

GUN AND CAMERA



IN
SOUTHERN
AFRICA

the border into the Transvaal, and see what we could do among the Marico Boers. Thanks to the kindness of Mr. Alfred Musson, we were equipped next day with a Cape cart and four horses, looked after by Moses, a capital coloured servant; and on May 7 we drove merrily off for Malmani, our first outspan on the way to Zeerust. Malmani lies fifteen miles from Mafeking, to the north-east, in Transvaal territory, amid some rather pretty scenery. The Boers certainly chose the pick of the country. Almost directly one leaves the dry plains of Bechuanaland and enters the Transvaal in this direction, running water is everywhere to be found, pleasant streams are met with, and at Malmani a full, deep river (a branch of the Klein Marico) of most pellucid clearness, has to be driven through, even at this the dry season of South African winter.

The morning was bitterly cold as we started off, and we were glad of the rugs and wrappers kindly provided by our Mafeking friends. Malmani a year before, during the "boom," was looked upon as one of the most promising gold-fields of the Transvaal. All was now changed. The one long street seemed desolate, canteens and stores were closed, the bank had shut up shop and taken its departure, and Malmani sat, figuratively speaking, crooning over the grey ashes of her vanished past. There was one good hotel and store, however—that of the Messrs. Weil—still open. Here we outspanned for an hour, had a capital lunch, and, thereafter, pushed on again. There is a good deal of expensive machinery lying waste here. The notorious Crystal Reef Company carried on operations at this place, as well as other companies. Gold in considerable quantities has un-

doubtedly been found in the quartz formation, but the general impression seems to be that, although very rich deposits, or "pockets," are here and there found, the gold is patchy and inconstant. There are knowing people who affirm vigorously that Malmani has not yet had a fair trial, and that, given honest and capable management, fair play, and companies not overloaded by vendors and promoters, the fields here will some day turn up trumps. For the present, however, Malmani, pleasant spot though it is, is very much out in the cold, and almost deserted by its erst bustling population.

Soon after leaving Malmani, the beautiful hills surrounding Zeerust began to open out in the distance, the country became richer and more fruitful-looking at every mile traversed, and after passing the little village of Jacobsdal, we entered upon the fairest and richest bit of country, from an agricultural point of view, that I have seen from the Cape to Khama's Country. Well may Marico be called the garden of the Transvaal. Its fat corn lands, plenteous water supply, smiling well-to-do homesteads, and fair orange groves, all set among noble hills, amply justify that title. The farms passed this afternoon between Jacobsdal and Zeerust are equal to the best parts of Devonshire. The soil is a rich deep loam, red for the most part, water is unlimited, and is laid out in sluits or courses to every part, and the crops are magnificent.

Marico was and still is well known as the stronghold of the old stubborn anti-English Boers, sons of the sturdy "Voer-Trekkers" who first occupied the district some forty or fifty years since. The famous old elephant hunter, Jan Viljoen, now a very old

man, one of the early trekkers, and his family live here. When Jan first picked his farm up here he called it, aptly enough, "Vär Genoog" (far enough), Marico, then lately wrested from the Matabele, being the extreme northward limit of the white men. In those days elephants wandered by hundreds over this part of the Transvaal, rhinoceroses were as plentiful as pigs, and all other game was equally abundant. It is not many years since such men as Viljoen led two widely different lives. In the winter they went elephant hunting far up into the Mashona, Matabele, and Lake Ngami countries; while in the summer they looked after their farms in Marico. Much of this is changed, however. Elephant hunting south of the Zambesi is nearly a thing of the past, and as the game is hardly worth the candle, the hunters stay more at home or have trekked to the wilds of Ovampoland and beyond. I am not certain that even in the good days those wilder spirits had all the best of it, and am inclined to think that the men who sat quietly at home on their land the year through have done better for themselves in the long run.

We were greatly surprised to find such capital homesteads in this region. Some of the farmhouses were excellently well built, and, with their deep thatches, white walls, and green doors and shutters, looked extremely picturesque. They were mostly embowered in groves of orange trees, just now positively aflame with luscious-looking fruit. Some of them, such as the house of Mr. Botha, where we next halted, are equal to most of the best homesteads at the Cape, and to many a good farmhouse at home. Here let me note that the Marico oranges are the

best in all South Africa; indeed, now that disease has carried off most of the old plantations round the Cape, they have no rival. Of course, the difference between a ripe orange plucked from the tree, and an orange that has been plucked unripe to enable it to be eaten in England (and which, therefore, never can be said to truly ripen) is incomparable.

There had been very heavy rain recently, the roads traversed this day were sticky, and before reaching Mr. Botha's two of our team (which was rather a scratch one improvised for the occasion) showed signs of giving in. We therefore outspanned and left the two feeble nags behind, while the others rested. Mr. Botha, who came out and kindly undertook their charge until our return, is well known in these parts as Danje Botha, or "Rich Botha" as many call him. A dark, stiff-built, well-to-do-looking man of middle height, perhaps fifty-five or sixty years of age—one would hardly imagine that the quiet, taciturn, self-possessed individual clad in dark grey tweed clothes, who now assisted us (not perhaps altogether too gladly or gracefully), was one of the moving spirits in the Boer war, and a commandant at Laing's Nek and other places. People may say what they please, throw dirt at the Boers, vilify them in every possible way; but they were *men*—men of strong wills, determined courage, and a sublime faith who could boldly face the whole British nation, and win the victories they did.

Well, Mr. Botha did not invite us into his house, although the young ladies were at home, and, curiously enough, English music from a piano began to issue through the open window. Even as we outspanned just below the road which passes close to

1890), and range from there about the Queebe Hills, twenty-five miles south of the lake, where Messrs. Nicholls, Strombom, and Hicks followed them a year or two back. Along the Chobe River swamps, and occasionally in the Mababē veldt, an occasional troop yet wanders, as I hear. Elsewhere in Khama's country the only strong troop nowadays is to be found in some wild and almost impenetrable jungle country between the Zambesi and Linyanti roads. This troop is partially preserved, and the country where they have found shelter is so dense and thorny that they are now practically unmolested.

A strange event happened a few years since at Molepolole in the Protectorate (Sechele's Town). A troop of nine or ten elephants, presumably from the North Kalahari or Botletli River, had by some extraordinary accident lost their way, and were discovered in the hills near the town. The population of course all turned out, and the unfortunate beasts—mostly cows and calves—were quickly hunted and destroyed. One of the greatest and most wanton bags of modern times was made by some Dutch hunters—the Van Zyls's and others—in the country between the Lake and the upper Okavango about fifteen years back. A troop of 104 elephants was driven into a deep morass, where they were bogged and helpless. The Boers set to work, and before sundown had slain every member of the herd. There were few with good tusks, and the slaughter seems to have been as unprofitable as it was unpardonable. So vanishes the elephant from Africa.

The black rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros bicornis*)—rhinoster of the Boers, borele or keitloa of the Bechuanas—formerly found abundantly in every part of

the country, and described by Harris and others as a positive nuisance to the gunner, is now seldom heard of. A few still linger in the swamps of the Chobe River, and near that portion of the Zambesi, but they are very scarce. Round about Lake Ngami they have quite disappeared. The rhinoceros is a water-loving, water-drinking beast, and in time of drought large numbers, gathered from a vast tract of country, were to be found at desert fountains and waterholes. Here the hunters of a generation since, such as Gordon Cumming, Baldwin, and Andersson, shot them at night by the half-dozen together. Oswell and Vardon in Livingstone's time slew eighty-nine rhinoceroses in one season; C. J. Andersson nearly sixty in a few months; and other hunters were constantly emulating these examples. As this sort of slaughter was practised by Dutch, Griqua, and native hunters also, it is not surprising that the rhinoceros, which even in daylight is not a difficult beast to bag, has all but vanished from the scene.

The white rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros simus*)—wit rhenoster of the Boers, chukuru or kuabaōba of the Bechuanas—once abounded in all the countries between the Orange and the Zambesi. This enormous rhinoceros, distinguished mainly from its black cousin of Africa by its vaster size, its more sluggish habits, its prolongate fore-horn, immense head, and blunt upper lip, adapted so evidently to its grass-eating habits, is now, I fear, from the reports of Mr. F. C. Selous and other hunters, on the very verge of extinction. The beautiful true quagga (*Equus Quagga*), another very interesting form, has been (as I pointed out two or three years back) the first to disappear from the once crowded natural game preserves of

Southern Africa. The monstrous white rhinoceros seems destined to stand second on the list of a lost fauna.¹

After coming down-country at Christmas 1890, my friend Mr. J. E. Yale and I photographed several

¹ Since writing the above, an interesting letter from Mr. Selous has appeared in the *Field*, a copy of which I annex :—

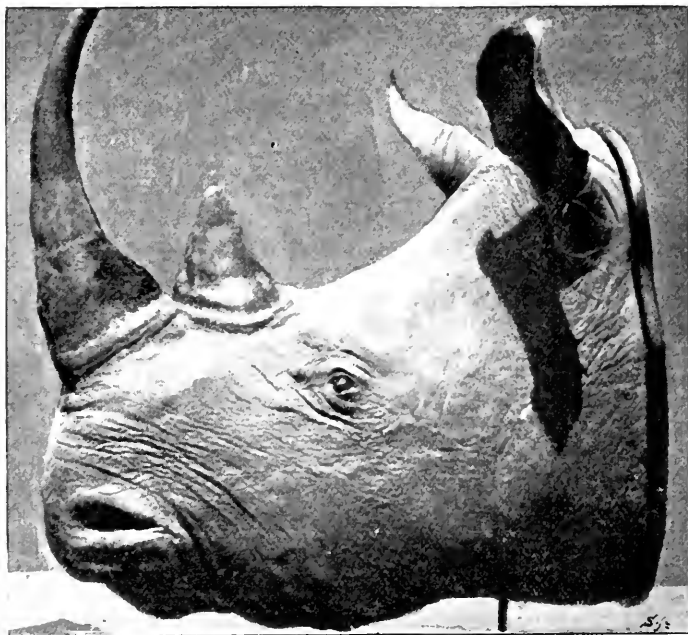
“AFRICAN RHINOCEROSSES.

“SIR,—It may interest some of your readers (especially my friend Mr. H. A. Bryden) to know that the great square-mouthed, grass-eating rhinoceros (*R. simus*) is not yet extinct. I have just heard from a reliable source that one of these animals (a female) has been killed lately about 100 miles N.W. of Salisbury, Mashunaland. This animal was one of six that were consorting together, and the two gentlemen who shot it—Messrs. Eyres and Coryndon—have, I believe, preserved the skin and skeleton. Whilst on this subject, I will take the opportunity of saying that I have never stated that the white rhinoceros was extinct, although I have often lately seen myself quoted as having done so. What I have said, and what I still say, is that this most interesting animal, the largest of terrestrial mammals after the elephant, is on the verge of extinction, its range being now confined to a very small tract of country in Northern Mashunaland.

“Had it not been for the occupation of this country by the British South Africa Company, I believe that the white rhinoceros would already be extinct; but that occupation having kept all native hunters from Matabeleland to the west of the Umniati River, has happily preserved the few white rhinoceroses still left alive from the constant persecution which, in less than twenty years, has utterly exterminated them in every other portion of South Central Africa. There may yet be ten or even twenty of these animals left, but certainly not more, I think, than the latter number. I have some evidence that one or two have again crossed the Umfuli River to the west, and are now living in the Linnaga, as the country is called between that river and the Umzweswe. They were very plentiful there in 1878 and 1880. I had always intended, after my term of service with the British South Africa Company was over, to make an attempt to secure a skin and skeleton of the white rhinoceros for our own magnificent national collection at Kensington, and left Salisbury last June for that purpose. Unfortunately a fall from my horse, whilst chasing an ostrich, bruised my leg, and laid me up for a time, and when I was all right again, my time was too short to allow of a journey into the rhinoceros country.

“Before closing this letter, I wish to call your attention to an article on African rhinoceroses, which appeared in the *Field* of July 2 last,

natural history specimens in the Cape Town Museum. Among these was the head of the last white rhinoceros brought down-country. This head belonged to an animal shot after much trouble and search by Mr. Selous in Mashonaland some ten years since; and



HEAD OF WHITE RHINOCEROS.

Shot by Mr. F. C. Selous in Mashonaland. From the Cape Town Museum.

it is undoubtedly the last (almost the only) specimen now left to us of an exceedingly rare and singular form. It is a thousand pities that no complete

from the pen of the eminent zoologist, Mr. R. Lydekker. In the course of his interesting and instructive letter, Mr. Lydekker says, *à propos* of the black rhinoceros (*R. bicornis*), 'Mr. Selous attributes to this species a gentle and unoffending disposition, but in this respect he is not in accord with Mr. Drummond and most other writers on African sport.' If Mr. Lydekker will refer to my book, he will find that he

skin of the entire animal has ever been brought to Europe.

The fore-horn is not so straight or so prolonged as in some specimens obtained in bygone years, when this animal wandered over nearly all South Africa: but on the whole the head is a good and typical one. Mr. Lydekker gives the extreme recorded length of such a horn as fifty-seven inches over the curve. This is an excellent record undoubtedly, and will now in all probability never be beaten. Yet in the old days when *Rhinoceros simus* abounded, and every chief's ambition was to possess a long kerrie or staff fashioned from the fore-horn of this beast, some horns of extraordinary measurement must have been in existence. There are still here and there in South Africa, in remote places, such kerries, but they are scarce, and the traders and hunters have had the pick of them. Probably at this day in England, in forgotten corners, some of these trophies are lying away in melancholy obscurity.

It has been the fashion to assume, since Cornwallis Harris's day, that the white rhinoceros was never found south of the Orange River. Undoubtedly in modern times (seventy or eighty years past) it was not; but there has always been a tradition, supported by Barrow and other travellers, that the mighty quadruped once wandered and fed in the open wastes

has entirely failed to convey the sense of my remarks upon the general character of the black rhinoceros. The passage to which I presume Mr. Lydekker refers reads as follows: 'What I wish to argue is, not that the black rhinoceros is a sweet-tempered animal, but that, at any rate, in the great majority of cases, he is by no means the surly, morose, and dangerous beast that some travellers would have one believe.' And to this opinion I still adhere.

F. C. SELOUS.

"CAPE TOWN, November 4." (1892.)

of Great Bushmanland, as well as in the country north of the Orange River.

This tract is very similar in character to the open plains of the South Kalahari and other adjacent districts; the Orange River at certain seasons is easily fordable, and there seems to be no sound reason, other than a purely captious geographical distribution, why the white rhinoceros should not have formerly grazed in this part of Cape Colony. Members of this species carrying the horn horizontally or a little downwards (*kuābaōba* of the Bechuanas) appear to have possessed a clearer vision than those carrying the horn vertically (*chukuru*); in these latter the sight seems to have been much obstructed, according to Livingstone, by these enormously long horns.

The vast bulk and height of this animal may be partly gauged if it be remembered that specimens were formerly slain standing more than six and a half feet high, measuring between sixteen and seventeen feet in length, and possessing a bulk in proportion to these measurements. Even the African elephant is dwarfed by comparison, although, of course, standing much higher at the shoulder.

Notwithstanding its size, the white rhinoceros could display upon occasion immense activity and speed, as the great hunter and companion of Livingstone, Mr. Oswell, and others can testify. In Ngami-land, and in the North Kalahari region, where formerly it was plentiful, it has been, as I ascertained while hunting in that direction in 1890, finished for some years past. It seems to be quite clear that no specimen has ever been known north of the Zambesi.

The white rhinoceros, from its sluggish habits and poor vision, was even more easily killed than the

black, and the slaughter of these animals during the last forty years must have been enormous. Sir Andrew Smith, during his scientific expedition in 1835, saw in one day of travel in the Bechuana country, near the tropic of Capricorn, between one hundred and one hundred and fifty rhinoceroses; one hundred giraffe were seen upon the same day. Other large game was often found in a like abundance. Alas! for the vanished days!

The hippopotamus—zee koe (sea cow) of the Boers, kubu of the Bechuanas—formerly abundant throughout the country wherever rivers were to be found, is now much more restricted in its habitat. The Vaal, Molopo, and other northern streams all supported these unwieldy creatures in abundance; but for the sake of its flesh, and still more of its hide—from which the best sjamboks are made—the sea cow is becoming very scarce south of the Zambesi. The Botletli and Tamalakan not long since swarmed with these animals; now they are much less plentiful and very wary. Lake Ngami holds a good many still. In the Limpopo they are not now often found until some way past Selika's. In the Chobe and Zambesi they are still numerous.

When killed, the skin is cut into long strips, two or three inches wide, and having a thickness of about two inches; these strips dry out very much like the bark of a tree. When cut and polished they make tough, supple walking-sticks, and are semi-transparent, and of a deep yellow—much resembling fine clouded amber. For up-country use the strips are "brayed" to a softer consistency, and furnish ox-whips and riding sjamboks of terrible punishing power. The teeth, which provide ivory of extreme