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# THE NEW AFRICA

A JOURNEY UP THE CHOBE AND DOWN  
THE OKOVANGA RIVERS

A Record of Exploration and Sport

BY

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AND

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*With a newly drawn Map of hitherto unexplored parts of the  
Country, and Seventy Illustrations from Original Drawings  
by the Authors, and Photographs*

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hauled the struggling boys, some six in number, over to the other side, and then twined a third of its length round two of the boys, tying them immovably to one another. An axe speedily settled the difficulty, and before long portions of this leviathan were roasting on a fire improvised by the boys for the occasion. We tasted of the fine-looking white meat out of curiosity, which, except for a slightly musty taste, much resembled the flesh of fowls. I must confess, however, that our natural repugnance to such a beast formed an effectual barrier to swallowing the morsels we had taken into our mouths, and we spat them out amidst mutual laughter.

A recollection of my early hunting days in the Bush Veldt occurs to me, when, in company with several other hunters, a honey bird led us directly to a fierce old black rhinoceros bull lying asleep in the long grass under a tree. We did not observe the rhinoceros until we were quite close upon him, as he was hidden by the long grass, and besides, our attention was directed more towards the bird, who sat twittering excitedly in the branches as if joyful over having completed some virtuous act. The first intimation of the rhinoceros we got was his suddenly rising, and charging at the centre of our party. We scattered without loss of time, and before the brute was twenty yards away he came down with a crash from the volley we gave him as he passed. I may mention that there was no honey in that tree, and that the bird disappeared, probably frightened by the fusilade we gave the rhinoceros on his appearance. Yet before the rhinoceros appeared, the bird had the behaviour, to all our minds, of having completed his mission, as he remained in the tree till we came up, and did not fly on beyond, as is usual when leading one to the goal. He was apparently satisfied that his share of the work was done.

Jan brewed us a famous beer from the honey, and that night, in recognition of the occasion, the natives held a dance unsurpassed for wildness under the great trees by firelight.

Two rows of about twenty dancers were formed some fifteen feet apart, illumined by a large fire at each end, each row repre-

neighbourhood, but could find no sign of anything. On passing the tree again, the sound was as distinct as ever, and feeling annoyed, I made a thorough search of the neighbourhood, with unsuccessful results; yet whenever I came near the tree the sound became audible, leading me to the conclusion that the tree itself was responsible in some way for this disturbance, which excited the superstitious fears of my boys to the utmost. A minute examination revealed the fact that there was a large bee nest in a hollow in the tree; and as each little labourer returned to deposit his store of provender, he caused a hum at the narrow orifice that served as entrance to the nest. With fire and axe we attacked this welcome find, and the three hundred pounds' weight or more of honey which we excavated served us for many days to sweeten our tea, our store of sugar having long since been exhausted. Honey boiled and left in a gourd to crystallise deserves special mention as a luxurious substitute to replenish the sugar-can with in the wilds. While on this subject it is as well to mention a class of honey found underground that is manufactured by small dark bees, slightly larger than the common house fly, a source of great inconvenience, if not danger, to the inexperienced, as it contains some strong aperient matter most unwelcome to the consumer,—at least we found it so. A hive of this honey was pointed out to us by the boys, who from the resonant sound produced by stamping on the ground assured us that there was a large nest there. The entrance to the nest was a little hole in the ground about an inch in diameter, and when we dug below this we came upon a twisted structure not unlike the interior of an ant-heap, but formed of beeswax. The honey was deposited irregularly in this space, without much regard to shape; and the wax, which had a deep grey-black colour, possessed perforations through which the bees found access to the combs in recesses on beyond.

In these regions we saw 'spoor' of all kinds of bush game, including rhinoceros, giraffe, buffalo, and occasionally of elephants.

Our bearers related to us that some of the reed men had informed them of a herd of buffalo in the neighbourhood, headed

faction, that the Chobe was sinking. The river, too, was much narrower than below, hardly more than half a mile broad, though still covered with reeds. Here I killed a fine letzwee ram which was heading a small troop towards the reeds as we came up. He happened to halt about two hundred and fifty yards off, raising his graceful head into the air, and, stamping with his feet, seemed to object to the intrusion, when a bullet from the long gun laid him low. The new bearers were very much surprised at the accuracy of the shot, and declared their belief that it was an accident, for, while I was sighting at what to them appeared an impossible distance, they asked in contemptuous tones what it was I meant to do. A native is no shot anywhere at anything like a range. Perhaps there are occasional exceptions among the Basutos and Zulus, although I never yet have met a single one who understood the manipulation of the sights. In the Zulu war, for instance, the warriors always elevated the sights and shot over the top, believing that, because the bullets then travelled further, the elevated sight gave the charge more strength, never understanding that the resulting trajectory, which carried the bullets safe over our heads, had anything to do with it. But for this fact the battle of Ulundi would have had a far different termination. Three thousand regulars and volunteers, formed in hollow square, were exposed in the open for three-quarters of an hour to the incessant fire of over twenty thousand Zulus, and sustained only a loss of nine killed and seventy-two wounded. This is the reason that the Zulus are more formidable with the assegai than with guns, for with the former they always seek opportunities to make rushes from cover at short distances, or out of the darkness, to get into a hand-to-hand mêlée, whereas they believe themselves capable of conducting an attack in the open, and in daylight, when they have rifles in their hands.

There was much spoor of large game along our route, especially rhinoceros, which we came upon fresh every mile or two, with the two peculiar deep furrows this animal makes with his two fore paws when scratching over his droppings.

The natives relate, amongst their tales of game lore, that there was a long dispute between the elephant and the rhinoceros for this privilege, and as they could not agree, it was at last decided to settle the question by mortal combat between two picked champions. The fight was fierce and long, and for a time appeared to be in favour of the elephant, who thrashed his adversary unmercifully with his trunk, always facing him, so that the rhinoceros, who rushed fiercely with his horn at the elephant's chest, was pushed aside by his front legs and tusks, and therefore could not get a fair dig at his opponent. Both combatants screamed in their rage till the forest shook, and neither would yield; the fierce rhinoceros only growing fiercer from the terrible punishment the elephant inflicted upon him. At last the rhinoceros in his fury rushed madly past the elephant's front legs with a dodging movement, and buried his horn deeply in the belly of his opponent, who, mortally wounded, threw up his trunk and screamed in agony that for evermore the rhinoceros should alone have the sole right to defile the forest in the peculiar manner related, and then rolled over dead.

On the second day of our march we were overtaken by two men in a canoe, who were messengers from Moheni to apprise Matambanja of our advent. We gave them some meat and a present to Matambanja, consisting of a splendid blanket, some beads, and other trifles, to show our friendly feeling towards him. They told us that they would reach the chief in three days' paddling, but that it would take as many more days to accomplish the journey on foot.

We came across the carcase of a koodoo buck fresh killed by lions who had fled on our approach. It strikes a novice as very peculiar that, although constantly coming across evidences of lions in the Veldt, and while often being disturbed by their roaring at night, one seldom has the pleasure of a personal meeting in daylight. The most wary of game, gifted with a keen scent and marvellous instinct for hiding, the lion avoids meeting mankind by day, and, unless driven by hunger, will seldom approach him even at night. There are lions, however, who

spatched with the significant command 'to put things in order, if there is anything wrong.

Through this far-reaching and effective policy the king holds control over his subjects, who in one place or another are continually, under some plea of prior claim or legitimate right to the throne, and promises of aggrandisement to their supporters, attempting insurrection.

The introduction into these countries of firearms, which the king only distributes amongst his most loyal and tried followers, has done much to check the promiscuous rising of petty chiefs.

While walking through some bush on the river banks, we stumbled right on to a black rhinoceros, who jumped up from his lair a few yards off, and stood looking at us sideways. I promptly fired for his head, but in the hurry shot slightly high, so that the bullet perforated his skin and went through just over the top of his skull. The brute dashed off, with a shriek like a steam engine, through the thicket into an open glade lined by bush beyond, and I went after him as hard as I could go. On nearing the bush, the rising of some 'rhinoceros' (also known as 'tick') birds, with their shrill, peculiar shriek, warned me that the beast was near; and none too soon, for out he came with a tremendous snort. None of the boys had followed me, so I was alone. It is a most peculiar sensation to have a rhinoceros charge one in the open. The elastic bounds of the great black mass, with the horn at the executive end swaying from side to side as the head swings in unison with the movements of the rest of the animal, have anything but a reassuring effect. Lucky for me that I was in perfect training, as everything depended on my activity at the moment when the beast was so near that the next stride would have toppled me over. Holding my rifle in the right hand at full cock, I made a desperate side jump to the left, intentionally falling on my left hand, stretched out to support the fall; and as the huge lumbering mass passed on, I stuck out the rifle, firing with one hand full into his broadside, lodging the bullet well behind the shoulder. He went on, without turning, straight into the thicket, where I followed, loading as I ran. Hardly

ance for us. It never was clear to us why the natives all lived on the other side of the Chobe, and I was anxious to cross over to see if there were any advantages of soil or other facilities to account for this fact. But to all my offers to go over, the natives always made some objection that ended in my remaining. Probably they felt safer from possible raids where they were, and with good reason, for no one could possibly have found his way across the labyrinthine passage through the interminable masses of reeds without a guide, or without attracting the notice of the inhabitants, who, thus warned, would have plenty of time to take steps for their protection.

The headman returned with the news that the chief was away to help ferry over the river a horse which had been sent to King Lebossi from the king at Lake Ngami, but where the ferry or horse was we could not learn, and both of us expressed our doubts about the possibility of bringing a horse safely through this fly-infested country. Our green beads were again accepted as payment by the canoe men without demur, and we also purchased a large basket of corn in exchange for enough beads to make a single bracelet. The country surrounding us was low and flat, supporting camel thorn—*Mimosa*, in which there was any quantity of giraffe and buffalo spoor.

While waiting for news from the other side *ennui* led me off on the track of a rhinoceros with several of my best boys to help find his lair. Apparently the rhinoceros comes to the river's bank to drink and wallow early in the morning, and then takes a bee-line for some feeding-place lying anywhere between three and six miles away in the sand belts. We proceeded without much attempt at caution, following the very distinct track leading straight through the sand for about four miles, when one of the trackers snapped his fingers to attract our attention. We all hurried over to him, while the boys assumed the wakefulness and keenness of pointers, and there sure enough was a sign that the animal had started feeding, for plainly all around us the tops of the small bushes had been cropped, as the animal had gone irregularly from one clump to another. He

might, as it was about eleven o'clock, be lying asleep anywhere in the neighbourhood, perhaps even on the back track, for near midday the rhino generally lies down to digest his breakfast; and if Mr. 'Tsekucurroo' (native for rhinoceros) got our scent before we came upon him, then good-bye to the day's sport, for he would be off. We all of us immediately made down wind several hundred yards, in a bunch, and then, spreading out in line, carefully quartered up the wind, eagerly looking out for the great dark hulk lying asleep behind some bush. Cautiously we came along, each one alert to the slightest sound or signal. To me it looked at last as if we were to have our trouble in vain, when suddenly Chiki on the extreme right gave a slight snap of the fingers and stood rigidly pointing to the foot of a large tree in front of him. Each passed the signal on, but I had clearly taken in the position at the first sound, and stooping low made my way over to Chiki, and by a circuit came up behind him. There, sure enough, lay the enormous hulk of a blue rhinoceros with his back towards us, fast asleep, his horn dangling loosely in the sand. There was no necessity for hurry or fear, but as I took the 4-bore from Chiki, also retaining the Swinburne-Henry for a possible second shot, my boys made off silently but quickly, losing no time in the performance, and I was left alone. I walked up to within fifteen yards while the brute lay quite still, then taking up a loose stick and holding the 4-bore in my left hand with the Swinburne-Henry fixed between my knees full cock to be handy, I flung the stick at the brute, bringing the four-pounder up at once, in readiness to shoot. The rhinoceros, disturbed in his slumbers, was rising slowly on to his knees when he caught sight of me, and had just braced himself for a more rapid effort, when I pulled. Dropping the big gun in the sand, I jumped clear of the smoke to see what was going on, and if necessary to avoid a charge; but for this there was no occasion, for the four-ounce bullet, driven in behind the shoulder by fourteen drams of powder had done its work: the rhino lay quivering in death agony, and with a last mighty kick or two surrendered his earthly being.



Not until I shouted did the boys appear, and then with hesitating steps. I never could understand the fear they had for this kind of game, for they seemed to be more terrified at what a 'Tschkucurroo' might do than at what I considered to be far more decided dangers from other kinds of game, such as buffalo. More meat, meat, always meat, and although perhaps justified in making a bag of rare game, I felt positively discouraged at the prospect before us, but made up my mind to give the meat nearly all away to the natives living across the river, and only keep a choice cut from the flank for our own camp.

As the chief Jeluka was away from home, we opened preliminary negotiations with his brother, who consented to supply us with the necessary canoes to take us to the crossing of a river ahead flowing into the Chobe from west and called the Liana, also Loengwe, pending Jeluka's approval on his return. We found that we were already camped at the bank of this Liana river, but the mass of reeds hid the fact from our observation until later, although we could clearly distinguish a stream about one hundred yards wide and very deep running from the west, which we at first mistook for an arm or loop of the Chobe.

Since we left the connecting stream between the Okovanga and the Chobe, the gigantic baobab trees, very frequent up to that point, seemed to have left us, with the Kolahni palm.

A thorn that some time previously had lodged in my foot began to be very troublesome, causing considerable inflammation and lameness, so that I prevailed on the unwilling Hammar to cut it out, an operation that gave me considerable relief, although distressing Hammar very much to perform.

At the junction of these two rivers we were astonished to observe the great variety of insects, especially of the mantis kind, of all shapes and colours. Some like broad dry leaves, others like sticks, and the most peculiar of all like grass seeds. Here was an inexhaustible field for the entomologist, and I am aware that many a collector will express disapproval at the apparent callousness with which we passed these rare objects without securing some specimens. But let it be borne in mind

that we were something like two thousand miles from the coast, with no appliances for collecting, and only vague possibilities of ever being able to transport such frail goods safely to the coast. Collecting requires time and opportunity. This must be left to those that come after us to fulfil.

While waiting for Jeluka's pleasure to visit us, Hammar crossed the Loengwe in a canoe, to have a shot at some letzwee buck visible opposite, and returned with two that fell to his gun. We found that besides the ordinary worm inhabiting the letzwee there were also many leeches which clung tenaciously to the mucous membrane of the stomach after the buck's death. Hammar also reported that what appeared to be mainland on the other side was only an island dividing the Loengwe into two branches, which flow into the Chobe under the ever-prevailing masses of floating reeds.

## CHAPTER XIII

Paul recognises me as a youthful companion in Natal—Paul, the big gun, and the rhinoceros—Chief Jeluka appears in state—Native attempt to rob us of our goods on the Loengwe—Suspicious outlook—Decide to try for the Okovanga—The Whippoorwill—I go to Matambanja alone—My guide to Matambanja—Game wild—Shoot wild dog believing it to be a lion—Nearly shoot a woman by accident—Matambanja's son visits me.

ON the morning of the seventh, Paul came humbly begging that I would lend him the big gun to shoot a rhinoceros with, so that he too might relate his prowess when he returned to the land of his birth, Natal. After all these months' travelling together, last evening he had confided to me that many years ago he had come up shooting to the Zambesi with young 'Drake' from Pinetown in Natal, and that he had deserted his master near the Victoria falls, lured by the wiles and charms of a Batoka maiden who induced him to adopt her people and country as his future home. He admitted that he recognised me now and that he had known me as a boy when first I carried a gun, and called the natives together to hunt with me on our own farm in Natal situated hardly three miles from Drake's farm, and that he often earned a sixpence from me for taking part in these early hunts by carrying game home for me. He said the fact dawned on him when first he heard me speak Zulu or Matabele to one or two of the boys with us who understood that language, and when talking of my early hunts, one incident after another I related convinced him more and more of the fact, till last night, as he lay thinking the matter over in a vague way, the truth came over him like the awakening of a dream, and with a start he realised the truth that I was the same man. Last night his father had appeared to him in his sleep, and said, 'Paul, take care of this white man your

old friend whom you have found, and come home with him.' And now he said his heart was sore to get back to Natal.

All this told by the fireside at night affected me strangely, and if Paul was overjoyed to meet me, my delight was not less to have one about me who from his breed was innately an honest man besides being an old friend. Paul and I shook hands on the spot like men between whom words are insufficient to explain all that is uppermost in their minds.

Of course Paul got the gun, and Franz and I went with him and the boys to witness the fun. We tracked a cow and calf rhinoceros from the river about two miles inland, and, after quartering about in search of her near the feeding-place, discovered her standing in a thicket fast asleep, with the calf lying in a heap at her heels. All was conducted in the utmost silence and Paul instructed to crawl up to get a broadside shot. The boys all showed their respect for the beast by immediately retiring while we were making our arrangements. Franz took up a station fifteen yards away on the right and I on the left, while Paul, who was already seated in position, waited for the signal that we were ready and then levelled the big gun, foolishly or in his excitement holding the weapon somewhat loosely. A 4-bore is not a toy to be trifled with when properly loaded, and so he found to his cost, for as he fired, the gun recoiled, knocking him fairly over on to his back, jerking itself clean out of his grasp and falling some yards behind him. Whether he hit the rhinoceros or not never transpired, for with a scream doing justice to her enraged maternity, the cow charged straight at the smoke of the shot. But Paul, half dazed with the shock he had received, still had the presence of mind to crawl rapidly behind a scrubby little bush, and hide before the brute was on him. As it was, he only escaped by a few feet, for the enraged rhinoceros nearly trod on him in her furious passage. Waiting till she was clear of Paul, both Franz and I each gave her a Martini-Henry bullet half sideways from behind as she passed, at which she tossed her nose in the air and half halted for a moment as if she would turn. But the calf rushing past at this moment,

gave her a lead which she followed away into a nasty jungle, where we left her, none of the boys consenting to pursue her any further, and I not liking the job alone; for, accompanied as she was by a vicious calf, the two of them might make things lively for the attacking party, and probably interfere with any jumping or dodging tactics by a double charge. A rhinoceros calf weighing close upon five hundred pounds, with a reasoning power akin to a steam-engine let loose, is a factor worth considering under these circumstances.

Poor Paul was very crestfallen at the result of his hunt, and afterwards only needed reminding of the event to put on the most aggrieved look. He never could understand what happened with the big gun, and was more astonished than any one to find it lying behind him after the shot was fired. None of the boys ever wanted to borrow the 'Tobolo Ituna' (big gun) for hunting after this.

On August the 5th, early, a messenger from Jeluka arrived bringing as a present a pot of crystallised honey, with the message that Jeluka was coming over. An hour later he came, accompanied by several subordinates, mostly old men of sleek appearance and large stature, denoting an appreciation of the good things in life. He approached us with great gravity, and when seated on one of our boxes placed handy for the purpose in a convenient spot, greeted us each separately, softly clapping his hands in salutation, a form of etiquette decorously followed by the whole assembly. One fat old gentleman, whose forefinger and thumb happened for the moment to be occupied by a pinch of snuff, vicariously used his ham with the free hand to comply with the slapping part of the salutation. Liaka, the headman who had accompanied us from the last place, then went up to Jeluka in a crouching position and extended his hand, which Jeluka seized and pulled at steadily for a few seconds, and then released it, upon which the ceremony of softly clapping hands was again put into force. Jeluka had his head adorned with a white, hard, felt bowler hat that had seen some service, supporting a beautiful white drooping ostrich

told even at the long ranges we fired at, for later in the day they disappeared and troubled us no more.

A female rhinoceros with a calf crossed my path as I was walking slightly in advance of the column towards afternoon, and I felt towards her much as Reynard the fox did towards the forbidden fowls in Goethe's *Reineke Fuchs*, but restrained myself from shooting, although she stood and looked at me quite half a minute from fifty yards off, deciding whether she would charge or leave me alone. At last she went off. A little further on I came on to a salt lick or creek that ran from the south-west into the Liana river, and even as I write now my mind is pleasantly excited at the marvellous sight of game that burst on my view. As far as I could see up the open laagte the ground was teeming with heavy game. Close in front of me stood three giraffes; a little further on a troop of seven more; between these a troop of buffalo: a little beyond, troops of giraffe, eland, buffalo, hartebeest, quagga, letzwee, rooi buck, blue wildebeest, ostriches, reed buck, and more, and more, repeated over again until the whole valley seemed one teeming mass of life. Unable to control myself from excitement, and wondering what effect a shot would have on this vast assembly of game, I stealthily looked round, and finding none of the party in sight, although there were more reasons than one why I should not shoot, I guiltily clinked the nearest giraffe sixty yards off under the ear with a Martini-Henry bullet, and she dropped, with one chopping blow of her powerful forelegs, into the reeds they were standing in, which effectively hid the body from sight as it lay. The shot boomed along the valley, hedged in by the forest on either side, awakening the recumbent and resting game into activity. Mercy! what a wonderful sight it was! The troops careered about like mad, till the earth reverberated to their hoofs; some ran one way, and some another. Many troops thundered down in my direction, and passed close to the advancing column of boys. Two rhinoceros that had been reposing in the reeds lining the little creek where the giraffe was lying, started up, and, with elastic bounds no one would