

EXPLORATIONS
IN
SOUTH-WEST AFRICA.

BEING

AN ACCOUNT OF A JOURNEY IN THE YEARS
1861 AND 1862 FROM WALVISCH BAY, ON THE WESTERN COAST,
TO LAKE NGAMI AND THE VICTORIA FALLS.



BY

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FORMERLY ATTACHED TO THE NORTH AUSTRALIAN EXPEDITION, AND SUBSEQUENTLY
TO THAT OF DR. LIVINGSTONE ON THE ZAMBESI.

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PREFACE.

THIS WORK was written by my Son during a journey from Walvisch Bay, on the west coast of Africa, to the Victoria Falls of the Zambesi River, in company with Mr. J. Chapman, a former friend of the author's, who had spent many years in travelling and was well acquainted with the country and the language of the natives. In 1858 Mr. Baines was appointed artist to the Zambesi expedition under Dr. Livingstone, and accompanied his party to Tete, the principal town in the Portuguese territory, on the eastern coast of Africa; but leaving that expedition in 1861, he returned to Cape Town. On recovering from a severe illness, which was attended with fever and loss of sight for several weeks, he resolved to explore the interior himself, and if possible to cross the continent from the west coast to the Zambesi on the east. For this purpose he built two copper boats, so constructed as to be used singly, or, when the river admitted, side by side, with a platform on which he could form a house or

twelve miles ; but an uncertainty as to the figure at which the trochameter was set at starting vitiated all calculations founded on the reading off. We intended to start again at moonrise, but the herdsman having allowed the cattle to run off, we were not under weigh till past 7 A.M. on Wednesday, when Jem, with an accuracy that would entitle him to rank as marksman in a rifle corps, shot his wagon into the only possible hole in the path, and broke the 'dissel boom' in trying to drag it out. The shortening and refitting this, and boring a new hole for the bell, cost me one hour's labour, and, though John found an inch-shell auger in Chapman's wagon, it was too late to save the centre of one of my bits.

The invalid, who thinking, I suppose, that two cures must be better than one, has submitted to some lancing or cupping operation in the native fashion, has now acquired a prescriptive right to the front of my wagon ; and Jem, taking advantage of my having allowed young Pompey to ride when the forced night marches were too long for him, is contriving to instal him permanently as his pipe-bearer, keeping him out of sight, instead of sending him forward with the women, till he thinks I cannot have the heart to turn him away and make him walk alone. My only remedy for this, I suppose, will be to insist on the young schemer washing himself : if that fails, what else can be effective ?

We saw the traces of an elephant upon the road, and Chapman had seen a herd of fine elands, and a rhinoceros, which scarcely ever drinks water, but lives on roots and melons. Chapman has observed that the elephant never eats the Markwhae, nor any grass, except a very sweet kind near the Zambesi, though we see now and then places where they have torn up the ground for roots that are agreeable to them.

We outspanned, after trekking for twelve hours, near a pit called by the Bushmen Thounce, and by the Bechuanas Leetje Pierie, both names signifying Wolf Fountain—the Stink Fountain of Andersson; but though we might by waiting for it have obtained a little water for ourselves, we could not have expected enough even for the dogs. We had made rather more than fifteen miles by trochameter, but were too late for an altitude of a star, my attempts last night being frustrated by the spilling of the quicksilver, and Altair passing before I could collect it again. A former observation of Chapman's, however, gives $21^{\circ} 19' 30''$, which I dare say is not far from the truth.

On the next day, I walked ahead on a winding road, sometimes west of north and sometimes nearly east, as dense patches of forest alternating with open mimosa plains influenced its course. I believe to the south there is a sandy ridge that renders it almost impossible to trace a direct road to Kobis. My soft 'vel-

its surface, in one hole, is placed a little burning tobacco ; the man kneels down, applies his mouth to the other, and enjoys the luxury of an unportable hubble-bubble. With a view to such pleasures as these, flat noses and protruding lips seem to be a most admirable provision of nature. Chapman says the Bechuanas in their own country do not smoke, but take snuff, and those I have seen must have learned it from the Bushmen. They do it, however, commonly enough on the Vaal River.

Thursday, 31st.—Dikkop reported the spoor of a rhinoceros at our well, where something must have frightened him, as he passed without drinking ; the Bushmen said they had told Dokkie early in the morning, but he had said nothing about it—a tolerable sign that none of our people are affected by hunger. We followed the spoor about five miles without seeing any sign of his halting—a stray rhinoceros-bird, which had perhaps parted company, also following us.

In the faint hope that the rhinoceros might turn back to drink, we went down shortly after dusk to lie at the water in one of the old scherms, or circular walls of loose stones, about thirty inches high and six feet in diameter. After some hours of alternate watching and dozing, Chapman proposed giving up the useless vigil, and devoting the rest of the night to its legitimate purpose at our camp ; and as the Bushman seemed to coincide with him, I consented, if nothing should appear shortly. We were lying in

a half-dreamy condition when the Bushman touched and whispered to Chapman, who cautiously possessed himself of his gun and levelled it in such a position that I could not move without either showing myself above the scherm or spoiling his aim. Of course not a word is spoken on these occasions, and settling myself down upon my back, with the muzzle of his gun exactly over my face, and about ten inches above it, I waited till the blinding flash had passed, and then, springing up, saw a large black object moving rapidly away from us. Of course in another instant my gun was at my shoulder, and pointed as carefully as the darkness permitted, but no report followed the falling of the hammer. We had fired at a mark during the day, and I had omitted to reload after the last shot—an utter violation, I humbly confess, of the sportsman's first and most elementary canon, to reload at once after firing, no matter at what, or when, or under what circumstances. However, it was not of much consequence, for the rump of an elephant would furnish a grave for a whole platoon of bullets without much inconvenience to its owner. Meanwhile I am flattered at thinking I have at last seen an elephant, and if anyone wants to know what it is like, let him take a black mass of anything, the bigger and more shapeless the better, then still further obscure it with a cloud of dust, and he will have a tolerable idea of the reality.

Next morning, despite Master Jem's assurance that

brother rode to it at night. John was occupying the intermediate one, and I was preparing to go down to that at Quarantine Vlei, when a commotion took place around the fire. Anthony (please be kind enough to pronounce this name Ann Tōny) had put his hand in the dark upon a puff-adder, and such a shower of blows were raining down on the ill-starred reptile, that I was quite safe to catch him by the tail and ship off his speckled skin before I started for my lair.

Tuesday, 19th.—My lonely vigil being ended, I went round the vlei, to make sure that nothing had visited it during my intervals of drowsiness, and returned to camp, where I was spreading out the snake skin, with its inner and adhesive surface, on sheets of paper, when Chapman returned with the news that he had killed a bull-elephant and a white rhinoceros, the former, I believe, standing within three yards of the scherm when he received the death-shot. Without waiting for breakfast, I gathered my drawing materials, and started at once for the spot, about three miles distant, shooting on the way one out of an immense flock of white storks, with black quill feathers, that hovered over or settled near one of the smaller vleis. The elephant, which seemed larger and blacker than those hitherto killed, was already in process of dissection; so making one of the Damaras hold up the ear for me, I rather hurried over a sketch of the head and fore-limbs, and set out to find the rhinoceros—an animal which

I had not yet seen. About 300 yards north-west of the water, and nearly between it and Secākaama hill, lay the barrel-like carcase, swelling in the morning sun till the naturally hard skin now seemed as if it enclosed an absolute solid, and yielded not even to the pressure of my foot, when I stood on it the better to observe the outline of the back. The clumsy head—like a shapeless log, with the eyes, nostrils, and disproportionately small mouth crowded together in one end of it—was furnished with two horns, the anterior nearly four feet long, seven or eight inches thick at the base, but diminishing to less than half at the height of nine inches or a foot, whence it tapered gradually, assuming a sabre-like form with the convex side forward; the posterior being a mere stump, about seven inches in height. The eyes were small and set flat in the side of the head, with no prominence of brow, and in such a position that I should doubt very much the assertion, that the rhinoceros can see *only* what is straight before it. I should think, on the contrary, that anything exactly in front would be absolutely hidden from its view. The mouth, as I have remarked, was very small, and the upper lip not prehensile. The limbs were dwarfish compared with the bulk of the carcase; nevertheless the creature runs upon occasion with almost incredible speed. The skin was of a light pinky grey, deepening into a bluish neutral tint on parts of the head, neck, and legs. The limbs, shoulders, cheeks, and neck were marked with deep wrinkles,

crossing each other so as to leave a lozenge-shaped reticulated appearance, but there were none of those folds in the skin which artists at home, borrowing their ideas from the Indian rhinoceros, are so fond of depicting, the only approach to anything of the kind being a slight collar-like mark across the throat.

Chapman and Bell came up soon after with the photographic apparatus, and took the following dimensions:—

	ft.	in.	ft.	in.
From point of upper lip to between the ears	3	11	} = 15	4
From ears to insertion of tail	9	3		
Tail	2	2		
From withers to fore foot	6	5		
From hump to fore foot	6	9 $\frac{1}{2}$		
From hip to hind foot	6	7 $\frac{1}{4}$		

The actual height will be a little less than these measurements:—

	ft.	in.
Half circumference of body	6	8 $\frac{3}{4}$
Ears	1	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
Half circumference of head	2	7 $\frac{3}{4}$
Horn	3	11 $\frac{1}{2}$
Short horn	0	7
Circumference of fore foot	3	0
Hind foot	2	9 $\frac{1}{2}$

The Elephant:

Height at withers	11	8 $\frac{1}{2}$
Length of trunk	7	5

To avoid altercation as much as possible, the Damaras had been sent to cut up the elephant; and as soon as Chapman had taken two or three very

good pictures of the rhinoceros, the drivers, with Koobie and his Bushmen, were allowed to work their will. First long strips of the thick hide, commencing at the centre of the back and running diagonally forward to the thinner portions of the throat and belly, were cut off for the purpose of being hereafter trimmed into whips for the hinder oxen. This done, and the flesh stripped from the top side, the ribs were broken through, and the lower half presented the appearance of a huge charger filled with clotted blood—was this to be thrown away? Not a bit nor drop of it! The long intestines, cut into convenient lengths, were tied up into bags, and the mouth of each being held open by one savage, another commenced baling with both his hands, and a cauldron partly filled with fat being already on the fire, sack after sack of life's ensanguined stream was started into it, to say nothing of tit-bits impaled on forked sticks or grilled and roasted in every variety of taste.

A 'sticker up,' or, in African parlance, a carbon-adjie, had been roasted on a fork for me, but so hurriedly and carelessly that I could not pronounce upon the merits of the flesh, and turned rather to that of the white stork, which I had skinned and by this time broiled. As it was now past sunset, however, I shouldered my rifle, and set out for the intermediate scherm, where, while enjoying my supper, or more literally, breakfast, a Damara arrived from camp with a slice of new bread and a bottle of new milk.

Nothing whatever except a bird or two visited my water ; but I could hear distinctly the barking of the dogs, and shouting of the people at the dead animals, and the howling of some hyænas toward Quarantine Vlei.

Wednesday, 12th.—On reaching the wagons, I found them nearly ready to start, and in a couple of hours we passed the elephant, and encamped something less than a mile south-east of Seeakaama, one of the largest of the range of Kopjies, which number about a dozen.

The rest of the week was spent in various occupations, as in making shoes, mending gun-locks, forced out of order by the Damaras, eating the rhinoceros' hump, which was really excellent and would have been much more so, had not Jan in taking it up from the hot earth and embers stuck his spade clean through the skin, allowing the whole of the juices and gelatinous matter to escape.

We shot three kinds of vulture ; one, the small common bird I had already sketched ; a pair with wings seven feet in the spread, and with the crown and back of the head covered with short white feathers ; and a third, with bald pink and purple corrugated skin on the head and neck, and a spread of wing of no less than eight feet. The plumage of the two last was of deep Vandyke and sepia brown, with white upon the legs and other portions, and I took the opportunity of sketching them carefully. We made a new scherm at a small vlei farther on

And now was to come before our view another portion of the panorama, to them of far more interest than all the cataracts the world can boast of. We had refreshed ourselves at the Masoe, a little stream flowing over a rocky bed, and had started with fresh vigour on our way, when our guide whistled. A halt was made, and every eye turned in the direction indicated. A black rhinoceros (*boriele*, the fiercer of the two varieties) was standing not far upon our right, and from his uneasy gestures it was evident he had caught sight of us at the same moment.

Keeping back as well as we could our excited followers, Chapman and I crept to within fifty yards, and fired with deadly aim into his shoulder. He stumbled, badly wounded, but stood at bay about a hundred yards farther, viciously snuffing the air with elevated nose. A couple more shots brought him down again with a broken shoulder, and bleeding profusely from the lung he darted away through the thicket at a pace we could not cope with. We ran till out of breath when the spoor was plain, or sought its course in devious windings when it was not. We crossed the little river, and about four miles back caught sight of him again, but the rush of the three men who had kept with us put him to flight, and being tolerably wearied, we returned, leaving *Wildebeeste* and *April* to follow as silently as they could, and find an opportunity of despatching the crippled beast. Having dined off a bit of elephant's flesh broiled upon the embers, we took the path again,

winding wherever soft red sand could be found among the low rocky hillocks. Pebbles of beautifully crystallised white quartz, transparent and opaque, others tinted with deep green like verdigris (though it does not test like copper), as well as agate and coarse red jasper, lay about on one of these hills, another feature of the ever varying scene which arrested our attention.

The deep valley of the narrow river,* enriched with every kind of foliage, had now become more decided in its character. Steep cliffs bounded it on either side, the deep shadows of their abrupt descent contrasting with the grassy plateaux above, whose yellow surfaces showed like fields of ripened corn. Immediately beyond was the belt of dark, fresh green forest, fringing the ravine of the Victoria, and from behind this rose the white vaporous columns (or rather clouds, for the first word suggests too formal an idea) screening as with a misty veil the now darkened southern face of the fall, beyond which a long vista of the palmy island-studded river glittered like silver in the sunlight, the banks now showing in warm and soft grey tints the detail of

* We did not at first recognise this narrow stream as the lower portion of the Zambesi. Dr. Livingstone's description having conveyed the impression that the continuation of the river flowed from the farther extremity of the chasm which receives the cataract, instead of about three-fourths from the nearer end. Beside this, the lower portion is apparently so mere a thread, compared with the broad sheet of water above, that any one would fancy it only a small tributary.