



W.C. Barré

XXII. ELEPHAS AFRICANUS. - THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT.

PLATE XXII.

ELEPHAS AFRICANUS. THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT.

Olifant of the Dutch Colonists. '*Clou* and *Maclou* of the Bechuana.

GENERIC CHARACTER.—Male attains the height of twelve feet at the shoulder; droops considerably behind. Extreme length between eighteen and nineteen feet. Provided with a flexible proboscis and finger. Skin solid, black, rough, and nearly destitute of hair. Tail moderately long, and tufted with long hair of the thickness of common iron wire, set round the edges of the flattened extremity. Head rounder, forehead more convex, and ears four times larger than in the Asiatic variety. The latter appendages extremely flat, reaching to the setting on of the legs, and overlapping each other at the top of the neck. Legs pillar-like and shapeless. Five toes on all the feet, so encrusted in the callous skin which envelopes them, that their existence is only indicated externally by the nails. Double the circumference of the foot invariably denotes the height at the withers. Tusks two, composed of solid ivory, arched and springing from immediately before the eyes; eight or nine feet in length, and often weighing each more than one hundred pounds. No canine or incisorial teeth. Two enamelled molars or grinders in each jaw, marked with lozenge-shaped ribands. These teeth are shed and renewed during the whole life, as occasion requires, by a lateral process—a new tooth growing from behind, gradually forcing the old one forward, and eventually taking its place, so that at certain periods the total number in the head may be eight instead of four.

Female from eight to nine feet high, usually provided with tusks about four feet in length. Mammæ two, placed between the fore-legs. Male sometimes found alone, but the species usually gregarious in large troops. Still said to exist in the forest of Zitzikamma, and is common in the extensive plains, woods, and hills, of the interior.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT.

"On comes the elephant, to slake
His thirst, at noon, in yon pellucid springs.
Lo! from his trunk up-turned, aloft he flings
The grateful shower: and now,
Plucking the broad-leaved bough
Of yonder plume, with waving motion slow
Fanning the languid air,
He waves it to and fro."

THROUGHOUT the more remote and unfrequented portions of the African continent which have yet been explored, the Elephant, mightiest and most peaceful of all the denizens of the woods, has been found in far greater abundance than in any other quarter of the globe. Many of the southern regions are still teeming with vast herds; and the unwholesome, though fertile borders of the almost inaccessible rivers on the eastern and western coast, have ever formed its chosen habitat. Since the first establishment of the Portuguese settlements about the close of the fifteenth century, man has waged against this lordly animal, a ruthless and exterminating war. Hunted and persecuted for the sake of its costly ivory, it has been driven further and further from the haunts of civilization, and is only now to be found in multitudes, amid regions to which its arch enemy seldom penetrates. Delighting especially in wide and secluded savannahs, where sluggish streams are skirted by a congenial vegetation, this giant among quadrupeds resides towards the southern tropic in stately troops, comprising many hundred individuals. There, fearless of danger, he wanders with calm solemnity amid the groves of aged mimosas, with which the broad meadows are sprinkled—leisurely *prizing* out of the ground, by means of his huge tusks, used upon the principle of the crow-bar, those which please him best, and inverting them with his single *hand*, the more readily to browse upon the soft and juicy roots that constitute his favourite food. Social in habits, and secure in his own strength from every four-footed foe, the wisest of brutes luxuriates in the waters of the lone stream that he has troubled, and, unless when man invades his repose, passes a lengthened life of tranquil enjoyment.

"Calm amid scenes of havoc, in his own
Huge strength impregnable, the Elephant
Offendeth none, but leads a quiet life,
Amongst his own contemporary trees,
Till nature lays him gently down to rest
Beneath the palm which he was wont to make
His prop in slumber.* There his relics lie,
Longer than life itself had dwelt within them.
Bees in the ample hollow of his skull
Fill their wax citadels, and store their honey.
Thence sally forth to forage through the fields,
And swarm in emigrating legions thence.
The little burrowing animals throw up.
Hillocks beneath the over-arching ribs;
While birds within the spinal labyrinth
Contrive their nests."

With the image of the Elephant we are apt to associate the idea of the gorgeous and stupendous vegetation of an Indian forest—to imagine trees of a growth and foliage proportioned to the bulk of the gigantic tenants which they screen. Such at least was my own impression, and I was therefore not a little amazed to find countless herds inhabiting the most open tracts, embellished with occasional straggling woods, so stunted in growth, that a host of colossal backs were not unfrequently to be seen above the tops of them. The face of the verdant hills, that in time of danger form the strong-hold of the species, usually terminate in an abrupt scarp, resembling a coronet, whence a number of ravines arising, are encumbered with rocks and precipices o'ershadowed by heavy forests—the intervening rounded space being quite destitute of trees. Through the denser covert, in parts impervious to man, the monstrous inmates have cleared many a path that would do credit to the pioneers of an army, and even by them would not have been accomplished without infinite labour. Marching

* Amongst many other early absurdities, it was currently believed of the Elephant, that he invariably slept in a standing posture, leaning against a tree for support. Sir T. Brown, in allusion to this popular notion, remarks, that "it sleepeth against a tree; which the hunters observing, do saw it almost asunder; whereon the beast relying, by the fall of the tree falls also down itself, and is able to rise no more."

in the van of his troop, the great bull Elephant bursts through the heaviest jungle, with the same facility that a bullock would make its way through a hop-garden, trampling under his heavy foot the thorny brushwood, and with his sinewy proboscis summarily wrenching off the larger branches, and tugging away the parasitic web that obstructs his progress; whilst the females, with the younger members of the herd, bringing up the rear in single file, complete the Herculean labour which their lord has so ably commenced.

But, notwithstanding the extravagant traditions that have been handed down of the colossal stature attained in Africa by "Nature's great master-piece," I am strongly disposed to the belief, that twelve feet form the maximum height of the male, and nine that of the female. Readily might the stupendous bulk of such an animal deceive an eye unaccustomed to its contemplation; but twice the circumference of none of the many foot-prints I measured, among the hundreds which were daily seen, yielded a product in excess of this standard. In Africa the tusks of the male unquestionably attain a much greater size than is usual in Asia, and nearly all of the cows are possessed also of these accessories, measuring from three to four feet in length. The enormous magnitude of the ears—which in the subject before us not only cover the whole of the shoulder, but overlap each other at the neck, to the complete exclusion of a driver—together with the increased volume and prominence of the forehead, constitute the most striking external features of difference between the two species.* Nor will those who have been accustomed to the sight of a groomed and well-greased elephant in his stall, fail to view with astonishment the brick-dust complexion of the animal's hide in its native forest—this latter fact being attributable to the collection of adventitious matter by rubbing against trees and rocks, no less than to the habit peculiar to the whole race, of dusting the carcass after a cold bath, with a shower of earth and gravel cast up by the aid of the trunk.

On first entering the haunts of the elephant, nothing surprised me more than the extraordinary facility with which, in a wild state, unincumbered by the howdah, the unwieldy quadruped contrives to clamber to the very *rigging* of the steepest and most inaccessible hills—dexterously traversing narrow mountain paths, descents, and gullies, over which a horse can follow with extreme difficulty—and like a sculptured monument, standing out at last in the boldest relief against the clear blue sky. Solemn and dignified in his ordinary gait, the long slouching amble to which he has recourse when pursued, covers the ground at an inconceivable rate, and will at first keep a good steed at a round gallop; but the tracts over which we usually hunted, being flinty, and strewn with loose pointed stones, it was only necessary to press the herd a mile beyond their speed, to render them so tender-footed that they were glad to seek shelter in the first wooded ravine that fell in their way,—up and down which they might be driven, and murdered from the banks *ad libitum*. That portion of the forehead lying immediately above the eyes, consists of two walls or tables, between which a wide cellular space intervening, a bullet hardened either with tin or quicksilver readily penetrates through the honeycomb to the cavity of the brain—proving so instantaneously fatal that the unfortunate animal often passes from life to death, without either a groan or a struggle. Guided usually by some monstrous male, long standing in years, it is not easy to separate the herd; and whether they attack, march, or fly, they appear to act with discipline, and in concert. Their enormous bulk and power considered, there is probably no creature in the creation possessed of a smaller share of animal courage; yet, if easily terrified and routed, they never hesitate when roused into fury to charge the assailant with persevering hostility, and although turning clumsily upon a wide circle, not unfrequently conclude the pursuit by playing a game of foot-ball with his lifeless body.

From the very outset of our campaign against the wild beasts, and long before we had obtained from his Amazooloo Majesty the freedom of his tropical preserves, our respectable acquaintance, Andries Africander, had gratuitously assumed unto himself the office of lecturer on the intricate science of elephant hunting, wherein, during three successive expeditions with ivory traders from the colony, he flattered himself to have acquired no ordinary skill. A day never elapsed without some gasconade of his by-gone or coming exploits; but although perpetually thrusting upon us his code of sage laws on the subject, we subsequently found that the impostor was uniformly the first to infringe it. Whilst winding through a grand and extensive forest which covered a slight acclivity leading to the Cashan mountains, we for the first time beheld the *vestigia* of the noble object of our search. Mimosa trees were there up-torn by the roots; sturdy branches rent from the parent stock overhung the path, or stripped of their foliage were strewn upon the ground; and hundreds of deep holes, impressed during some recent heavy rain by the feet of a gigantic drove, together with great heaps of their fresh excrement, were visible in every direction. Heretofore our sapient tutor had affected to consider beneath *his* notice all animals that had been found; and at the near prospect now presented of displaying his science to advantage, he became perfectly frantic. Checking the team of the waggon which he was leading, he waved aloft his greasy blue cap, tossed a mass of dung into the air, and huzzaed till he was hoarse.

* The Asiatic Elephant has been employed from the earliest epochs, to swell the pomp of eastern princes and potentates—his enormous strength and surpassing sagacity having been equally applied to warlike, ostentatious, and laborious purposes. In ancient days the African species also would appear to have been extensively employed by the Carthaginians, who during the first Punic war brought great multitudes against the Romans; insomuch that at the siege of Panormia (Palermo) no fewer than one hundred and forty are said to have been drawn up in a single line. But whilst the barbarous tribes that people Southern Africa have never dreamt of the possibility of rendering this noble animal serviceable in any domestic capacity, the assertion that it is capable of being tamed and ridden, is received with universal incredulity—an unaccountable superstition, existing even amongst the Dutch Colonists, that its subjugation is not to be accomplished. Readily captured, and appearing to agree with its Indian relative both as to essential habits, and in aptitude for service, it is in the general absence, within the Colony, of sufficient food for its support, that the chief difficulty is presented. Were it once arrayed against the beasts of the forest, Africa would realize the very *beau ideal* of magnificent sport!

Not an hour was lost in setting fire to the grass on the hills, and making other customary preparations for forcing the elephants into the more open plains; but although the ravages committed by their foraging parties became hourly more and more apparent, and their footprints more recent and numerous, many days were still passed in fruitless search. During one excursion a gigantic savage of a subordinate tribe of the Baquaina nation, accidentally joining our party, confidently volunteered to lead us to a troop out of whose ranks he had the preceding day speared a large calf—an act, be it observed, of which no one could be better capable, seeing that he was a perfect ogre in dimensions, six feet four inches “without his boots,” and built in proportion. On reaching a sequestered valley at the opposite foot of the range, we found the recently evacuated cantonment of the herd, wherein was a portion of the victim’s skull, being all that the hyenas had left of the little that this Goliath of Gath had deemed too hard for his own digestion. But after following the trail of the receding column nearly the whole day, and twice passing across and through the mountains—from the summit of which was presented an extensive prospect over one of the wildest and most savage regions that the whole universe can produce—the main body was ascertained to have marched eastward, in which direction it was deemed necessary that the camp should forthwith be shifted. Like small specks in the distant valley, our white waggons could be discerned from the bare and sterile rocks which crown the highest elevation, and form a strong contrast to the middle and lower regions, so thickly covered with verdure and forest. The latter occupies the ravines and hollows only, whilst the whole plain beyond on either side is studded with detached pyramidal stony hills, interspersed with dilapidated cattle enclosures, and with crumbling “cities of the dead.”

Wild elephants make the most extraordinary forced marches, invariably travelling in troops during the night, and with all military precaution. We followed on their route during the day, and thus it happened, that although frequently coming upon the bivouac or encampment which they had evacuated only a few hours previously, their retreating forces were always in advance. On the third day of our pursuit, hugging the base of the mountains, we passed through high coarse grass, betwixt two conical hills of singularly twin-like appearance, which stood like sentinels on either hand, and were yecept by our guides the *Cloguncolo* and *Clogunpalma*—gaining at length the vicinity of a remarkably abrupt aperture in the range, which through a telescope promised to afford a practicable road for waggons to the northward. The heat had gradually waxed intense—not a breath stirred—and heavy black clouds fast collecting bade us prepare for a deluge. We accordingly formed the camp in a sheltered but elevated position under the lee of a high stone enclosure, which only required the entrance to be stopped with bushes to become a secure pound for the cattle. Scarcely were these arrangements completed, when a stream of liquid fire ran along the ground, and a deafening thunder clap, exploding close above us, was instantly followed by a torrent of rain, which “came dancing to the earth,” not in drops, but in continuous streams, and with indescribable violence, during the greater portion of the night; the thunder now receding, and rumbling less and less distinctly, but more incessantly, among the distant mountains—now pealing in echoes over the nearer hills, and again returning to burst with redoubled violence above our heads.

“Far along

From peak to peak the rattling crags among,
Leapt the wild thunder; not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain soon had found a tongue.”

The horses and oxen were presently standing knee deep in water, and the sheep were in imminent danger of being drowned. Our followers remained crowded all night in the baggage waggon which leaked immoderately; but our own vehicle being better covered, fortunately resisted the pitiless storm. Sleep was, however, perfectly out of the question, the swamped earth actually threatening to give way under us, and the lightning being so painfully vivid, that we were glad to hide our diminished heads beneath the pillow!

Those only who have witnessed the setting in of the south-west monsoon in India are capable of fully understanding the awful tempest that I have thus feebly attempted to describe. About an hour before dawn its fury began to abate, and at sunrise the weather was perfectly fine; but the mountain streams being quite impassable to the waggons, I proceeded on foot with some of the Hottentots to reconnoitre the pass. It proved to be nothing more than a narrow channel, flanked by perpendicular bulwarks, between which a small river wends its way to the parent stream, through a number of very abrupt windings created by a succession of steep acclivities,

“Where the monarch of storm
Rears his giant form,
On some rock built throne
That he claims for his own.”

Descending from the highest peak, whence, after prying with a telescope into every nook and corner of the vast landscape that lay expanded before us, several herds of buffaloes only could be descried, we came unexpectedly upon the deep sunken tracks of a monstrous bull Elephant, that could not have passed above an hour before, and finding that the trail proceeded eastward along the chain, we re-crossed the river—of which the waters had now considerably subsided—and without loss of time returned to the encampment for horses and ammunition.

Leaving the waggons to proceed to a spot agreed upon, we took the field about ten o’clock, and pursued the track indefatigably for seven or eight miles, over a country presenting every variety of feature. At one time we crossed bare stony ridges; at another threaded the intricacies of shady, but dilapidated forests; now struggled through high fields of waving grass, and again emerged into open downs. At length we arrived amongst extensive groups of grassy hillocks, covered with

loose stones, interspersed with streams, and with occasional patches of forest, in which the recent ravages of elephants were more than ever surprising. Here, to our inexpressible gratification, we descried a large herd of those long-sought animals, browsing lazily at the head of a distant valley, to which our attention had first been directed by the strong, and not to be mistaken effluvia wherewith the wind was impregnated. Having never before seen the noble Elephant in his native abode, we gazed on the sight before us with intense and indescribable interest, our own feelings on the occasion extending to the whole of our followers. As for Andries, he became so agitated, that he could scarcely articulate. The blood forsook his sallow cheek, while with open eyes and quivering lip he barely contrived to stutter forth "*Daar stan de Olifant!*" Mohanycom and Lingap were immediately despatched by a circuitous route to head the herd back into the valley, up which we rode slowly and without noise against the wind—and arriving unperceived within one hundred and fifty yards, made our horses fast, and took up an elevated position in an old stone kraal. The shouting of the savages who now appeared upon the height, rattling their white ox-hide shields, presently caused the huge animals to advance unsuspectingly towards us, and even within ten paces of our ambuscade. The group consisted of nine—all females with large tusks. Selecting the finest, with perfect deliberation we fired a volley of five balls into her side. She stumbled, but quickly recovering herself, uttered a shrill note of lamentation, whereupon the whole party threw their trunks above their heads, and clambered up the rugged face of the adjacent hills with incredible celerity, their huge fan-like ears flapping in the ratio of their speed. We instantly mounted our horses, and the sharp loose stones ill suiting the feet of the wounded lady, soon closed with her. Streaming with blood, and infuriated with pain, she turned upon us with uplifted trunk, her little eyes glowing like live coals;—nor was it until after repeated discharges that a ball took effect in her brain, and cast her lifeless on the earth, which resounded with the fall.

Turning our attention from this exciting scene, we perceived that a second valley had opened upon us, surrounded by bare stony hills, and traversed by a thinly wooded ravine. Here a grand and magnificent panorama was before us, which baffles all attempt at description. The whole face of the landscape was actually covered with wild elephants! There could not have been fewer than three hundred within the scope of our vision. Every height and green knoll was dotted over with groups of them, whilst the bottom of the glen exhibited a dense and sable living mass—their colossal forms, at one moment partially concealed by the trees which they were disfiguring with giant strength, being seen the next majestically emerging into the open glades, bearing branches in their trunks with which they indolently defended themselves from the flies. The back ground was filled in by a limited peep of the blue-mountain range which here assumed a remarkably precipitous character, and partly scathed by fire, completed a picture, at once soul-stirring and sublime!

The approach of our party being still against the wind, was unobserved, and created no alarm, until the vanguard of the herd that we had left behind, suddenly showed itself, recklessly thundering down the side of the hill to join the main body, and passing so close to us, that we could not refrain from pouring a broad-side into the leader, who, however, bravely withstood it. Having secured our horses on the summit of a stony ridge, and stationed ourselves at an opportune place, on a ledge overlooking a portion of the wooded defile, we sent Andries to manoeuvre so that as many of the elephants as possible should pass before us in order of review, designing to ascertain, by a close inspection, whether there was not a male amongst them. Filing sluggishly along, numbers halted at intervals, and crossing their hind legs, stood at ease beneath an umbrageous tree, some fifteen yards below the rock on which we sat, lazily fanning themselves with their ample ears, blowing away the flies through their trunks, pushing their enormous foreheads wantonly against the stem, and uttering that feeble and peculiar cry so familiar to an Indian. They all proved to be ladies, and most of them mothers—the little old-fashioned calves trudging close to the heels of their dam, and mimicking all her actions. Thus situated, we might have slain any number we pleased, a score of heads being frequently turned towards us in such a position, and so close, that a single ball from our elevated position must have sufficed for each; but we still hoped to find a bull, and were yet hesitating when a shot fired by Andries suddenly whizzing past Richardson's ear, put the whole cohort to immediate flight. We had barely time to seek the shelter of a tree, before a party of about twenty adults, with several little ones in their wake, were close upon our heels, striding at their utmost speed, and trumpeting loudly with uplifted heads. I rested my rifle against the stem, and firing behind the shoulder of the leader, she dropped instantly. Another large detachment appearing in our rear at the same moment, we were again compelled to retreat, dodging from tree to tree, stumbling among stumps and stones, and coming ever upon fresh parties of the enemy. But this scene of ludicrous confusion did not long continue, and being soon enabled to approach the prostrate lady, we put an end to her struggles by a rifle shot in the forehead. Andries now came puffing up in high good humour at his achievements, and under the pretence that the animal was shamming, in the most bravado manner discharged his cumbersome piece into the dead carcase. The villain's object evidently was, however, to confound the shots—for thrusting his middle finger into the orifice made by my two-ounce ball, he with the most modest assurance declared himself to be the author of the deed, being pleased altogether to overlook the fact of the mortal wound having been inflicted on the side opposite to that on which he was stationed, whilst his own bullet, whether designedly or otherwise, had all but expended my worthy and esteemed fellow-traveller.

On our way back to the camp, of the exact position of which we were rendered somewhat uncertain, owing to the difficulties opposed to the advance of the waggons by the late inundation, we passed three other large herds. One of them standing directly in our route, we attacked and pursued the fugitives about a mile over loose stones. Much has been said and written of the attachment of elephants to their young, but neither on this nor on any subsequent occasion could we

perceive that the mothers evinced the smallest concern for the safety of their offspring. On the contrary, they left them to shift for themselves, and Mohanycom with 'Lingap being behind us, assagai'd one little fellow whose tail they brought in.* Another old female was slain as we ascended the brow of an eminence, and at the same moment our waggons were revealed within a few hundred yards of the spot. The whole drove dashed through the middle of the camp, causing indescribable confusion both amongst cattle and followers; but fortunately no accident occurred, and after the fatiguing day's work that we had undergone, we were not sorry to find ourselves again at home.

Watery clouds hung about the sun as he set heavily behind the mountains. Loud peals of crashing thunder rent the air, and before night-fall we had a repetition of yesterday's storm,—the river roaring past us with frightful fury. Troops of elephants flying from the scene of carnage, passed close to our waggons during the darkness, their wild voices re-echoing amongst the mountains, and sounding like trumpets above the tempest. It was not possible to keep the fires burning, and the oxen and sheep were alarmed to so great a degree, that they broke from the kraal, and sought safety in the wilderness. Tired as I was, the excitement of the recent proceedings banished sleep from my eyes. I ruminated on the spirit-stirring events of the day, and burned with impatience to renew them. Heedless of the withering blast that howled without, I felt that my most sanguine expectations had been realized, and that we had already been more than amply repaid for the difficulties, privations, and dangers, that we had encountered in our toilsome journey towards this fairy-land of sport.

It was still raining heavily when the day slowly and gloomily broke; and the mountain torrents having overflowed their banks, had rendered the valley in which we were encamped one continuous pool of water. High roads had been ploughed through the mire by the passage of the giant army; and whole acres of grass by which we had been surrounded the preceding evening were trampled level with the ground. The weather clearing up as usual, shortly after sunrise, and the truant cattle having been recovered, we armed a party with hatchets, and proceeded to collect the ivory. After a little brush with a crusty rhinoceros, and a long and tedious trudge through deep black mire, from which our feet were extricated with extreme labour, we again sought the living picture—but upon all the plain which was yesterday so teeming with noble quadrupeds, not one was to be seen. On reaching the glen, however, which had been the scene of our exploits during the earlier part of the action, a calf some three and a half feet high, walked forth from a bush, and saluted us with mournful piping notes. The unhappy little wretch had been observed hovering about its mother for some time after she fell, and having probably been unable afterwards to overtake the flying herd, it had passed a dreary night in the woods. Entwining its pliant proboscis about our legs, the sagacious creature, after demonstrating its delight at our arrival by a thousand ungainly antics, accompanied the party to the body of its dam, which, swollen to an enormous girth, was surrounded by an inquest of vultures. Seated in gaunt array with their shoulders shrugged, these loathsome fowls were awaiting its decomposition with forced resignation—the tough hide having defied all the efforts of their beaks, with which the eyes and softer parts had been vigorously assailed. The conduct of the quaint little calf now became so affecting as to elicit the sympathy of every one present. It ran round its mother's corse with touching demonstrations of grief, piping sorrowfully, and vainly striving to raise her stiff limbs with its tiny trunk. I confess that I had not been without compunctions when committing the murder, and now felt so bitterly reproached by this moving behaviour, that I half resolved never to be found aiding or abetting in another.

The operation of hewing out three pairs of tusks occupied several hours, their roots, embedded in massive sockets, spreading over the greater portion of the face.† After considerable labour we also succeeded in extracting the ball which Andries pretended to have fired; and the groves of my rifle being conspicuous upon it, that worthy but unabashed 'squire, was not only constrained to relinquish his claim to the merit of having secured the prize, but, which was the 'unkindest cut of all,' to forego his fancied right to the ivory. During the whole operation the miniature of its prostrate mother was scanning our proceedings with the most intense interest, and finding at length that she heeded not its caresses as of yore, voluntarily accompanied our party to the waggons, where it was received with shouts of welcome from the people, and by a band of all sorts of melody from the cattle. But in spite of every care, the little wretch pined to death in the course of a few days, as did two others, much older, that were subsequently captured.

Arriving next in the valley of the Limpopo, I went out alone one afternoon, shortly after the caravan had halted, and having ascended the hill by a narrow path trodden by wild animals, entered a strip of forest occupying an extensive ravine. Several elephants had been seen from the waggons during the morning, clambering with the agility of chamois to the very summit of the chain; and I had now not advanced many yards, before I perceived a solitary bull posted on the outskirts of

* By the savage hordes of Southern Africa, the elephant is deemed to hold equal rank with the greatest of their Chiefs, some of whom, and Moselekatse among the number, assuming unto themselves the style and title of "the noble elephant," court etiquette does not authorise any allusion being made in the royal presence to the animal's death. Numbers are however annually mobbed and slain with the assagai, the noble attributes of the giant victim being extolled the while by his naked assailants in a loud voice, coupled, when he charges, with supplications for mercy, such as "Spare our lives high and mighty one; hurt none of us Great Captain." One of the tusks, and the tuft of the tail, are considered the perquisites of the crown, and the latter trophy being moreover esteemed an ensign of royalty, is raised upon a pole at the gate of the cattle-kraal; whilst the trunk, which is held in superstitious veneration, is interred with all suitable solemnity during repeated exclamations of "The Elephant is a great Lord, and the trunk is his hand." This latter simile is as old as Cicero.

† By the slaughter of a first-rate bull elephant, each of whose tusks weigh upwards of one hundred pounds, a man may earn with a single bullet from seven to eight hundred Rix Dollars, equivalent to between £60 and £70 sterling. Touching the mode of extracting ivory, however, one need take a lesson from the Abyssinians, who would appear to be most summary in their proceedings. "There is a race of people," writes Mr. Wolf, "called Shiho, living under trees and bushes, who catch the elephant in the following manner:—they entice him to the water, and the moment he begins to drink, they cut off his rostrum and sell his teeth."—*Oriental Christian Spectator*.

the wood, upon one of the lower steppes — his ponderous trunk wreathed around his white tusk, and but for the measured flapping of his ample ears, motionless as a marble statue. Securing my dapple grey mare to a convenient tree, I crept noiselessly behind a huge red block of stone; and from this ambush, which completely concealed and protected me, levelled my rifle at his ample forehead —

“Like a whole town
Clean undermined, the slain beast tumbled down;”

the very earth trembling under his stupendous weight as he subsided with a heavy crash, and uttering one deep groan expired without a struggle! The echoes of the report, reverberating through hill and dale, whilst they caused the mare to break her tether and abscond, brought forth a whole colony of pig-faced baboons from their sylvan haunts to afford me by their ridiculous grimaces, any thing but sympathy; and so long was it before I recovered my truant steed, that I did not regain the party until some hours after nightfall.

We were now in the very heart of the elephant country, but the perils of waggon travelling were hourly so materially increased by the more rugged character of the ground as we advanced, that in order to follow a retreating herd it was found requisite to leave the camp standing — a measure to which we were further impelled by a positive refusal on the part of the rebellious guides to accompany us one step to the eastward of the Limpopo. Crossing that river, therefore, we skirted the mountain chain on horseback, overtaking the rear guard of the fugitives at the close of the second day, below the highest point, where the sources of the *Bekane* and *Umpeban* mark the site of the last bloody conflict betwixt the savage forces of Moselekatse and Dingaan. Speedily becoming confluent, these rivers describe a nearly semi-circular course before joining the Limpopo considerably to the northward of the range, where the country, intersected by detached stony hills, and by mountain spurs of barren and forbidding aspect, assumes a more rugged character than ever. Open and level to the southward, it is dotted over with clumps of forest literally swarming with elephants: but although the rich black soil continues, vegetation becomes visibly less and less abundant.

Seated the following morning upon a grey rock, we were discussing our frugal meal on the summit of a lofty knoll which overlooked a wild tract of this broken forest, when some of the Hottentots, shading their squinny eyes with one hand, pointed with the other to certain sable objects upon an eminence about two miles in advance, the which, on being reconnoitred through a glass, proved as conjectured, to be the out-lying picquets of the vast troop of which we were in search. The unconsumed portion of our coarse repast being hastily thrust into our pockets, we “saddled up,” and having with some difficulty eluded the officious attention of a rhinoceros, who was at hand as usual, were presently ascending the brow on the opposite side of which stood the van of the enemy. As our figures rose to view, the bull, startled by the unwonted sound of a horse’s foot-fall in his quiet valley, flourished his great trunk above his head, and having gazed a moment in mute astonishment at the intrusion of such a cavalcade — whilst the females crowded up as if to claim his protection — erected his enormous ears, and moving his column-like legs after the fashion of seven-league boots, strode rapidly past. Crossing Andries first in order, that skilful Nimrod, anxious probably to accelerate his pace, dismounted nimbly, and marked the hind-quarters of the quarry with a four-to-the-pound bullet, the heavy pat of which was instantly followed by a copious flow of blood. A shrill scream of mingled rage and dismay gave token of the pain occasioned by this wound, as, curling his trunk in the air, and clapping his flail-like tail betwixt his legs, the giant pressed on at his utmost speed — the wrathful voices of his associates, mingled with the crackling of broken branches, resounding meanwhile in the hollow, as they burst through the wood in various directions. Alternately galloping up on either flank, Richardson and myself then saluted him by turns, each with two barrels — the one keeping sight of him among the trees, until the other had reloaded. Every discharge was succeeded by a fresh stream of gore, and his noble form was shortly bathed in crimson; but still the gallant beast held on his course at a swinging pace, until, being obscured for an instant by the brow of an intervening ridge, he was suddenly rejoined by his flying comrades, and could no longer be distinguished in the crowd.

Conceiving that he had broken away with a small section to the lower ground, I left the Hottentots completely at fault, seeking to retrieve the *spoor*, and leading my horse, attempted to force my way on foot through a ravine at its base, tangled with trees and undergrowth. Confused and unintelligible shouts from the height presently warned me of the proximity of danger — *Daar stan he! Daar lope he!! Daar com he!!!* but who or what he was, or in what direction he stood, ran, or came, I had not the most remote idea; and being consequently unable to extricate myself — hearing at the same time a fearful crash among the branches, accompanied by a sound resembling the rolling of numerous large stones, I abandoned my horse to his fate, and hastily ascended the nearest tree, whence I obtained a bird’s eye view of the broad red backs of a large detachment of females, emerging with heavy tramp from the defile not twenty yards from my secure position. Andries had in the meantime been descried scouring over the plain below, with the wounded bull in front, and having fired two dozen shots in rapid succession before any one could arrive to his aid, he finally left the ivory standing, and came blustering back to say his ‘*powder was out.*’ This terrible piece of mismanagement affording the animal a fresh start, we were compelled to follow the bloody trail a full mile, and having been again delayed by the attack of a rhinoceros, the lengthened shadows plainly told that it was late in the afternoon, when from a rising ground we once more obtained a partial view of the colossus, standing sulkily in the very middle of an isolated scrub, banging to and fro his broad ears, and occasionally, by way of interlude, trumpeting forth a challenge to advance “an we dared.” Having fired several salvos without the slightest effect, and long waited in the vain hope of the Philistine coming forth to do us battle, Richardson, as a *dernier resort*, proposed that before it grew too dark, we should cut business short by going in to him in a body. Andries, upon hearing this rash proposal, began to foam

and stutter like a maniac, stating, so soon as his powers of articulation had returned, that in event of our entering the jungle we should certainly "*kill de Olifant*," "That," remarked my companion, "is the very thing we are ambitious of doing, so come along." "*No, no, no, no*," screamed our vaunting ivory hunter, with much painful blinking of the eyes to accelerate his delivery, "*I fra dat de Olifant shall undoubtedly kill de Sieur; he's he's he's—vary quaad*."*

This was indeed a clean different affair, and after some deliberation it appeared so highly probable that Andries' last position was correct, that seeing the poor beast was in no condition to travel far, we bivouacked in a snug situation, hoping to find him somewhat the worse of his wounds when hostilities should be renewed in the morning. But no! The moment the badgered animal again perceived his persecutors, like a champion knight of old entering the lists to cast down the gauntlet to all comers, his little twinkling red eyes glaring under the fire of madness like lenses of glass—out he burst into the open space, grinding his heavy foot along the soil, brandishing his ponderous trunk aloft, and screaming forth his shrill note of rage and defiance! Charge succeeding charge, volley after volley, was poured into the moving mountain of flesh, now completely begrimed with dirt and clotted gore. Frenzied by pain, he rushed recklessly in every direction, squirting the crimson tide from his nostrils, and appearing to be almost suffocated with rage—until, covered with wounds and with glory, and fairly exhausted by exertion and loss of blood, he quietly sank upon his knees after a last desperate lunge, and receiving another shower of balls in the broad forehead, rolled over like a falling tower! Great as was our triumph, and loud and long though the cheering that followed the reduction of this most invincible of his race, the manner of his death could not fail to recal somewhat unpleasantly to mind the foul murder in Exeter 'Change of the unfortunate *Chunee*, upon whose luckless carcase were expended more than a bushel of rifle bullets, in addition to the entire ammunition possessed by a strong detachment of the military.

The attempt to capture a sturdy little bull calf that had lagged behind, and been abandoned by its comrades in the yesterday's skirmish, next afforded us infinite diversion. Far from attempting any pathetic appeal to our humanity, the rascal charged with the utmost vice and indignation every person who ventured within its range; and finally overturning one of the Matabili guides, was by the sentence of a drum-head court martial, summarily impaled and executed on the spot. The troop being now completely routed, we returned on the fourth day to the waggons, laden with spoils, having also fully established the possibility of dispensing, even to cooking apparatus, with every article of baggage. Carrying nothing save the raiment on our backs, the saddle served for a pillow, and the horse-rug for a blanket. Our tent was the starry canopy of heaven; we drank of the waters of the crystal stream, and our viands were the produce of our trusty rifles. It is said of the epicures of Rome, that they esteemed the trunk of an elephant amongst the choicest of luxuries; and descending to more modern times, we find one brother traveller, Le Vaillant, feasting upon the foot with extraordinary relish. To the attention of the city alderman, however, I must be permitted to recommend the slice round the eye, which appears hitherto to have been overlooked by *bon vivans*. Upon this dainty morsel, roasted on a stick before a blazing fire, or so singed among the embers as to come under the Hottentot denomination of *carbonaadtje*, or devilled-grill, we frequently feasted: and I can aver without the smallest fear of contradiction, that the dish much more nearly resembled the fragment of a shoe, picked up after a conflagration, than meat which could boast of having been subjected to any culinary process.

Long ere retracing our steps from the tropic through this menagerie of elephants, both the waggons were so crammed with *spolia opima*, that we were compelled to cast out a number of the teeth, and leave the ground strewn with ivory. After all, the greatest difficulty was experienced in getting the heavily laden vehicles clear of the formidable belt of wooded hillocks, which, intersected by deep ravines, form the suburbs of the Cashan range. In some places, the paths worn by the huge tenants of this almost trackless region being too narrow, it was found requisite to send a party of pioneers to widen them—thus literally cutting our way through the country, and making the aged and hitherto silent forests ring to the unwonted sound of the axe. Our concluding day's elephant hunting was scarcely less full of incident than the first. From the top of a commanding eminence overlooking a lone valley in which they had long been cantoned, many hundreds of the stately beasts burst at once upon the vision, and we for the last time saw the face of the highly picturesque landscape literally *alive* with their scattered forces—some bathing in the pellucid stream—others browsing in indolent security "like the cattle upon a thousand hills." It is no exaggeration to say that a verdant glen some two or three miles in length, was completely studded over with clumps of them. Wheresoever we gazed, there a party of elephants was to be seen, and upon our attacking a column consisting of one hundred at least, the whole rushed frantically down a ravine, with ears upraised, and tossing trunks, screaming wildly, and levelling every thing before them. A shot fired from the bank, whilst it sealed the fate of the leader, headed the division back again; and again, like a fleet tossing the opening waves from before their gallant bows, they crashed through the yielding branches, snapping like small twigs the largest that opposed their progress, and strewing them on either side of their headlong course—the persecution being repeated after this manner until they had become fairly stupified. On one occasion the generals attempted to retrieve the lost day by a reckless and simultaneous charge from several quarters; but although we were often so surrounded by small detachments that it appeared extremely doubtful which party would be eventually obliged to retire from the field, the sound of the human voice uniformly turned the scale, and proclaimed MAN the victor.

A stupendous army of elephants thus ranging in native dignity amid the primæval magnificence of an African landscape—their sagacious appearance giving earnest of their exalted intellectual endowments amongst quadrupeds, and their very

* I say that the elephant will surely kill *you*, for he's—very angry!

attitude and motion so in unison with the majestic solemnity of their department, as to inspire sentiments approaching to veneration—doubtless forms a most uncommon and imposing spectacle; and both to my companion and to myself, the first view of a herd under such circumstances—now industriously working among the aromatic trees with their ivory crowbars, and now with “lithe proboscis” idly culling the succulent shoots

“upon the flowery lap
Of some irriguous valley,”

afforded infinitely greater gratification than the wholesale butchery of the noble quadruped which might have ensued. In most instances, this chase is followed as an avocation solely for the profits arising from the ivory; but as we possessed not the means of bringing away this valuable commodity, had we even been so minded, the chief incentive to continued pursuit was obviously wanting; and after the novelty of the excitement had worn off, I do not hesitate to confess, that although the tracking among scenery of the wildest and most romantic character, backed by the various turns and accidents of the spirit-stirring chase, possessed a never fading charm in my eyes, I could not at any time thoroughly divest myself of the idea that the ‘half reasoning’ quadruped, against whose voluminous carcase I had turned my deadly weapons, was none other than mine own stalwart ally, my tried and trusty favorite *Mowla Buksh*, from whose gallant back I had during many happy years vanquished my feline foes in Western India, and whose fancied presence—how idle soever the impression must appear—detracted not a little from the satisfaction that I experienced.



Tail of African Elephant, as preserved by Capt. Harris.

Ear of African Elephant, in the Possession of Mr. Croft, of the Surry Zoological Gardens.