

TRAVELS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

BY HENRY H. METHUEN.

THE BUSH PEOPLE.

The habits of the Bushmen are migratory and unsettled, and, depending in so great a degree upon game for their subsistence, they rarely associate together in large numbers. Their arms consist of assegais, and bow and arrows, the latter poisoned by a vegetable extract from a species of amaryllis, or by the poison of snakes or poisonous insects; the shaft of the arrow is of reed, bound at either end with sinews, and the point, commonly of bone, is so made that it can be drawn out and inverted; the poisoned end being always carefully sheathed in the reed till required for use. The bow itself is small and weak, nor, judging from their efforts to strike a hat which I once placed as a target, and offered as a prize to the best shot, are they very extraordinary marksmen. They generally creep up to within thirty yards before shooting at any creature. Their stature has, I think, been underrated as much as their intellectual capabilities; the men are not often below five feet, and the expression of their faces is mostly shrewd and animated. In hardship they eclipse any class of beings that I ever saw. A leathern girdle around the loins is worn by the men, and an apron by the women, the rest of the person being uncovered, and with the exception of a skin, which in very severe weather is thrown over their shoulders, this forms their entire wardrobe. I have seen little Bush children running naked in the grass when the temperature was so low that I had on me a thick great coat.

The buffaloes were usually found congregated in huge herds in the vicinity of water. Good sport was usually obtained in

BUFFALO HUNTING.

A herd of at least two hundred buffaloes, slowly grazing along a hill side towards the water, was soon descried, and, securing our horses, we soon dismounted and approached them.

Buffaloes are very regular in their evening visits to the streams with which they are familiar; they are most hideous, ungainly creatures, with very low shoulders, very heavy round bodies, and thick short legs. Their horns are immense, especially in the bull, meeting together on the forehead, and forming an impenetrable shield to the brain of nearly a foot in depth. They run with their noses protuded, and horns thrown back, carrying the head low, and presenting a most malicious, ruffian-like aspect. We crept within shot of the herd and fired; all the balls struck, but Piet alone succeeded in killing a huge bull, which ran at least one hundred and fifty yards before it fell, though, as we afterwards found out, the bullet had perforated the heart. The enormous beasts, scared by the report, charged, crashing through the bush, but stopped within five hundred yards of the spot whence they started. In this manner we followed them up on foot, and killed four, besides wounding others, till the whole of them broke cover and fled. We had not, at this time, gained any experience of the buffalo's revengeful disposition, or we should not have pursued them so hotly, without securing a tree to climb in case of being attacked. Large limbs of the mimosas were shivered and broken off by the rocky brows of the flying squadron, and a calf was caught by the dogs in passing the wagons.—Pearson happening to come near it when thus arrested in its progress, it bellowed, broke loose from its persecutors, and made a rush at him, which, stout as he was, would have felled him in an instant; but, to save his ribs, he broke the stock of his gun over the buffalo's head, and so checked his fury; when the dogs again seized it.

halters were then brought, and it was fastened to a wagon wheel, where it strangled itself in the night. It was nearly dark before we had ceased shooting, so, leaving the dead buffaloes untouched, we retreated to our homes.

17th. A white frost encrusted the ground at daybreak, and soon after we set off in the direction of the buffaloes. The one which Piet killed was the largest, standing at the withers sixteen hands! girth at shoulder seven feet two inches; of fore elbow two feet six inches; horns two feet one inch from tip to tip, and much curved; ears twelve inches; length of body six feet ten inches. Jackals had gnawed the lips and tore out the entrails of the dead buffaloes, and vultures were descending in vast numbers, hovering overhead, and sitting in moping postures on the adjacent mimosa branches.

The first encounter with rhinoceroses was quite successful. The huge beasts seemed to be too dull to be very dangerous. After the slaughter a party of natives gave them a specimen of

AFRICAN COOKERY.

Continuing our walk we espied two rhinoceroses in the mimosas below us, which we stole a march upon. On descending to low ground we for some little time could not descry our quarry, and came upon it quite suddenly; the two enormous brutes both lying asleep in a state of unconsciousness. At the first fire, one of them, a cow, rushed by within a yard of our ambush, snorting violently, and limping on one leg; we followed her up, and, after receiving several two ounce balls in her shoulder, she fell with a loud scream. The second, which proved to be a young bull that had not yet abandoned leading strings, was necessarily killed also, since he would not allow us to come near his mother. The height of the cow is six feet at the withers; length of head, two feet ten inches; of body, eleven feet.—The present specimens belonged to the large white species, the least dangerous of the whole; and I now discovered that the one which I first shot was of a different order, and by report a very vicious one, so that its speedy death was perhaps a fortunate event for us. We have not yet encountered many rhinoceroses, but indications of their existence are numerous.

22nd. Early in the morning we went to the rhinoceroses, which lay at a slight distance from our camp, a large body of natives following us who, we learnt, were a deputation of Bawangkets from Sobiqua, their chief, who wished us to visit his dominions. The Bawangkets lit several fires and commenced flaying their rhinoceroses, vultures, as usual, closely watching the dissecting process. Hacking away with tomahawk and assegai, the savages in a little while removed the entire ribs from the side of the female rhinoceros two of them stepped inside the belly, and, standing in blood above their ankles, aided their comrades in hailing the clotted glutinous substance into the intestines, which had previously been inverted and fastened up at one end. Thus a black pudding on a large scale was manufactured. It is needless to state that all the process was completed by hand, and that, with their naked arms and legs besmeared and encrusted with blood, and talking vehemently together, they were a savage and terrible group. The flesh was cut into long thin strips to dry, for salt is here very scarce, and all the bushes round were festooned with odious garlands of this nature.

We find in another part of the volume

AN ADVENTURE IN RHINOCEROS SHOOTING.

Coming to the dry sandy bank of a periodical stream, we descried, as we thought, two rhinoceroses asleep in the low bush and reeds which grow along the margin. Cautiously approaching

to leeward, we left the horses with Frolic, and advanced on foot to within thirty yards of the drowsy monsters. We were obliged to bend ourselves nearly double for concealment, so slight a shelter did the bushes afford us. Here, to our surprise, we observed no less than five rhinoceroses slumbering like so many fat pigs in a straw heap, and one leisurely drew near our ambush, but soon halted, and with a grunt arranged his ponderous frame in the most convenient attitude for repose. After a brief council of war, we both fired together into the shoulder of the one nearest to us, which was somewhat protected by an intervening shrub.

Never did antelope rise more nimbly at hearing the lion's roar, than did these five sleepers from their sicsta. The wounded one, probably scenting the powder, came thundering towards us like a locomotive engine; the rest fortunately took another direction, for we could scarcely have withstood such a charge of heavy cavalry. We dodged behind the bushes, through which the animal crashed as if through so much grass, and had the felicity of seeing it hurry beyond us; for my friend was within one ace of being trampled upon by the enraged animal in its headlong course.

It was no uncommon thing for the travellers, while peacefully journeying through a wild country, to be surprised by the appearance of some ferocious animal bounding across their path. On one occasion the author

BROUGHT DOWN A FINE LEOPARD.

We were slowly riding through this defile, when a magnificent male leopard, that seemed to have been lying in wait for prey, bounded from the stream up the crags, with an agility only possessed by the feline race, and by them in a wild state. I leaped instinctively from my horse, and, having a small double rifle in my hand, sent one ball after him, which, striking a stone near, brought him to bay; he faced me instantly with a resolute air, and gave me an excellent shot, which I took with the second barrel; he sprang forward with a growl, and I ran to my horse, which, alarmed by my gestures, took to flight, so, facing the enemy, I expected his attack; but my companions, who, from the suddenness of the whole, had had no time to assist, shouted out, 'He is dead,' and relieved my anxiety. The ball had pierced the leopard's heart, and it lay quite dead.

Sometimes the travellers came on unpleasant omens. "Skulls, either of men that have fallen in war, or been killed by lions, are occasionally to be seen bleaching on the plains." The most valuable of all the beasts of chase for food were elands, which were occasionally met with in herds. We have a short account of the exciting nature of the

ELAND HUNT.

A few elands were observed; and these valuable creatures not having been as frequently met with as we could have wished, we pursued them, hoping to lay in a good supply of fat.

Four of them fell to our rifles, and we returned in high spirits. Pearson had a bad fall, his horse coming down in rocky ground, but was not materially hurt, although his gun-stock was broken in half. The scene at one period of the pursuit is worthy of description, though words can but inadequately convey it to the reader's mind.—The elands were crossing an extensive plain, the horses by the side of the huge bulls looking no larger than donkeys, each horseman having selected his victim. Intent upon chasing the ponderous creatures, whose sides and dewlaps reeked with perspiration, we did not perceive the advance of two rhinoceroses till they were close upon us, one on each side within one hundred yards; they were in a very excited state, while some troops of the blue gnoo, quagga and sassay-

bie, dashing past, increased their astonishment and indignation; they ploughed the soil with their horns, and charged through the dust at every thing which came near them, their ugly heads looking too large for their bodies. It was amusing to see with what utter disregard the other animals, conscious of their superior fleetness, treated the rhinoceroses.

The shores of the large rivers were clothed with the most magnificent vegetation, and here animal life seemed to vie in profusion and grandeur with the produce of the soil. Nothing can be more striking than the descriptions given of

THE BANKS OF THE MARIQUA.

Heat and moisture together fostered the vegetation along the river banks in the most powerful manner; and during our ride that perfect stillness, so common in the noon of hot days, wrapped every thing in complete repose. The weather was intensely warm, although we rode chiefly in the shade of a broad belt of jungle, through which the numerous rhinoceros and buffalo paths enabled us to proceed. We were frequently brought to a halt by deep ravines and gullies, where tributary streams had worn a channel to the river, but by retracing our steps always found an opportunity of crossing. The waters of the Mariqua, unbroken by a ripple, unless when a fish rose to the surface, glistened in the sun, and the foliage above them was motionless. Spoors of lion and hippopotamus, with old elephant tracks, were visible along the banks; and my pulse beat quickly as I pictured to myself Behemoth, and the gigantic lords of the forest, bathing in these beautiful and lonely retreats. Every shade of green was combined together in one dense mass: the light and vividly green mimosa, the darker willow with its graceful and pensile boughs, acacias of various kinds, and numberless others of which I knew not the names. On a sudden, a lioness sprang from her lair with a growl not a yard before me, and bounded off as fast as her legs would carry her, followed by all our dogs; I fired at her as she rounded a bush, but without effect.

We next came across a herd of female waterbucks. These creatures are as large as a red deer, are of a dark grayish color, and have long hair; the females are hornless, but the males have horns upwards of two feet and a half, ringed, diverging, and upright, with a curve forwards. A white line encircles the tail in both sexes.

The sportsmen had often curious witnesses of their exploits. An English gentleman used only to the pheasant and partridge shooting of this country, would hardly relish such lookers-on as are found in

AFRICAN JUNGLES.

Bain shot a rhinoceros, and Piet having killed a pallah, came for a horse to convey it to the wagons; but on returning he found the buck gone, and in its place the spoor of a large lion, which had taken it away, doubtless well pleased with a feast gained with so little trouble. John also, while cutting off some of the hide from a dead buffalo, saw two lions watching his manœuvres with much apparent interest.

The cookery was as strange as the game.— Here is

A NEW DISH FOR M. SOYER.

Breakfasted on *elephant's feet*, cooked on the approved South African fashion, by being placed in a hole with hot embers, and then covered with the same. The outer skin having been removed after this preparatory process, a gelatinous substance like calves' head was abstracted by means of a spoon, and when duly seasoned with pepper and salt, formed no despicable dish.

In the midst of the most barren and desolate scenery, the traveller in these barbarous regions

suddenly comes upon spots of unsurpassable beauty, where

FOUNTAINS ARE BREAKING FROM ROCKS.

Continuing our ride, some Baquaines conducted us to a fountain beautifully situated at the rocky base of a hill, which formed one side of a pass through which the wagons were to travel.— Above it was a steep and jagged rock, in whose crevices many wild fig trees made their anchorage good, with apparently no means of sustenance; their silvery roots ramifying confusedly among the rocky clefts like veins of white spar. Some trees of this kind overshadowed the spring, excluding the sun's rays from the water, which trickled forth cool and bright, enlivening the heavy, dull stones with a verdant cloak of moss, and enticing many motley plumed birds and butterflies, besides larger animals of different kinds, to quench their thirst there: the spoors of the lion and the rhinoceros could be discerned amongst others. This is indeed one of the most delightful objects both to the eye and to the palate of a traveller in so sultry a climate, nor can it be less so to the various creatures that drink its waters.

These extracts will give an idea of the spirit of these volumes, though they fail to convey the variety of the scenes the author has described in his pages. All creation here presents itself under an aspect unknown to Europe. The delusive mirage tempts the footsteps of the wanderer in search of lakes that fly from his vision as he attempts to reach them, breaks the landscape into a thousand fantastic shapes, and gives gigantic dimensions to the forms of life that appear under its dazzling influence. Salt pans stretching over hundreds of acres cover the desert with an imitation of smooth and brilliant lakes. Fountains, breaking forth in the midst of arid plains, raise islands of the most fruitful and vivid vegetation for the refreshment of life, till the flow of the waters is lost in the spongy sand. Groves of thick and beautiful mimosa border the banks of rivers which give fertility to wide tracts of country, and nourish every species of existence, from that of the lordly elephant who crushes forest trees in his path, to that of the tiny insects which sport in the air like rays of brilliant light.

The natives he met with were generally friendly in disposition. From several queens, whose attire consisted of brass bracelets and bead necklaces, he received great attention. Wherever missionaries have penetrated, they have produced a marked and beneficial improvement in the native population. Mr. Methuen does full justice to their labors, and expresses his belief that Africa can only be civilized through their instrumentality.

This able and novel volume will afford amusement to all classes of readers. Since the work of Major Harris nothing has been written on Africa more likely to become popular.—*Britannia.*