

D 2

AFTER OPHIR;

OR,

A Search for the South African Gold Fields.

BY

CAPTAIN AUGUSTUS LINDLEY,

AUTHOR OF "THE LOG OF THE FORTUNA."

With numerous Illustrations.

SECOND EDITION.

CASSELL, PETTER, & GALPIN,

LONDON, PARIS, AND NEW YORK.

with triumph; then the voice of the beaten ant-bear died away altogether, and the spotted conqueror, shaking himself clear, gave one thundering roar of victory—but it was his last. Even as he rose in his pride to triumph over his dead antagonist, our rifles were levelled, and that resounding roar changed to a dismal howl, as he rolled over by its side in the agonies of death.

Upon measuring the leopard, we found that its length, from the tip of its nose to the end of its tail, was just seven feet and an inch. In the same way, the ant-bear measured seven feet and a half, but then it was much smaller in the body than its enemy. On each foot it had four powerful claws, six inches long, and these, together with the tremendous horn into which its head extended, were the tools with which Nature had so well supplied it for the purpose of burrowing into the earth to obtain its food—the large white ant. We never chanced to fall in with another of these singular animals, for it is of shy and secret habits, and is supposed never to come forth from its burrow in the earth except at night.

After crossing the Umvolosi Umnyama, or Black Umvolosi River, at a point about 100 miles from where we left Natal, our course laid through a low bush country—a deep wide valley, running between the Bomba Hills on the east and the Drakensberg on the west. It was now the South African mid-summer (December of 1868), and, what with the excessive heat during the day, the dampness and moisture of the heavy dews at night, and the miasma rising from the tangled masses of damp and dripping vegetation, several of our party suffered from fever, including Tom Ashwell, Monsieur Louis, and our beneficent goddess, the fair Carlotta. Fortunately, by the strenuous application of quinine, and a careful attention to diet, the sufferers soon recovered, though our young Teutonic friend, at one time, became dangerously ill. This part of the country is undoubtedly very unhealthy; and only the higher ridges, which rise up here and there, as spurs from the mountain ranges on either side, are inhabited by the natives. I pity any European who may venture through this district without a comfortable—for Africa, that is—waggon, a strong team, and a good supply of food and medicines; without these luxuries or necessities, they would surely succumb to jungle fever.

It was almost pathetic to observe the anxious glances many members of

with resolution and determination, not without a sense of relief that we were ourselves again, the "long Yankee" whispering to me—

"Say, old fellow, we hev had a narrow squeak for it."

I agreed with him ; so we got beyond the sound of the unsophisticated and discarded maidens' cries as soon as possible, and then tried to divert our thoughts by a good long *trek* forward on our journey in the brilliant tropic moonlight.

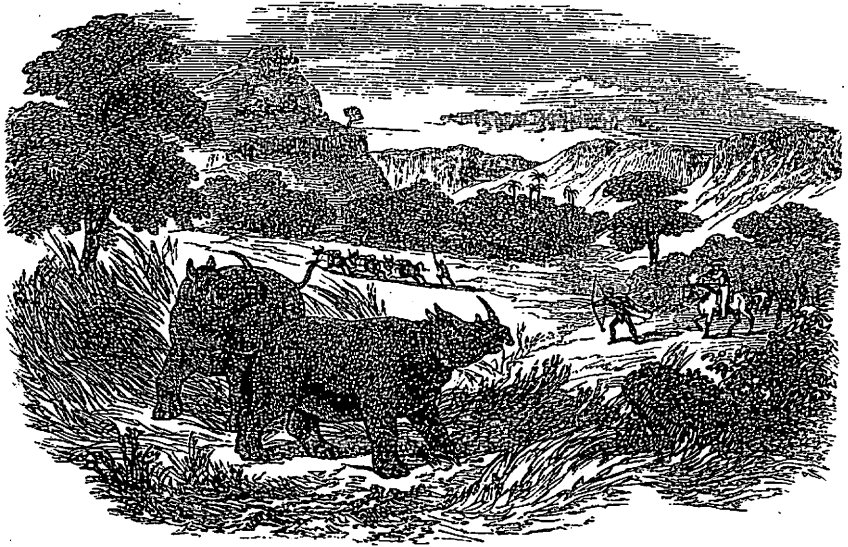
Red and white quartz and feldspar, with crystallised sandstone, conglomerate, and red granite, prevailed throughout Umziela Land, as far as the Lipaluli River, whilst ironstone was scattered thickly all over the country. Garnets, "mundeck," black sand and magnetic iron ore, turned up in every "pan" we tried at the streams in our path, but not a speck of gold.

As we approached the river, game appeared in great quantities ; but it was after we had crossed the Lipaluli, and, on the fourteenth day after leaving Umzielar's *kraal*, arrived at the banks of the vaguely known, large, and mysterious Limpopo, that the wild animals thronged the country in incredible numbers. This river was far too deep and wide to be forded, so we were obliged to turn off to the north-west, and proceed along its southern bank. We found canoes were used upon it, and so took advantage of their presence to avoid the tangled bush and mangroves at the edge of the water, by going off in them to shoot—as they stood for a moment petrified with amazement at our appearance, staring at us from the jungle-encumbered banks—such game as was required for our table and the extremely capacious maw of our Umziela allies.

Buffalo, hippopotami, quagga, *gnu*, *gemsbok*, *hartebeest*, and many other beasts of the chase thronged the banks of the Limpopo in vast quantities ; whilst the elephant, the fierce and formidable rhinoceros, the lion, leopard, and hyena occasionally put in an appearance ; and alligators swarmed in the water almost as plentifully as the feathered legions of cormorants, wild fowl, with many strange, and to us unknown fowls of the air, thronged every neighbouring tree, and maintained an incessant noise with their vociferous chattering, and the rustling, whirring sound of their wings.

One day we came to the termination of a long gully, which extended to

the north, and had every appearance of being a dry and ancient watercourse. Numerous quartz reefs cropped up in its rocky sides, and, altogether, it offered considerable temptation for prospecting; so, as it was impossible to cross with our waggons, we outspanned upon a little plain, fitted three of our oxen with packs, and crossed to the other side of the river in canoes, swimming the three oxen and the horses of the "long Yankee," Wilhelm,



A MEETING WITH RHINOCEROTIS.

Louis, and myself—who formed the party, together with a dozen Umzielas—after us, and making a great noise by beating the surface of the water with pieces of flat wood and paddles, in order to keep off alligators.

We had followed the course of the gully but a short distance, when suddenly we came right upon a huge male and female rhinoceros. As we halted irresolute, Kaffirs and all, they set up a fierce snorting sort of sound, which started off our pack-oxen in dire alarm and fright, and the next moment charged right straight upon the half-dozen natives who stood waiting with myself for the coming up of the rest of our party, immediately after I

had opened fire with my Snider. Although I managed to take a couple of good shots at them, the bullets must have glanced from their tough impenetrable hides, and still, fast and furious, on they came, uttering a shrill, bellowing sort of noise, between a snort and a roar, and with their formidable horns bent low to the ground for attack. Not a moment was to be lost. The Kaffirs had already sought safety in flight, and so off I dashed, in the direction my friends were coming. As I met them galloping up, attracted by the reports of my rifle, the huge brutes not far behind, in full chase, explained the situation. We halted a second, poured in a volley, as ineffective as my previous fire, which allowed the horny monsters to arrive within dangerous and uncomfortable proximity, and then dashed off again at full speed, the nearest brute within a few feet of the hindermost of our party; but although one unfortunate Umziela was overtaken and knocked down by them, they never swerved from pursuing those of us who were mounted. Suddenly, as ill-luck would have it, before we had gone fifty yards, and whilst spurring our horses up a rather steep ridge of rock, our friend, Louis, was thrown from his saddle. His animal had made a bad stumble, shooting him over its head, and landing him right in the path of our terrible pursuers.

"Jump off, boys! Stand by for a shot at their nose or chest as they come up within half a dozen yards," cried the "long Yankee," with resolute promptitude, reining up, springing off his horse, and dragging the helpless Louis to the top of the ridge.

But we had already executed the action he had recommended. Our horses were turned loose, and, rifle in hand, I and Wilhelm knelt down behind the crest of the ridge, our nerves braced to a rigid firmness, for we knew that now our lives depended upon a steady hand, and that nothing but an effective shot could save us from destruction by the coming terrible animals.

Louis was apparently insensible; but, taking his rifle in addition to his own, the "long Yankee" was quickly by our side, whilst the rhinocerotis were still some little distance off.

"Boys," said he, hurriedly, "I'll take the one to the left; you both fire upon the other. Unless you can make sure of his eye, one of you pick out the side of his chest, under the shoulder, and the other let fly at his nose."

We acted upon this advice, Wilhelm choosing the body of our particular foe, and I its wrinkled-up, savage-looking, and dilated nostrils.

As the charging monsters came rapidly upon us, at a great rate, clumsy, shambling, and ungainly as their awkward style of gallop appeared, the rest of the Umzielas came up, whilst those in front descended from the trees, and all, very gallantly, tried to effect a diversion in our favour, by shooting arrows and throwing *assegais* at our formidable assailants, whilst those who carried muskets blazed away. Vainly, however, strove those bare and poorly-armed warriors to divert the charging monsters from their object; although our dusky escort bravely risked their lives by running into dangerous vicinity from which to hurl their ineffective weapons, and fulfil the charge their chief had given them for our safety, the horny armour-plated and almost invulnerable brutes never swerved for an instant from their headlong rush upon ourselves.

"Now then, boys," I shouted, as the brutes arrived within five or six yards, and their pace slackened as they began ascending the ridge, "blaze away—steady. Let them have it!"

The reports of our rifles rang out sharp and loud, almost simultaneously, just as the fierce and redly-gleaming, small, pig-like eyes were glaring ferociously upon us, and the hot breath of the panting monsters was almost in our faces.

It was a trying moment. The brave Kaffirs gave us up as lost, shouted a despairing yell, and rushed forward with their knives and stabbing *assegais* in hand.

The three puffs of smoke obscured our view of the two terrible brutes for a moment, but even as Will snatched up the other rifle, while I and Wilhelm plucked forth our deadly Deane and Adams' breech-loading revolvers, the vapour passed away; and lo! by the blessing of Providence, we saw our frightful enemies rolling on the ground.

Our aim had been true, despite the agitating nature of the situation. Indeed, in such cases, where the peril is deadly, imminent, and unavoidable, I have always found that it makes one cool, firm, and steady as a rock—there is not time for fear—whereas, in gradual approach of danger, the mind has leisure for reflection and anxiety.

At all events, the "long Yankee" had dropped his opponent dead in its tracks, his bullet having exactly pierced its eye and brain, whilst I had committed no little havoc upon the other monster's smelling apparatus, and the large spherical ball from Wilhelm's heavy *roer* had fairly smashed its right shoulder.

"Habet! Hic habet! He has it! Hurroo, my boys, hurroo!" roared the "long Yankee," dancing and jumping over the ridge in high glee, and finishing the wounded rhinoceros by discharging Louis' rifle with the muzzle almost in its ear.

Our rejoicing was great, and it was hard to believe our senses that those two terrible, formidable, and almost invincible monsters had been so easily disposed of, and were now actually lying there before us in all their huge, unwieldy, and fearful bulk, so still, harmless, and lifeless.

"Wal," said the "long Yankee," "I've knocked over a heap of game in my time—all sorts of things, from that 'amoosin little cuss' (as Barnum calls the kangaroo), to a 'grizzly' on the Rocky Mountains—but, boys, tell yer what, that's the worst and heaviest kind of an-i-mal that ever this child drew a bee-line on, it air. It took me all I knew how to lead his eye up, it did. A 'grizzly's' pretty rough, when it comes to close quarters, but I'd elect to have a rough and tumble with any two of them before I'd hev a difficulty again with one of these cast-iron-hided, shot-proof, horn-nosed an-i-mals, I would."

When excited, our long friend became more Transatlantic in his speech than usual, as, by this time, my readers may surmise.

The pleasant surprise with which Monsieur Louis sat up and surveyed the scene of battle, and the two ungainly carcasses of our late terrible antagonists, may easily be imagined. Fortunately, beyond some bruises, and being stunned for a few moments, he had not received any injury. He came to his senses, as he strangely expressed it, expecting—

"To droo me find der hole knocked mit der rhinoceros horn so pig ast mein leg."

His joy was great; but our rejoicings were as nothing compared with those of the Umzielas and our driver, whom we had brought with us. They set up a hunting-dance, a frenetic sort of gymnastic and vocal triumph,

Huge cliffs of granite and porphyry rose to a perpendicular height of several hundred feet on every side, and were heaped together, contorted and riven, by former mighty convulsions of Nature. From the furthest extremity of this rock-bound valley, trickled the Tatin in a tiny sparkling silver stream, through a verdant little plain, soon to be lost in the desert sand beyond.

We off-saddled at a green little eminence overlooking the valley, where we cooked our supper, and pitched the small tent we had brought with us for the night; taking care to picket our horses securely, and leaving our driver and forelouper feeding a large fire all night to keep off lions. This they were pretty sure to do for their own sakes, as they had to sleep in the open, rolled in their dingy blankets, by the side of the blazing wood.

At daylight in the morning we were up and at work prospecting the small alluvial plain through which the little stream slowly meandered on its way to the sandy plains.

The "long Yankee" this day very nearly lost his horse. Not feeling very well I remained at the tent to prepare breakfast. In the meanwhile, whilst Louis, Wilhelm, and Tom Ashwell proceeded to sink a small trial shaft by the edge of the stream near at hand, the latter's brother, accompanied by the two Kaffirs, went further on.

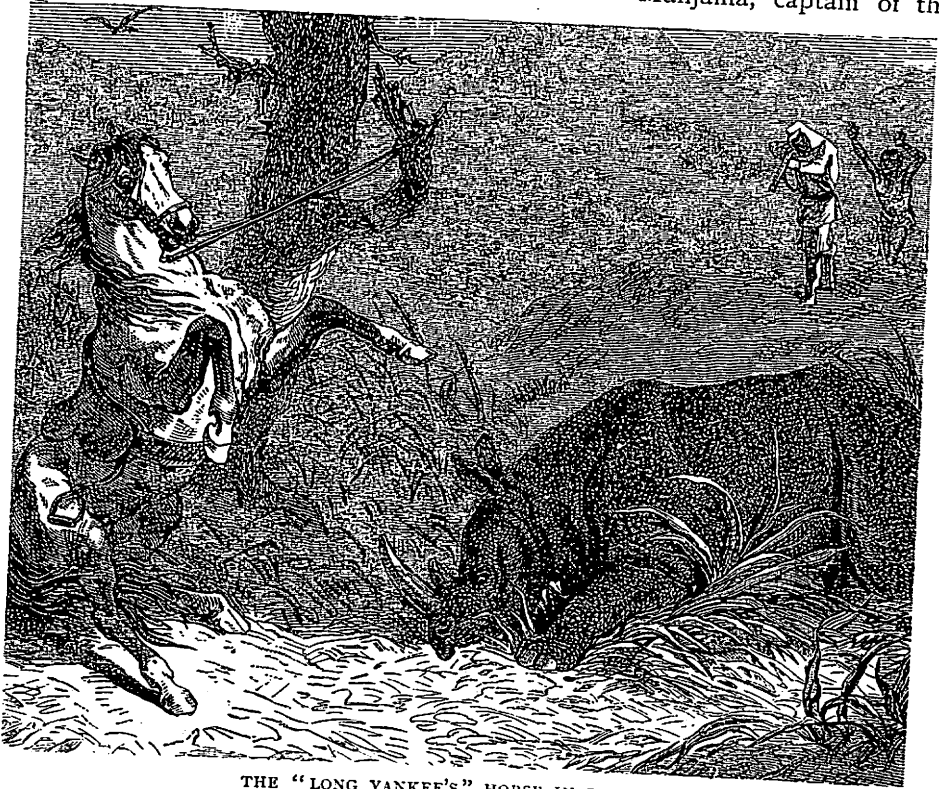
It seems that he had picked out a place to wash a few panfuls from the bed of the river, and, having left his horse hitched to a tree, they were proceeding to do so, when the wild screaming neighing of the poor animal recalled them in haste and alarm to the spot, just in time to see a young rhinoceros making a furious attack upon it. In a moment, at a distance of less than twenty yards, and from a most favourable position to the side and rear of the fierce and formidable assailant, the "long Yankee" made a capital and successful shot, by sending a Snider ball right in at its vulnerable spot behind the shoulder, and rolling it over in the agonies of death.

The result of our prospecting the source of the Tatin was absolutely *nil*, and not a vestige of quartz reef existed in the neighbourhood.

We now *treked* off to the north-east, so as to strike the Matabele outposts, and, besides prospecting thus all round the very limited auriferous

locality—except to the south, which had been seen by all the diggers, however—try to obtain leave to proceed on to the imaginative Mauch's northern gold field.

Within a week we arrived at the *kraal* of Manjama, captain of the



THE "LONG YANKEE'S" HORSE IN DANGER.

outpost, without experiencing any mishap or adventure, and without discovering the slightest trace of the precious metal, although we came across several extensive quartz formations.

At this time—the middle of March, 1870—several members of a gold-digging party from Durban, under a Mr. McNeil, had gone into the Matabele country, ostensibly to visit a missionary located at that part, and to build a