

WANDERINGS AND ADVENTURES

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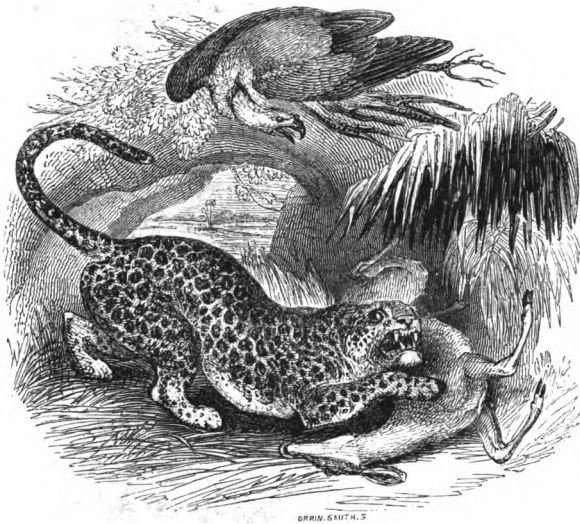
THE INTERIOR

OF

SOUTHERN AFRICA.

BY

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ILLUSTRATED WITH LITHOGRAPHIC AND WOOD ENGRAVINGS.

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## CHAPTER IV.

The *Amaquati*—An Evening Entertainment—Sham Fight—Fish River Bush—Elephant Hunt—Bivouac and Conflagration—A Night in the Forest—Hottentot's Adventure with a Rhinoceros—A Caffer Queen—Death and Character of Gaika—Untimely end of John Thackwray.

ON the morning of my departure from Wesleyville, the Chief Pato, from whom I had previously received the elephant's tusk, waited upon me at Mr. Shaw's residence, accompanied by a party of his followers, to receive the customary presents. His expectations having accordingly been more than satisfied, he grasped with glistening eyes the much-coveted beads, his eagerness on this occasion inducing the interpreter to remark, "Now is Pato like a wolf clutching his prey." Fearful that his companions, who were assembled outside the door, would on his return to them beset him for a share of the donation, he cunningly prevailed on Mr. Shaw to take charge of his treasure until a favourable opportunity should be presented of removing it with secrecy to his dwelling.

Leaving Wesleyville, we crossed a ford in front of the station-house, and alighting at the opposite kraal of the Chief Kaina, were much struck with

spot, he ventured so close before he fired, that the cocking of his piece gave the first intimation of danger to the elephant, which at the same instant received the fatal ball. The poor beast ran for some distance before it fell; Thackwray marked it with his initials, meaning to return at some future time for its tusks, as well as for those of the other which he had shot on the preceding day.

My curiosity with regard to elephant-shooting was now perfectly satisfied, and the weather being cold and wet, we resolved on returning without delay to Fort Wiltshire. On our route we met a celebrated elephant-hunter, a Hottentot, of the name of Skipper, whose horse had lately been killed under him by a rhinoceros. He stated, in reference to this disaster, that before he had time to raise his gun to his shoulder, the animal rushed at him with great fury, thrust its horn into the horse's chest, throwing horse, Hottentot and all, over its back. The rhinoceros went off without attempting to do him any further injury, whilst he was in vain grappling for his gun to take a shot at the animal in its retreat. "But," said he, "though he was too quick for me this time, I may meet him again some day, when I shall not forget to *betaal* him."

Mr. Rose has so ably portrayed this noted individual, that I cannot refrain from giving the description in his own words. "Skipper, one of the Hottentots, was far the most singular figure in the group: his large hat, with its round raised top, and strangely-

formed brim, throwing a dark shadow over his dusky visage ; his deeply-sunken eyes, his high cheek-bones, his mustache large and black ; then his dress—his trowsers tucked up to the knee, showing bare legs that defied thorns ; one shoulder-belt, from which the pouch and powder-horn were suspended, and another supporting his hatchet for cutting out the tusks, and his bag for holding the wild honey. His jacket, too, of many-coloured patches, ‘ that seemed to show variety of wretchedness ;’ here, however, it was but seeming, for Skipper was one of the boldest and most successful shooters in the country ; but his gains, while these lasted, went only to keep the canteen in a roar, for he never could be persuaded to purchase cattle or acquire property. Methinks I see the extraordinary old man now before me, coolly shaking the ashes from his large pipe, while the elephants are feeding within a dozen yards of him. I asked him how many wild beasts he had shot in his life : his list I cannot accurately remember ; but there were, I think, two rhinoceroses, one lion—when all his companions fled—I know not how many elephants, tigers, wolves, &c. ; but it finished with two Caffers ; for Skipper was not a man of nice distinction. ‘ I think, Skipper,’ said I, ‘ you would smoke if you were between the tusks of the elephant ?’ ‘ No, Sir,’ he replied, without the slightest change of countenance, apparently taking my speech literally, ‘ for he would smell me.’ ”

We reached Fort Wiltshire late in the evening

and having obtained some refreshment, retired to rest with very different feelings from those which we had entertained on the preceding evening in the *Veld*. Whilst I was at breakfast on the following morning with the Commandant, the Chief Gaika entered the apartment, accompanied by his favourite Queen, Tota. I prevailed upon her majesty on this occasion to part with her full-dress cap, an article of attire which I had hitherto endeavoured in vain to procure at the various places lately visited by me in Cafferland; the females being unwilling to dispose of this cap, from the circumstance of only possessing one, and seeming to regard it as a sacred gift, since it had been generally presented to them by their husbands at the time of their marriage. It is made of the skin of the little blue antelope, with the hair inside, decorated with a profusion of beads, and, from their mode of wearing it, has rather an ornamental appearance. The Commandant showed the queen his own wife's cap, and asked if she would consent to exchange. She acknowledged it to be very fine, but preferred her own, as the former, she thought, would soon be worn out or spoiled on her dirty head: a remark the truth of which could not be questioned, as she was smeared all over with red clay and grease.

The appearance of Gaika about thirty years before this period has been thus described by Mr. Barrow:—  
“ Gaika was at this time under twenty years of age,

of an elegant form and a graceful and manly deportment, height about five feet ten inches, his face of a deep bronze colour, approaching nearly to black, his skin soft and smooth, his eyes dark brown, and full of animation, his teeth regular, well set, and white as the purest ivory, his countenance open, but more marked with the habit of reflection than is usually observed in that of the Caffer; he had the appearance, indeed, of possessing in an eminent degree a solid understanding and a clear head. To every question that related to their manners, customs, laws, and various points, he gave without embarrassment or reserve direct and unequivocal answers; and it is to him I am principally indebted for the little information I am enabled to give concerning the Caffer nation. His understanding was not more strong than his disposition appeared to be amiable; he seemed to be the adored object of his subjects. The name of Gaika was in every mouth, and it was seldom pronounced without symptoms of joy. Like the Chiefs in the Colony, he wore a brass chain suspended on the left side from a wreath of copper beads that encircled his head; on his arm he had five large rings cut out of the solid tusks of elephants, and round his neck was a chain of beads: his cloak was faced with skins of leopards, but he threw his dress aside, and, like the rest of his people, appeared entirely naked."

Such Gaika appeared in his own country, among

his own people, in 1797. The following picture of him is drawn from his appearance in the colony, or at the frontier posts, in his old age, full of caution, if not of suspicion, and depressed by many fearful recollections. "His person was not so gigantic as that of many of his countrymen, neither was his aspect calculated to command. His countenance was neither graceful nor assuming, and when in the pursuit of spirituous liquors, to which he was attached, he lost both the dignity of the commander and the man. His general habits were marked by depravity and insincerity; yet, notwithstanding all his defects, he was not deficient in policy. He exacted respect without the exercise of austerity; and to his art and address alone may be ascribed his long, pacific, and successful rule\*."

Fort Wiltshire is a quadrangular building, with a small bastion at each corner; one side consists of stabling, another is appropriated to the officers. The front is occupied by victuallers and a canteen for the supply of the troops, and the opposite side by the soldiers. It is surrounded by a high wall, at the outposts of which a guard is kept constantly stationed. The fort was planned and erected under the superintendence of Colonel Wiltshire, formerly

\* This celebrated Chief died on the 13th of November, 1829, after a long and painful illness, during which several persons, accused of *bewitching* him, among whom were two of his wives, fell victims to his superstition.

Commandant on the frontier, from whom it takes its name. A detachment of troops is regularly quartered here, to protect the Colonists from the predatory incursions of the Caffers. This military station is situated on the Keishamma river, surrounded by hills and mountains, which reflect upon it in summer the most intolerable heat.

Leaving Fort Wiltshire, we crossed the Fish River, and proceeded by way of Hermanau's Kraal, through Groveller's Kloof, to Graham's Town, which we reached the same evening. Here I parted with Thackwray, who went soon afterwards to obtain the tusks of those elephants which he had shot during our recent excursion.

Having been accompanied by this enterprising young man throughout my first visit to Cafferland, I was much shocked on learning from the Colonial Journal, some time afterwards, that he had lost his life in an encounter with elephants similar to that I have described, and almost on the very spot which had been the scene of our recent adventure. It appeared that he was pursuing his usual occupation, accompanied by a Hottentot, when they fell in with a herd of elephants, and wounded one. On seeing it fall, the Hottentot supposed that it was dead; but on his approach the animal rose and rushed furiously towards him: he threw himself instantly on the ground, and the enraged elephant passed him by, tearing up and scattering the trees in its progress,



but darting into the covert where Thackwray stood, in the act of reloading his gun, it knocked him down, and thrust one of its tusks through his thigh, then, lifting him up with its trunk, dashed him about with the greatest violence, and, trampling upon him, finished the work of destruction. When the mangled body was discovered it presented the most appalling spectacle.

It is but an act of justice to the memory of this unfortunate man to state, that, during the journey on which he accompanied me, he evinced so much kindness of disposition, that the natives, to many of whom he had been previously known, welcomed him with a degree of cordiality and esteem highly creditable to each party. His unassuming manners, his coolness in the moment of danger, far removed from all foolhardiness, created a favourable impression on his behalf. He was of low stature, a spare, bony young man, whose sun-burnt features gave him the expression that belongs to a wanderer over the mountains, whose life is a succession of perils. Few will read his brief and mournful history without regretting that experience so valuable, courage so undaunted, and fortitude so enduring, had not been made subservient to higher aims than merely seeking a scanty provision for the supply of his daily wants, and that his end should have been so untimely and distressing.

On rising the next morning, we found that all around, as far as the eye could reach, was a dry, sun-burnt plain; not a single vestige of vegetation was anywhere to be seen, except the *karroo* bush, almost as brown and barren as the ground on which it grew. Here it was that, for the first time during this excursion, we began to experience the want of water, and were under the necessity of digging deep into the sand to obtain even a small quantity; but as none could be procured for the oxen, we were compelled to proceed with all haste to a fountain, in an obscure corner of the desert, from which, at some seasons of the year, there flowed a considerable stream, and where a farmer of the name of Snayman had taken up his abode, in order that he might avail himself of this spring.

We reached the place about midnight, but found the spring dried up, or nearly so, the proprietor and his family having gone with their little flock to seek support in some other part of the country. The fig-tree, the almond, and the vine were scattered about the grounds in wild disorder, parched up and withered, presenting altogether a melancholy picture of desolation, and seeming to proclaim the impotence of man, when deprived of those showers from above, without which all human efforts to till the stubborn soil in this sterile region must prove unavailing. We intended to have spent the day here, but, not being able to obtain water, were obliged to proceed at once to the

Buffalo River, where we found a good supply, with plenty of grass for our oxen. Here we passed the remainder of the day, and after travelling all night, *uitspanned* a little before sun-rise at a place called Cannon's Fountain. We soon, however, discovered that there was neither grass nor water for the cattle, and consequently pursued our route to Willow Fountain, which takes its name from a number of willow trees growing on its margin.

If there is one circumstance more calculated than another to depress the spirits of a traveller while crossing these arid wastes, it is the sufferings of his cattle, which he is compelled to drive frequently forwards without food or water. Leaving our shady retreat, we crossed the Blood River, so called from a conflict that once took place there between some Boors and a party of Hottentots, in which much blood was spilt on both sides. We came to the *Dwyka*, or Rhinoceros River, on the following morning. The sun had become obscured by heavy thunder-clouds, which rendered travelling much pleasanter to ourselves, and less fatiguing to the oxen, than on any previous day since our entrance on this parched and dreary country. Availing ourselves of this circumstance, we pursued our course, but had not proceeded far before the gathering storm burst in terrific grandeur over our heads. The thunder echoed in repeated volleys among the neighbouring hills. The windows of Heaven seemed

opened, and the skies poured down torrents of rain. Not a living object was to be seen beyond a solitary eagle, soaring to its rocky eyrie immediately before our view. We were now under the necessity of halting, as the rain continued to fall most violently, rendering it impossible for the oxen to proceed. The impetuosity with which the clouds empty themselves, as it were, drenching the dry and thirsty ground, can scarcely be conceived: the earth being unable to absorb this sudden flood, it rushes along the surface like an overwhelming deluge. By this time it had penetrated the tent of our waggon, rendering our situation extremely uncomfortable, for the storm continued with unremitting fury during the night, but abated before sun-rise.

No sooner had the rain subsided, than all was again clear and bright; a perceptible change, too, was felt in the temperature of the air; while, quickened by the showers, and stimulated by the action of the solar rays, vegetation appeared ready to sprout forth in every direction. The whole face of nature seemed refreshed and invigorated, and new life and spirits were infused into us all, rendering this day's journey particularly cheerful and agreeable. Crossing *Bitter Water*, we continued our route until after midnight, when we encamped on the banks of the *Gamka*, or Lion River.

Our course now lay along the margin of this beautiful stream, which was thickly skirted with the

## CHAPTER II.

Rhenoster Kope—Anecdote—Large Herd of Spring-boks—Description of these Animals—Exploits in shooting—Narrow Escape—Gloomy Situation—Graaff Reinet—Swarm of Locusts—Difficult Ascent of the Sneeuwberg Mountains—Schelms—Barren Aspect of the Country—Celebrated Waterfall.

ON the 1st of November we quitted Beaufort, and continued travelling until two o'clock on the following morning, when we *uitspanned* at a place called Rhenoster Kope, from the supposed resemblance which the mountain bears to the head of a rhinoceros. We found here a scanty supply of brackish water, and very little food for our cattle; as the heat, however, was most oppressive, we deemed it advisable to remain until the decline of day, when we again took our departure. An unusual number of that most beautiful species of falcon, the *Falco musica*, were to be seen flying about in search of prey, and alighting on the highest branches of the trees, which are thickly spread over this extensive valley.

Availing ourselves of a bright moon, we travelled during the night, and towards morning reached the farm of Cornelius de Plooie, where we rested, securing the oxen to the wheels of our waggon, to prevent them from trespassing on the cultivated land.

tor-oil plant (*Palma Christi*), the euphorbia, and aloes of various descriptions, with their crimson, yellow, and scarlet blossoms, are thickly scattered over the surface of the country. The districts, however, bordering on the Colony frequently suffer severely from continued drought. During the summer months the grass is generally brown and dry, and is frequently burnt by the natives, in order that after the first rains the cattle may enjoy the new and tender herbage. Thunder-storms, accompanied with terrific flashes of lightning, are exceedingly severe during the hottest months; and, on these occasions, the very mountains almost appear to tremble beneath the peals which they fearfully reverberate. The stillness of night is invariably disturbed by the incessant croaking of frogs, the number of which, and the noise they create, is truly surprising; grasshoppers also, and various other insects in vast numbers, unite their dismal chorus to the wailing of the nocturnal breeze.

Beasts of prey are not particularly numerous in this part of the country, although now and then a lion, and more frequently a tiger, may be seen prowling about in the more secluded ravines and passes of the mountains. In former years elephants were abundant, but in consequence of the great increase of population they are now rarely to be seen, although the extensive forests near the Zimvoobo River and in the vicinity of Natal contain large

herds. The hippopotamus is found in all the rivers, and its flesh is much esteemed by the natives, to whom it often affords a substantial repast. The rhinoceros also inhabits the thick bushy coverts; and here the hyæna also makes its lair,—an animal, as will appear from what has been already related, extremely ferocious and destructive. Great varieties of game, such as antelopes, hares, pheasants, and partridges, abound in the thinly inhabited parts of the country, but in the more populous regions are seldom met with. Baboons and monkeys are seen by hundreds at a time, and serpents, with many other noxious reptiles, are very numerous. The birds resemble for the most part those found in the neighbourhood of the colony. A species of hawk makes its appearance about September, when the Amaponda tribes say it is time for them to begin clearing the ground, and they accordingly commence planting their maize, while others are guided in these matters by the blossoming of a tree, called by the Dutch the Cafferboom. The animals kept for the use of man are, horned cattle, goats and a few horses, which latter belong exclusively to the Chiefs. Some of the marauding tribes possess sheep, which have been taken in former years from the Dutch boors, or Ghonaquas, in the Bechuana country. The Amapondas have a small breed of poultry about the size of the English partridge, reared exclusively for the sake of the feathers, which they use to ornament their heads;

of these they are particularly proud. Copper and iron ore are found in the mountains, and specimens of silver and platina have been occasionally discovered. The country altogether bears in many particulars a strong resemblance to that described by the Sacred historian:—"A land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass."

The form of government in a Caffer tribe, or rather collection of tribes, resembles the feudal system of the middle ages. The Chief has respect shown to him on account of his rank, but his real power depends more upon his talents and the strength of the clan which is especially attached to his family. The subordinate Chiefs make war upon each other, and unless one of them appeals to the "Umkumkani," no notice is taken of their quarrels, but they are allowed to settle their differences amongst themselves.

The Umkumkani is usually a lineal descendant from the first great patriarchal chieftain of the tribe, and the title of *Inkose enkulu* is enjoyed exclusively by himself: all his male descendants are called Inkosi by birthright; but their power depends in a great degree upon their popularity, the people being at liberty to attach themselves to whichever of the sons their inclination may lead them to prefer. The eldest son does not always succeed to the authority