.

When sitting by the fire one evening, a black Rhinoceros came within thirty yards of the waggon, snorting and rushing

past. This Rhinoceros is much more dangerous than what is called the white Rhinoceros, (*Rhinoceros Simus*); the former will often attack man without any provocation.

November 29th.—About ten o'clock this morning, in passing through an exceedingly thick part of the forest and long grass, I was seated on the waggon box, and Mr. E. lying down in the waggon, when four young Lions, about half-grown, sprang out from the bushes; I took down my gun, leaped from the waggon, and ran after them to get a near shot. After going thirty yards, two old Lions started from the same bush, which startled me for a moment. One of them went in the direction of the young ones, a few paces, then hesitated, and went on again. The other came bounding with rapid strides—head and tail up—after me; I fired as she came on, the bullet passed through the fleshy part of the side of the skull, which increased her rage. She had nearly caught me within a few yards; Mr. E. had got up, standing upon the fore chest of the waggon, and fired over my head, giving her a lucky shot under

We left Boatlanami on Friday, passing Lapepe, and pushing forward by moonlight. Two hours after our departure, Edwards and myself were lying in the waggon, when the oxen set off galloping at a rapid rate, over stumps of trees and deep hollows, scattering on the road all the cooking utensils from the trap behind the waggon; also my large box containing skins and specimens, and many other articles. The Bushman leader was trampled under foot by the oxen, badly injured, and the driver sitting on the waggon chest holding on like grim death. When brought to a stand still, a scene of confusion ensued, one crying out, where is my leader? another, where are all the pots and pans, and where are my boxes, &c.? After an hour's delay, we managed to find most of the missing articles. It is dangerous to travel by night, but necessity compels us to do so, sometimes on account of the waters being far apart.

We supposed the oxen smelt a Lion, or took fright at the loose oxen coming on behind, supposing them to be Lions. Both horses and cattle generally exhibit great fear at the sight or smell of a Lion.

The next day a troop of Giraffes were seen.

Edwards mounted a horse that was by the waggon in readiness. The ground being good and open was a great advantage. In less than ten minutes, one of their giant forms was laid in the dust. The waggon was speedily brought up, all were up to the elbows in blood; and in half an hour it was cut up, placed in the waggon, and on our way hastening to the next water.

We reached Mashue, and resumed our journey on the 27th, arriving a little before sun-set at a water called Collybelt. During the day, we came in with Mr. Wilson, returning to Kolobeng in a state of great excitement, caused by a report that a party of Boers were in pursuit of him. Most of his goods were buried underground, so that his loss would not be so serious in case of being overtaken and robbed. I told him to keep up his courage, for three Englishmen were equal to ten Boers any day, and should there be an attack, we could stand a brush, having a few servants that would give additional assistance in case of an emergency.

The next morning we made a detour from the main path, reaching at sun-set the

bottom of a large chain of mountains that lay before us. After reconnoitring for a short time we found a fountain; the ground in the immediate vicinity was trampled flat, like a farm yard, with innumerable footprints of Lions, Rhinoceros, Camel-leopards, Hartebeests, Sassabes, and Pallahs. A small enclosure was formed to protect our oxen and horses during the night. It was difficult to keep them in the kraal, owing to the incessant roaring of Lions and howling of Hyenas, with our dogs in reply. In the morning, I ascended the rugged mountain side, which was covered with large trees and bush, and found the remains of two black Wildebeests, killed and dragged there by the Lions. Being alone, without attendants or dogs, and cognisant of the presence of these monsters in the neighbourhood, I did not venture further, and retraced my steps. After winding round the mountains, watering our oxen at a pool of water, we reached Labotani.

April 30th.—It was reported that a party of Boers were at the next water. Some doubts were expressed, as to whether it was not those that were in pursuit of Wilson. This

duced them to part with some of their weapons. A quantity of salt was exchanged, said by them to have been obtained from a salt-pan, fifteen miles distant; the strength was not equal to the salt procured in the Colony.

On the 13th, we left Mokakanyani, following the course of the sand river for a few hours. The Palmyra became of larger growth, more numerous, and taller; some were thirty feet in height. It was a matter of surprise that there were no medium sized trees of this class; all were either full grown or small young shrubs—the latter were scattered all over the banks of some portions of the river.

We reached a water called Nchokotsa on Tuesday the 15th, situated in the immediate vicinity of a salt-pan extending as far as the eye could see. It was crusted over with a crispy, seline substance, and had the appearance of a large sheet of water. In the direction of the River Zouga clouds of smoke were seen, which was stated by the natives to be reeds on fire.

The water at this fountain is very brackish, numbers of game come to drink. On the night of our arrival, footprints of two

Rhinoceros' that had been drinking the previous night, were seen. I proposed lying in ambush the following night; Edwards, myself, and two Bechuanas, piled up a few stones for a hiding-place, about fourteen feet from the water. The first animals that came were Hyenas and Jackals, which drank and went away; then followed a troop of Zebras, standing about fifty paces off, sniffing the tainted air as if all was not right, then rushed away, returning again, and ultimately going off.

Two Rhinoceros' then came, snorting and ploughing up the ground, and stood about thirty to forty paces from the water. It was moonlight, and we had a good view of these enormous brutes. Knowing their dangerous character, I got ready to spring out, in case they charged upon us; Edwards and myself fired, the bullets lodged in one of them, he turned as if inclined to charge, the other ran away. The wounded one was very furious, goring the ground with his horns, and doubtless thinking "discretion the better part of valour," soon turned round, following his companion. The following morning the ground was found besmeared and spattered with blood.

We lay down the second night. A white Rhinoceros soon made his appearance, standing about forty yards from the pool. We fired, but he escaped; a Wildebeest was also wounded. We returned to the waggon disconsolate at our non-success.

Considerable danger attends this mode of night shooting; the white man has almost invariably to keep watch for all. No reliance can be placed upon the natives, for directly after lying down, they too frequently fall asleep; and should all sleep together, a Lion or Panther, with stealthy and noiseless footsteps might come in our midst, carrying off one or more of our companions.

We left Nchokotsa, skirting the borders of the salt-pan, and arrived before sun-set at a large pool of rain water, where we came in contact with a party of natives from the country of Sebetuan, a well known chief, which lay about ten days' journey from Lake Ngami. They wore a sort of blue calico hanging loosely from their bodies; we thought they must have obtained this from the Portuguese traders from the West Coast. One of them carried a dagger, very ingeniously

carved, which confirmed our opinion. Great reluctance was manifested in giving any intelligence respecting the country they had passed through; all the information obtained was, that they had been three days without water, and if it had not been for a seasonable rain, their journey hitherto could not have been accomplished. An opinion was expressed by them, that waggons could not travel the district they had traversed, on account of drought, and that if attempted, all our oxen would be destroyed by the Tsetse fly, a fly very destructive to horses and cattle.

We supposed they were despatched with some important message from the Sebetuana chief to some other distant tribe, the nature of which they were not permitted to divulge. It is a common occurrence for chiefs to send messages on foot hundreds of miles, to which great honour is attached by the bearers.

Troops of Buffaloes, Veldebeests, Zebras, and other animals came at night to drink at the water. This was deemed a favourable opportunity for replenishing our store of flesh meat. The first night one Buffalo was shot. The second night our hiding place, which

consisted of a few stones cobbled up, was at a distance of thirty yards from the water; while a troop of Buffaloes were drinking, we fired in among them; the darkness was so impenetrable correct aim could not be taken. One Buffalo fell to our guns, the head of which I skinned and preserved. Buffaloes are of a fierce and savage disposition, being more dangerous to encounter when wounded than a Lion. One night, when lying in ambush by the water, a Buffalo was shot down with our guns; it rose again, trembling with rage, looking towards the place from whence the shots had originated. Edwards, myself, and two natives, lay motionless, with our guns empty, not daring to stir. While in this position, two old bulls came walking within five feet of our hiding place. Our lives depended upon avoiding an attack. Again the wounded Buffalo fell, and re-gained his feet, the two bulls going round to the opposite side of the water. We now ventured to re-load, with as little noise as possible; on our appearance at the margin of the pool, the bulls rushed off. I proposed pursuing the wounded one, but my companions declined to accompany me, probably knowing the danger

of encountering a wounded Buffalo better than I did.

Our journey after leaving the Bamangwato country to Nchokotsa, was one of great labour and privation, for our oxen especially. The route lay through the so-called Sahara or Kalahari Desert, which is a flat, sandy country, almost destitute of trees, though abundance of coarse, rank grass. Water is extremely scarce, the fountains being sometimes sixty miles, or three hard days' trekking, apart. A large portion of the soil being sandy, makes it very laborious for the oxen in drawing the waggon.

Kind Providence appears not to have been unmindful of the wants of the inhabitants of this arid, desert country, by supplying vegetation in the shape of a wild kind of water-melon, bulbous roots, &c. In some parts of the desert these are abundant. Of the melons there are two kinds, bitter and sweet. The quantity of moisture these contain, serves to quench the thirst of man and beast, and has saved the life of many a poor Bakalahari and Bushman while roaming in the desert wilds. There is also a flat kind of dark coloured bean, which I have often used as a substitute for coffee, by first roasting,

then pounding, and pouring boiling water on it. There was a peculiar taste in this, which took off the brackish taste from the water.

The Kalahari Desert is inhabited by the Bakalaharis and Bushmen, who are migratory in their habits, rarely remaining long in one place. When one water dries up, the game invariably go in search of another. The natives at once follow in their track.

A striking contrast is presented in the growth of these two tribes. The Bakalaharis, as already described, are tall and lanky, while the Bushmen are very short in stature. It is a matter of surprise the quantity of meat that can be consumed at one meal, by the former especially. After satiating the appetite, they can exist contented for two or three days with little or no food. I have seen one man eat sufficient at one meal to satisfy four or five Europeans. While sitting by the watch fire at feeding time, I have often been amused in seeing the loose folds of the skin of the abdomen gradually expand, reminding me of the blowing of a bladder. I have repeatedly remarked to my friend E. that no European could exist under such a load. The great and

only object of their life appears to be, to satisfy their gluttonous appetite. When there is a large pot of meat on the fire, their countenances brighten up with joy, and the camp is full of mirth, each one relating the adventures of the day. At meals their hands are made to answer the purpose of knives and forks. Supper being over, the night fires made up, they retire to sleep, crouched up like an hedgehog, with no other covering beside a small piece of animal skin over the shoulder and loins.

I thought the Kaffirs of the Colony enormous eaters, but these tribes of the desert far surpass them in that respect. The most unpleasant result of being in their company is experienced after their departure; they besmear themselves freely with fat and grease, which has a tendency to increase the breed of lice, (these are much larger than the insect known by that name in England.) I have had many sleepless nights, arising from the presence of these disagreeable tormentors. Other tribes possess these insects, but none to such an extent as the Bakalaharis and Bushmen.

The following lines, descriptive of the Kalihari Desert were penned by a Colonial bard:—

Away, away, in the wilderness vast,
Where the white man's foot has never past ;
Where the quivered Corranna and Bechuan
Has rarely passed with his roving clan ;
A region of drought, where no river glides,
Nor rippling brook with osiered sides,
Nor hill, nor ridge, nor misty mount,
Nor tree, nor shrub, nor bubbling fount,
Appears to refresh the aching eye,
But the barren earth and burning sky.

We left Nchokotsa, and on Monday the 9th, reached the River Zouga, which runs from Lake Ngami. The river being low, the water was inaccessible, on account of the large quantity of tall reeds, and the soft, boggy nature of the soil by the side of the river. A small village stands on an island in the river, inhabited by a section of the Bakarutsi tribe. With assistance from these, water was obtained for our oxen from a deep hollow, left by the river. The natives brought us abundance of sweet water melons, which were a great treat, and far surpassed the wild ones that are found in different parts of the desert. The banks of the river where the reeds grow, is a kind of

turf; in many parts where the reeds have been burnt, the fire is smouldering underneath, although apparently extinguished. Myself, several of the oxen and dogs, have repeatedly had our legs burnt by incautiously stepping on the burning boggy soil, which the natives say sometimes burns for months together. The reeds stand nine or ten feet high, extending as far up the sides and margin of the river, as to exclude some parts of it from view. A little further on, by winding round the river, we came to a part where the oxen could drink freely.

On Friday we arrived at a portion of the river so low, that we could have crossed with the waggon. At this season of the year many parts of the Zouga were quite dry.

During the previous night, a troop of Elephants had been drinking at this spot; a cow Elephant was shot a few nights previous, by a party of Boers, with whom we came in contact prior to crossing the desert.

With my gun for a companion, I went up the river side in search of game, and found a quantity of aquatic birds; amongst others, La Vaillants Darter, Cormorants, and Ducks. I

shot three, and only succeeded in getting one, in consequence of their falling in the water. There are not always canoes at hand, and it is dangerous to swim in after them, as Crocodiles are numerous in many parts. These reptiles will attack either man or beast. A Mr. Robinson, a trader and hunter, lost his life last year in swimming after a bird, which had dropped on an island in the river. Mr. Moyle, his companion, related the following particulars relative to this tragic occurrence :—Both were going together along the banks of the river; Mr. R. proposed, as there was nothing fresh for dinner, that Moyle should fetch the bird that had been shot. M. replied, that he would not run the risk for a thousand of them. R. made answer, that he would soon go in for it, and suiting the action to his words, at once took off his clothes, swam to the island, and secured the bird. On returning he suddenly loosed the bird, and appeared in a terrible fright. Mr. M. suspecting a Crocodile was about to pounce upon him, called out, what is the matter? shall I fire? There was no reply, and he soon disappeared. Nothing more was ever seen or heard of him afterwards.

Returning to the waggon I had a narrow escape from falling into a game pit that was most artfully concealed. One foot was on the reeds and grass that covered the surface; I felt it giving way, and immediately stepped back; I had been on my guard during the day, looking for any intimations of the presence of a pitfall, as the natives informed me they were numerous; some are twelve or fourteen feet deep, and many have spikes set in the bottom, to kill more speedily the game that fall in. Nothing escapes, from the Elephant down to the smaller Antelope. Most of the Elephants obtained by the natives in the Zouga and Lake country, are caught in this manner.

There was abundance of dried meat hanging about, in passing through the Bakoba villages. In one of these villages there was part of a Rhinoceros, becoming quite putrid; the natives apparently being too idle to cut it up for beltongue.

On the 22nd, we left the river, as it took a bend, rejoining it shortly before sun-set, at a place where there was an open space to the river's brink, made by Elephants coming down to drink.

In the morning I proceeded up the banks of the river, and shot a Diver. It fell in the water about ten paces from the shore. I felt anxious to secure this specimen, and looked carefully around to see if any Crocodile or Alligator was near; thinking I should be in and out again in a few moments, I began to undress; on looking round again, to my horror and surprise, two eyes of an enormous Crocodile were seen gliding down on the surface of the water; a strange sensation came over me, my fate certainly would have been similar to that of poor Robinson, had I have gone in. This monster appeared about eleven feet long; with a few shots from my gun I scared him away.

I shot a number of Ibises, night Herons, and Bitterns. Some of these species I had not seen before. Most of them I preserved, being desirous of procuring as many kinds of birds as possible, from the Lake Ngami country. I was the first European that attempted to collect birds in this district. The birds were very wild, though rarely shot at; Pheasants or Francolins, and Guinea-fowl were numerous—we could go out and shoot a few brace any morning.

The Francolins differ from those of the

Colony, being somewhat smaller, and the white markings on the breast, neck, and sides, are more distinct. I skinned and preserved numerous specimens.

We inspanned at sun-rise on the 26th, and after two hours' trekking, a party of Boers and Griquas, with five horses, joined us. Elephants, Rhinoceros', and Buffaloes, are very numerous in the vicinity of this part of the Zouga. Hunting these without horses is dangerous, and generally unsuccessful. They feed within a radius of ten or twelve miles from the river, coming down at midnight to drink. Large branches and small trees, that had been torn up by the Elephants, were strewn about in the forest. Cow Elephants with calves are considered the most dangerous; she will often charge on the first shot being fired. It is as much as a horse can do to, to avoid being overtaken. Her usual plan is, to pursue a distance of three or four hundred yards, and then return to her calf.

Yesterday, the Boers went out with their horses, and killed a large bull Elephant, the tusks of which weighed upwards of eighty pounds each. One of the feet and part of the trunk were brought to the waggon, and cooked

in the following manner:—A large hole was dug in the ground, and a wood fire made; when this was burnt down, the foot was placed at the bottom, then covered up with hot ashes and sand. In the morning it was ready for eating; I partook of it, and found it very palatable.

Our journey was resumed early in the morning; the trees now became larger and the bush more dense. We outspanned at sun-set. Early the following day, I took my seat in a canoe, and was paddled a considerable distance up the river by the Bakobas. I shot and preserved several birds.

Returning, a huge Crocodile was seen on the opposite bank, basking in the sun. I made signs to the Bakobas to paddle me over, in order to get a shot; they shook their heads, and refused to go near. We then sailed down to the fishery, where the nets were laid. Complaints were made of the scanty quantity of fish caught, owing to the river being so low: when the river is full, fish are exceedingly plentiful—large numbers are caught and dried for future use. Some excellent fish were brought to us on several occasions. The

I gave the young Bushman several pounds of copper wire and some beads; he then returned to the kraal greatly delighted. These Bushmen, I think, had never previous to this, saw the face of a white man. Never had I seen any natives betray such trepidation and fear as in this instance.

The next morning, a male Ostrich was discovered, caught in a pit-fall; I preserved the wings, which contained some splendid white plumes, and dried a portion of the meat, though very coarse, in case our supplies ran short in crossing the desert. A few Bushmen came up at the time; I gave them some copper wire, which was considered an equivalent for any claim they might have to the Ostrich.

A little further down the river, I observed another pit-fall broken open; on going up to it, I found a young Zebra, three parts grown, caught in coming down to the river to drink. While standing admiring its beauty, a group of Bushmen approached; one of them with a knobkerry, made from the horn of a Rhinceros, struck the Zebra a powerful blow, which killed it. It was at once taken from the pit, and cut up; each one carrying a portion to

behind some tall bush, listening attentively, and should any one pass near, it rushes out, and endeavours to gore him to death; many lives have been lost in this manner.

I started off in advance of the waggon on the 10th, and came across a troop of black Gnoos or Wildebeeste. Being protected by some rising ground, I stalked within fifty or sixty yards; I fired, and two dropped dead. After skinning them, I found that only one had received the bullet. I can only account for the death of the second, (which was a cow heavy with calf,) on the supposition that it was frightened to death by the sudden report, together with the whizzing noise of the bullet. There was a trembling and convulsive movement of the muscles of the body, which tended to confirm this.

We came to a Bushman village on the 12th. On going to pick some water melons, it was soon apparent that fever was very prevalent among the inhabitants; many women, covered with scabs, were lying about helpless. I beat a hasty retreat, and at once inspanned.

The next day being Sunday, we halted. I felt sick and feverish; my pulse beat very high.

When feasting upon its prey the Lion has also a great objection to be disturbed. As an instance, the following incident was related to me by a Missionary:—A Lion having killed a Buffalo, a Bechuana woman caught sight of him, while feeding on the animal, and hid behind the bushes, watching his movements, until his appetite was appeased. The Lion then left the Buffalo, retreating towards the neighbouring mountain. She at length ventured to the remains of the Buffalo, and when in the act of cutting a portion of the meat to take with her, the keen eye of the Lion discovered her, and at once came down lacerating her so fearfully, that life must soon have been extinct. A party of natives found the dead body soon afterwards. This illustrates the danger and risk the natives will incur in order to obtain flesh meat.

We left Boatlanami on the 21st, arriving at Kopeng, where we found the spring stopped up with mud. The men set to work at night, and cleared it out, anticipating a good supply in the morning, but were disappointed. Two Rhinoceros' and a Lion during the night visited the fountain, and drank it nearly dry. The

spring being very weak, it was necessary to hasten on to the next water. At sun-set we reached Locackin, and the following day arrived back at Kolobeng.

On the route from Bamangwato to Kolobeng, I shot a variety of birds; amongst others, the Red-breasted Shrike, Sand Grouse or Namaqua Partridges, also several varieties of Thrushes. Between these two towns is the only part of South Africa, where I saw the Red-breasted Shrike, a description of which has already been given. Numbers of Eagles were seen in different parts of our route near waters, hovering about high up in the air.

I found Kolobeng nearly deserted on my arrival. Koselensi, Sechele's brother, for some time had the management of a section of the Bakwains located about ten miles from Kolobeng. Sechele, with the inhabitants of Kolobeng, removed to that place, which possessed several advantages over Kolobeng. Game was more plentiful, the soil more fertile and productive; the situation was also superior, being near to some scraggy, rocky hills, and consequently better adapted for defence in case of attack. A native

teacher with a few natives were left behind.

During the time I remained at the town, the evenings appeared long, in comparison to what they did before leaving for the Lake. In place of the singing, dancing, clapping of hands, &c., nothing was heard except the Lions, Wolves, and Jackals, in their nightly rounds, and their voices re-echoed by the mountains. Large numbers of various kinds of game came regularly to drink; before Sechele left, I had to go several miles before meeting with any game.

The Lions now have fine sport at the Kolobeng River; but his Majesty is not content with game alone, frequently the cattle are attacked in open day; they felled three oxen and one cow, a few days ago, close by the almost deserted town. The man in charge witnessed the attack, and ran to the post giving an alarm; two brothers went to the spot on horseback, when an old Lioness stood at bay, as if inclined to fight; she came bounding forwards, with head erect, and lashing her sides with her tail; at her approach, the two natives, with unusual pluck and bravery, shot her dead.