

THE GOLD REGIONS
OF
SOUTH EASTERN AFRICA,

92826

BY THE LATE

THOMAS BAINES, ESQ., F.R.G.S.

ACCOMPANIED BY BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR.

With Portrait, Map, and numerous Illustrations and Photographs.



BOLBOTRITUS BAINESI.—NATURAL SIZE.

LONDON:
EDWARD STANFORD, CHARING CROSS.

CAPE COLONY:
J. W. C. MACKAY, PORT ELIZABETH.

1877.

wezwie (beautifully overshadowed by bold groups of forest trees) Mr. Nelson found gold among the stones, and sand in the broad bed which only the flooded river could fill.

The hills of the watershed upon our right sweeping round like a vast amphitheatre from east to north, forced us still more in that direction; and camping in a soft wood grove near Zizina, or Mud Spruit, we lost an ox from weakness and exhaustion; and here, saddling up my horse—kept only for great emergencies—I rode on to overtake Mr. Hartley. Crossing the Zinbindasi rivulet, and the broad and sandy Um Vuli river, I reached the Sarua and halted for the night. I observed the glare upon the clouds from fires in the direction of Sir John Swinburne's camp, three or four miles south-west of me. Next day I crossed much quartz ore and well wooded country, intersected by several rivulets; and during the forenoon reached the wagons of Mr. Hartley, the brothers Wood, and Mr. McMaster. The hunters were absent, but Mrs. McMaster and the other ladies welcomed me, and spread upon the skin that did duty for a breakfast table, so many little delicacies, created from the rough materials at their command, that I seemed to have fallen into the very lap of luxury. A train of Matabili and Mashonas arrived, loaded with ivory and elephants' flesh, and as the camp was shortly to be moved I rode back early next morning to hasten on the wagon. I met it at the Sarua river, in which Nelson found a little gold.

When we returned to the hunter's camp at the Imbeeta River, Mr. Hartley gladly received us, but dared not promise me any help in gold seeking until his head man, Inyoka (or the Serpent), had ascertained from mine that I had received full permission to explore from Um Nombati himself. So soon as this information was given he at once invited me to ride with him on his hunting expeditions, and also promised to show me such quartz-reefs as he knew of. Beyond this river no wagon road existed; but the hunters had already marked the direction. We proceeded north-north-west, crossing the Inzinghazi River, and halting to form camp upon a large river called the Ganyana,* where a huge block of granite, big enough for a comfortable cottage, is supported on three or four smaller ones, so as to form a massive canopy over a space in which a goodly company might sit or lounge at pleasure. Mr. Nelson found several quartz-reefs to the westward of the road; one strik-

* Ganyana River, lat., 17°44'56"; long., 30°41'20"; height, 3953 feet; from Pietermaritzburg, 1,195 miles.

ing north to west was 150 feet wide, forming several hills in line, which were visible from afar. He did not think this was gold-bearing, but considers it, nevertheless, well worthy of examination.

From Um Nombatis' village we had been travelling through a wilderness desolated by the marauding expeditions of the Matabili against the former inhabitants—the Mashonas—a people rich in cattle and of peaceful and industrious habits—of whose villages and cattle-folds the ruined walls, built of dry stone, still remain among the granite kopjies. Their formerly extensive rice and corn fields present long reaches of ridge and furrow, causing the ox-wagon to pitch like a boat in a short sea, and so trying to the horse that an elephant in these old gardens very often baffles the hunter.

Here we were visited by a number of Mashonas, from the village, about thirty-five miles to the north-west, and as they informed us that there were pits in the vicinity, from which their forefathers used to dig a kind of metal, of which they professed ignorance, I accompanied them on their return, and it may interest our countrymen at home to know that we do not, on such occasions, go armed to the teeth, and in constant fear of treachery. I rode at a walking pace, about the centre of the long procession, my head man, Inyassa, carried my rifle, and two or three other men my blankets and other necessaries, we crossed large tracts of well wooded granitic country, alternated with belts, in which quartz reefs of considerable extent prevailed. When we reached Maghoondas Village,* it seemed to me that I had reached the borders of the Zambesi population with whom I had been familiar in 1859. The chief sent me a dish of meal paste, and a little pot of meat, rather high in flavour. I slept in a little arbour below the village and the next day a guide went with me to shew me the pits from which the precious metal used, in old times, to be extracted. The reef bordered by clay slate, and other rocks, traversed a valley shut in by rounded hills, and the pits were in groups of six or eight together, three or four feet wide, and some of them ten feet deep. My guide jumped into one to fetch me up a specimen, and as his gaunt weird figure disappeared, I wondered whether his forefathers had ever done the same, at the bidding of Solomon's merchants, and thus afforded material for the legends of Djinns, Afreets, and Demons, who were said to be subject to that powerful monarch.

* Maghoondas Village, lat., 17°33'30; long., 30°17'40; Miles from Maritzburg, 1,230

The customs of the Mashonas, as I have said, seemed all familiar to me, they are more negro like than the Kafirs, the Zulus, or the Matabili, their hair is naturally crisp and short, but they cultivate and increase its length by tying it up in small tufts with red mimosa bark, plentifully anointed with fat, or with vegetable oil, mostly from the ground nut (*arachis*); these tufts are arranged in ridges, from back to front, giving a dandy, with his hair in curl, a ludicrous resemblance to our clowns; but when the locks are nearly a foot long, they are taken "out of paper," dressed with charcoal and nut-oil, parted in the centre, and allowed to hang down on either side the face, confined only by a bandeau, reminding one of the drawings on Egyptian monuments. Of course the head cannot be allowed to touch the ground, and to keep the well oiled locks from being soiled by dust, every man carries with him a neck pillow, like a little stool, which suffers not the head to come within eight or ten inches of the ground. Their arms are the bow and arrow, and the assegai or short spear in many forms, from the blade, meant to inflict a wound two inches wide and two feet deep, upon an elephant, to curious little instruments of torture, intended to penetrate the human form, and by means of thirty or forty ingenious reverted barbs to remain fixed and rankling in the wound.

The law observed by Portuguese hunters, was in force among them, *i.e.*:—That the half of any slain animal that touched the ground belonged to the chief, and till he had taken his, the hunter must not touch his own share. I had expressed my opinion, ten years before, that English hunters would not submit to this, and now the question was settled, without even being proposed to the white men. The Matabili camp followers, indignantly repudiated the bare idea. "Our own master, the great chief, our late king Umselegazi, never took a tusk from an Englishman, and shall you Mashonas, who are only our dogs, dare to claim that which he refrained from?" At one time I found that they had debated on the propriety of terminating my earthly career, while they had me in their power, to give the white men an idea of their prowess. I had observed Inyassa gathering his weapons, and my own closer to me, but went on eating my mess of pap till I should learn more, and I believe gained more credit for coolness than I might, had I known the object of their discussion. As I returned I saw several other quartz-reefs, and groups of diggings, in all of which gold bearing stone had evidently been found. I was requested to put my horse to speed, that the villagers, who had never seen such an animal, might have some idea of his power.

Spending a night at another stockaded village, perched on the top of a rugged clay slate hill, with quartz reefs at its base, I reached our camp, supplying my followers with flesh, by shooting a rhinoceros and two antelopes, on the way.

On our return journey, Mr. Hartley brought us by a more direct road, crossing the Simbo rivulet, just above its junction with the Umvuli. Some of our wagons were damaged in the drift, and we halted for repairs, under a group of granite hills, with quartz-reefs at their base. Here Mr. Hartley picked up several specimens, in which we afterwards found gold. He informed me that extensive diggings were near us, but as he wished his head man, Inyoka, to



SLAYING A RHINOCEROS. FROM A PAINTING BY THOMAS BAINES.

shew them to me, I refrained from visiting them until we had persuaded him to go with me next morning.

The reefs seemed to be the greater part of a mile in length, but were so covered with refuse, thrown from the old surface workings, that their exact limit could not be easily determined, the holes were three or four feet wide, and sometimes ten or twelve feet deep. Here and there a group of holes had been worked into one, forming a large pit, and in many of these mimosa and other trees, from three to ten inches thick, were growing, proving that many years must have elapsed since they were worked, but not establishing for them a high antiquity. One of Inyoka's followers remembers that a house stood some distance north, and in his father's time, it was inhabited, and gold dust was sold there. Perhaps, it might have been the

residence of some one combining the occupation of trading with the office of Catechist, or teacher from the now deserted Jesuit mission, at Zumbo on the Zambesi. Mr. Nelson, who had been out in another direction, inspected these reefs, and was so pleased with them, that I delayed the wagon as long as I could for repairs, to give him opportunity for examination.

Nearly a mile to the south Sir John Swinburne had encamped, and with the help of his head miner, Mr. August Griete, had sunk two shafts about twenty-five feet deep, from which he had obtained some very rich, and visibly auriferous quartz, some white and crystalline, some coloured red or yellow with oxide of iron. Mr. Nelson and I returned on subsequent days to examine the Simbo reefs, and at length determined to mark them off in the presence of our head man, as the first claim for which we would ask the new King when he should come into power, and as an acknowledgement to our friend, who had first shewn me the locality, I named the station "Hartley Hill,"* the north side is bounded by the Simbo rivulet, the north-east by the "Hartley Hill," and the south by large ant heaps with marked trees growing from them.

Mr. Nelson, in his official report, thus describes the place we had selected :—

"Profitable quartz mining depends largely on the facilities for working and crushing quartz; here these are very good, an unlimited supply on the ground, and a fine stream, the Simbo, within a few hundred yards, with constant water, which can probably be used as a motive power.

"The rock strata enclosing these veins are gneiss and a mixture of talcose and chloritic schists striking north-east and south-west or thereabouts, and these dip westward at an angle of 70° or 80° judging by the dip and strike of the rocks lying close on both sides of the hill.

"Just where the reefs are the underlying formation is so covered with soil that it cannot be seen.

"Everywhere in the northern mining district the stratified rocks are so hardened and metamorphosed, that their geological age cannot be ascertained. I believe they belong to the lower palæozoic epoch.

"On the north-eastern boundary of the chain are several kopjies, or small hills of igneous rocks (Hartley hills), which have burst

* Hartley Hill, lat., 18°31'39; long., 30°49'20; height in feet, 3,079; 1,167 miles from Pietermaritzburg.