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THE MEMOIRS
OF
PAUL KRUGER

FOUR TIMES PRESIDENT OF THE
SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC

TOLD BY HIMSELF



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sure the lion's teeth, which were extraordinarily big. Thinking no harm, I jumped on the lion's stomach. As I did so, the air shook with a tremendous roar, which so frightened Hugo that he forgot his tooth-measurements and fell down flat upon his back. The others shook with laughter, for every hunter knows that, if you tread upon a lion's body within a short time of his death, he will give a short last roar as though he were still alive. The breath still in him, being forced from the stomach through the throat, produces the roar. Hugo, of course, knew this, but he had forgotten it, and was greatly ashamed of his fright. In fact, he was so angry that he turned on me to give me a good hiding. But the others stepped good-naturedly between us and made him see that it was only my ignorance that had given him so great a fright.

I shot my second lion behind the Magaliesberg on the Hex River. My uncle Theunis Kruger and I were after a herd of antelopes when, my horse being done up, I was left behind, alone. Riding at a foot-pace, I came upon a herd of lions. Escape on a tired horse was out of the question. Suddenly one of the lions left the herd and made a dash for me. I allowed him to come within twenty paces and then shot him through the head. The bullet passed through the head into the body. The lion fell, with his head turned away from me, but jumped up

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again immediately and returned to his companions, while I reloaded. The moment he reached the herd, he fell down dead. Encouraged by my success, I fired upon the others. But in vain. They escaped into the nearest mountain, and I was not able to follow them. A few years later, I had another encounter, on the same spot, with a herd of lions which had killed several of our oxen. These also escaped into the same mountain; but I succeeded in first shooting two of them. My companions, who were not so swift of foot, lost their quarry.

I shot my fifth lion in the Lydenburg district, when on a trek towards the Elephant River. We were pursuing a brute that had robbed us of several oxen. I at that time had a good and faithful dog, which was my constant companion, and which used to track the lions through the bushes. When he found the lion, he stood still, loudly giving tongue till the lion roared angrily back at him. When the dog saw me coming, he stood aside a little. Now the lion got ready for me; but, at the moment of springing, the dog seized him from behind, and a bullet at close quarters dispatched him quickly. This made the fifth lion that I killed by myself. In company with others, I have of course shot a great many more.

During a march against Moselikatse, who, a short time previously, had surprised and cut down our

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people, I was ordered to set out with a strong patrol from Wonderfontein, where we left our wagons, to reconnoiter the enemy's position. At Elephant's Pass, in the neighborhood of Rustenburg, we came across a big herd of elephants. The pass owes its name to this encounter. My father went after them, but Commandant Potgieter stopped him from shooting, as the enemy might be nearer than we knew. Those were the first elephants I saw.

My first rhinoceros I encountered during that same expedition. As I was slightly in advance of the others, my uncle Theunis Kruger gave me permission to fire, and I was so fortunate as to bring him down with the first shot. I had an ugly experience on the next occasion that we—my brother-in-law and faithful hunting companion, N. Theunissen, and I—hunted rhinoceros. I must mention that we had made an agreement by which that one who behaved recklessly or, through cowardice, allowed game which was only wounded to escape should receive a sound thrashing. There was something wrong with my rifle on the morning we started, and I was obliged to take an old two-barreled gun, one barrel of which was injured; consequently its driving power was considerably lessened. I knew that a shot is thrown away on a rhinoceros unless you manage to send it through the thin part of its skin. We came across three of them, a bull and two cows.

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They were *witharnosters*,¹ the most dangerous brutes. I told Theunissen to follow the two cows and not lose sight of them. It was my intention to kill the bull, and then join in pursuit of the cows. My comrade fired from time to time to let me know where he was, for he was soon out of sight in the thick undergrowth of the wood. When I had passed the rhinoceros, I jumped from my horse to shoot him. I placed myself so that he had to pass me within ten paces; this would give me a good opportunity to hit him in a vulnerable place. One bullet killed him outright. I mounted and rode as fast as I could go in the direction whence I heard Theunissen's gun, loading my rifle as I galloped. He had just sent a second bullet into one of the cows as I came up. The brute stood quite still. I saw that the animal was trying to get away through the underwood, which was less dense here than anywhere else, and I went after her. As I rode past my comrade, he called out:

“Don't dismount in front of the beast; she's awfully wild and can run like anything.”

I did not pay much attention to the warning, knowing Theunissen to be over-cautious, but jumped off my horse and ran obliquely past the rhinoceros. She had scarcely caught sight of me

¹ *Rhenoster* is the Afrikander for rhinoceros. *Witharnoster* is a white rhinoceros.—*Translator's Note.*

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before she was in hot pursuit. I allowed her to come within a distance of three or four yards. When I fired, the percussion-cap refused, and there was no time for a second shot. The animal was close upon me, and there was nothing to be done but to turn round and run for dear life. In attempting to do so, my foot struck against the thorn roots, and I came down flat on my face. The beast was upon me; the dangerous horn just missed my back; she pinned me to the ground with her nose, intending to trample me to death. But, at that moment, I turned under her and got the contents of the second barrel full under the shoulder-blade, right into her heart. I owed my life to not letting go my hold on the gun during this dangerous adventure. The rhinoceros sprang away from me, but fell down dead a few yards away.

My brother-in-law hurried up as fast as he could, for he thought I had been mortally wounded by my own gun in this deadly combat. When he saw, however, that I was standing up safe and sound, he took his sjambok, and "according to contract" commenced to belabor me soundly, because I had, he said, acted recklessly, in disregarding his warning. Soft words and attempts to justify my conduct were thrown away on him; it availed me nothing to point out to him that the beast had already hurt and bruised me to such an extent that I might well be let

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off my hiding. I was eventually obliged to entrench myself behind the thorn-bushes. But this was the first and last time that Theunissen had occasion to thrash me.

I brought down my first buffalo very near the above spot. A flying herd of buffaloes came up from the valley by the bank of the stream. We hunted them, and I led. A buffalo-cow left the herd and made a rush for me as I jumped from my horse to shoot. I was ready, however, and, when she had come very near, shot her through the shoulder. The impetus of her onset knocked me down, and she rushed on over my body, fortunately without stepping on me. She took refuge on the opposite bank of the river, where we killed her.

My next adventure with buffaloes took place near Bierkraalspruit Farm. The underwood was from four to five feet high, and contained a number of buffaloes. Six of us came to hunt them. I forced my way alone through the bushes to see if it was possible to get a shot there, and passed a herd of buffaloes without being aware of them; but before long I came right upon a second herd of the beasts. A big buffalo at once turned his attention to me, but fortunately his horns were so wide apart that, in butting, the trees and bushes got mixed up between them, which not only broke the force of his attack, but hid me very effectually, if only for a few mo-

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ments, from his sight. Trying to get out of the wood, I found myself suddenly amongst the herd which I had passed a little while ago, without noticing them at the time. Even now I only realized the position when I ran right up against a buffalo that was just getting up from the ground. Angered at being disturbed, the beast tore my clothes from my back with his hoof. My comrades, as they stood outside the wood, took the buffalo's hoof for his horns, so high did he raise it in attacking me. Fortunately I escaped with a fright.

My brother-in-law N. Theunissen and I were hunting near Vleeschkraal, in the Waterburg district, when I had a most unpleasant encounter with a buffalo. I had hit a buffalo-cow, and she had escaped into the dense thorn-bushes. As it was impossible to follow on horseback, I gave my horse to my brother Nicholas, and followed the buffalo on foot. The great thing was not to lose sight of her in the thick undergrowth. Believing myself to be the pursuer, I was unpleasantly startled to find her suddenly facing and attacking me. I got ready to shoot, but my flint-lock missed fire, so I had to run for it. The rains had been heavy, and just behind me was a big swamp into which I fell as I jumped out of the enraged animal's way. The buffalo fell in after me, and stood over me in a threatening attitude before I had time to get up.

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My rifle was in the water and useless; but, fortunately for me, as the buffalo butted at me, she rammed one of her horns fast into the ground of the swamp, where it stuck. I got hold of the other and tried with all my strength to force the animal's head under the water and so suffocate her. It was a difficult thing to do, for the horn was very slippery on account of the slimy water, and I needed both hands and every atom of strength I had to keep her head under. When I felt it going, I disengaged one of my hands to get at the hunting-knife, which I carried on my hip, in order to rid myself of my antagonist. But, if I could not hold the brute with two hands, I certainly could not hold her with one, and she freed herself with a final effort. She was in a sad plight, however, nearly suffocated and her eyes so full of slime that she could not see. I jumped out of the swamp and hid behind the nearest bush, and the buffalo ran off in the opposite direction. My appearance was no less disreputable than the buffalo's, for I was covered from head to foot with mud and slime. Theunissen, hearing the row we made, knew that something was amiss, but he could not come to my assistance. It was impossible to get through the undergrowth of thorns on horseback.

When I had cleaned myself down a little, I got on the track of the rest of the herd, and succeeded in shooting two.

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I was never so near losing my life as once during a race with an elephant. One day, Adrian van Rensburg and I were on the veldt looking for elephants. Van Rensburg was behind me, when the first herd came in sight. I galloped on to get a good shot at them. I could not wait for van Rensburg, for the horse I was riding that day was a particularly spirited animal, and had the habit of running round me in a circle after I dismounted. This necessitated my quieting and holding him, and so some time was lost before I was ready to shoot. As I jumped down, one of the elephants caught sight of me, and came through the bushes as fast as she could go. At the moment of dismounting, I knew nothing of my danger, and had not the least idea that an elephant was after me. Van Rensburg, however, saw everything, and called out as loudly as he could to warn me. I turned and saw that the elephant was flattening the bushes behind me with her heavy weight as she broke through the underwood. I tried to mount, but the elephant was already upon me, and the weight of the underwood, trodden down and held together by the bulk of the elephant, pinned me to the ground. I found it impossible to mount. I let go of my horse, freed myself with a tremendous effort, and sprang right before and past the elephant. She followed, trumpeting and screaming, hitting out at me fiercely with her trunk. Now came a race for life

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or death. However, I gradually increased the distance between us; but that was a race I am never likely to forget.

The Kaffirs who were with us were about a hundred yards away. When they saw what was happening, they too commenced to run; so there we were: the Kaffirs first, I after them, and after me the elephant in furious pursuit. While running, the idea came to my mind that I would catch the Kaffir who was the poorest runner, and, in case the elephant bore down on him, step suddenly aside and kill her at close quarters. I had kept hold of my rifle, a big four-pounder. But the elephant was so tired out by this time, that she herself put a stop to the hunt by standing still. Just then van Rensburg came up, but his horse stepped into a hole covered with grass, and both horse and rider came down, for van Rensburg's foot had caught in the stirrup. Meanwhile, the elephant had disappeared. After van Rensburg had found his legs again, I said to him:

“ Hunt in that direction,” pointing with my finger, “ and try to catch my horse!”

The elephant, in making her escape, had turned first to the north and then to the west, the direction in which the herd had moved on. I said to van Rensburg:

“ When you have found my horse, bring it after

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me. Meanwhile, I will follow the herd of elephants, and not lose sight of them till you join me."

I soon came up with the female elephant that had pursued me. The calf ran a little way behind her. I passed it quickly to get near the mother; but it screamed when it saw me, and the mother, who turned round quickly at the cry, just caught sight of me as I jumped into the bushes. I ran as fast as I could through the underwood, and came suddenly upon van Rensburg, who had caught my horse.

"There are tse-tse flies here," he said; "we must turn back."

"Very well," I answered, "you go on, but I must get a shot first at these elephants which have given me so much trouble."

The mother and her calf had meanwhile disappeared, but, before I made my way back, I was so lucky as to shoot two of the herd. Unfortunately my horse, whose name was Tempus, had been stung by the poisonous flies, and shortly after our return, at the commencement of the rainy season, it sickened and died.

When quite a youth I encountered a tiger or panther. My Uncle Theunis, his son and I were hunting antelope, or elands, near Tjiggerfontein Farm, in the neighborhood of Ventersdorp, and we soon found an antelope in the cover. My cousin rode in

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front and my uncle followed him; there was a distance of about forty yards between them. Suddenly, a panther appeared and made for us at a furious rate, although we had given him no provocation whatever. He overtook my uncle; but the latter's well-aimed shot brought the panther to the ground at the very moment when he was leaping on the horse which my uncle was riding.

A big lion-hunt, in which several of us took part, gave me the opportunity of witnessing a remarkable instance of canine fidelity. We had a whole pack of hounds with us. When they had found the herd of lions, they surrounded it, barking furiously. One of the hounds would go no further from us than about twenty paces. There he stood barking; but nothing could induce him to join the pack: he was too frightened to do that, and too faithful to leave us. One of the lions made for us and then the poor terrified hound was the only one that did not run away. He stuck to his post. He trembled and howled with fear, to say nothing of more visible signs of distress, and every second he looked round anxiously at his master to see if he were still there, hoping, I dare say, that he would fly, and that the dog might follow at his heels. But the master stayed and so the dog stayed. The lion was within ten paces of the dog when we shot him. And even now the timid dog was the only one of all the noisy pack that attacked him as he fell

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under our fire. He nearly died of fear, but remained at his post for love of his master.

In the year 1845, my two brothers Douw and Theunis, Douw's wife, my own wife and I were making a halt near Secucuni's town, not far from the place where the Spekboom River joins the Steenpoort River, in the north of the Transvaal. We outspanned, and I went, in the course of the day, on the veldt to shoot some game. I was mounted, and carried my old big four-pounder. After about an hour's ride, I came across a rhinoceros and shot at it. But I only succeeded in wounding the animal, and it fled into the wood. I dismounted quickly, ready to shoot again, but moved only a few steps away from my horse, lest the rhinoceros should turn to attack me, in which case it would be necessary to remount at once. I succeeded in getting a second shot; but, at that very moment, my rifle exploded just where I held it with my left hand, and my left thumb, the lock and the ramrod lay before me on the ground and the barrel of the gun behind me. I had no time to think, for the furious animal was almost upon me; so I jumped on my horse and galloped away as fast as I could, with the rhinoceros in fierce pursuit, until we came to the ford of a little spruit, when my pursuer came to the ground and so allowed me to ride quietly in the direction of our wagons. During the next day, our people, guided by the track of my

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horse, went to the spot, and there they found the rhinoceros still alive, and, following the trail of blood, discovered the remains of the rifle and my thumb.

My hand was in a horrible state. The great veins were torn asunder and the muscles lay exposed. The flesh was hanging in strips. I bled like a slaughtered calf. I had succeeded in tying a large pocket-handkerchief round the wound while riding, to save the horse from being splashed with blood. When I got to the wagons, my wife and sister-in-law were sitting by the fire, and I went up to them laughing so as not to frighten them. My sister-in-law pointed to my hand, which looked like a great piece of raw meat, the handkerchief being saturated with blood.

“Look what fat game brother Paul has been shooting!” she said.

I called out to my wife to go to the wagon and fetch some turpentine, as I had hurt my hand. Then I asked my sister-in-law to take off my bandolier, and she saw that my hand was torn and noticed how white I was, for I had hardly any blood left in my body. I kept on renewing the turpentine bandages, for turpentine is a good remedy to “burn the veins up,” as the Boers say, and thus to stop the bleeding. I sent my youngest brother—he was still really young at the time—to borrow as much turpentine as he could get from the nearest farm, which was about half an hour’s ride away. Herman Potgieter, who

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was afterwards so cruelly murdered by the Kaffirs, came over with his brother. The former got into the wagon and, when he saw the wound, cried out:

“That hand will never heal; it is an awful wound!”

He had to get down again as quickly as possible, for he was nigh fainting. But his brother said, possibly to comfort me:

“Nonsense; I have seen worse wounds than that: get plenty of turpentine.”

We inspanned and drove to the farm. Every one there advised me to send for a doctor and have the hand amputated; but I positively refused to allow myself to be still further mutilated of my own free will. The two joints of what was once my thumb had gone, but it appeared that it would still be necessary to remove a piece of bone. I took my knife, intending to perform the operation, but they took it away from me. I got hold of another a little later and cut across the ball of the thumb, removing as much as was necessary. The worst bleeding was over, but the operation was a very painful one. I had no means by me of deadening the pain, so I tried to persuade myself that the hand on which I was performing this surgical operation belonged to somebody else.

The wound healed very slowly. The women sprinkled finely-powdered sugar on it, and, from

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time to time, I had to remove the dead flesh with my pocket-knife; but gangrene set in after all. Different remedies were employed, but all seemed useless, for the black marks rose as far as the shoulder. Then they killed a goat, took out the stomach and cut it open. I put my hand into it while it was still warm. This Boer remedy succeeded, for when it came to the turn of the second goat, my hand was already easier and the danger much less. The wound took over six months to heal, and, before it was quite cured, I was out hunting again.

I account for the healing power of this remedy by the fact that the goats usually graze near the Spekboom River, where all sorts of herbs grow in abundance.