VI. DORCAS. THE ELAND.
PLATE VI.

BOSELAPHUS OREAS—THE ELAND OR IMPOOF.

Eland of the Dutch Colonists. T' Ganna of the Hottentots. Impoof or Pooffo of the Kafirs and Bechuana.

Generic Character.—Full grown male about six feet six or eight inches high at the shoulder, and upwards of twelve in extreme length. Head light and bony. Facial line perfectly straight. Muzzle broad. Forehead square; covered with a cluster of strong wiry twisted hair, forming feathers of an intense sienna brown colour, margined on either side by a bright yellow crescent, which commences above the eyes, and nearly meets about half way down the face. Eyes large, brilliant, and melting. No expression of ferocity in the face. Ears small, white, flexible, and pointed. Horns placed on the summits of the frontals; about two feet in length, massy, slightly divergent, and nearly straight; but twisted on their own axes, and encircled by a ponderous ring which ascends in a spiral direction almost to the tips. A few transverse wrinkles on the more prominent parts. Bony cores approaching to the weight and substance of ivory. Proportions of the body resembling those of a bull. Figure, square and ponderous. Neck very thick, compressed laterally as in the ox; shoulders very deep, withers slightly elevated owing to the length of the spinous processes. Larynx very prominent, and larger than an apple. An ample pendulous dewlap, very thin, lax, and wrinkled, fringed with long wavy wiry brown hair; and descending to the knees. A crest of bristles from the forehead passing upwards and recurrent along the ridge of the neck, in the position of a mane. Hind quarters extremely heavy. Tail two feet three or four inches long; slender, with a tuft of short and coarse brown hair at the extremity. Hide black. Hair very short and scanty. General colour rufous dun, or ashy grey tinged with ochre. Legs extremely short and bull-like; rufous and buff below the knees. Hoofs large, rounded, and black; the succentorial hoofs much developed. Has a muzzle. No suborbital sinus, or lacrymary depression.

Female much smaller, and of slighter proportions; with longer and more slender horns, generally diverging more, and often capriciously twisted. They are usually about thirty inches in length, and have a swelling of the axis between the spiral turns, which forms a knot, above which they incline backwards. She has no dewlap, but a protruding tuft of stiff rufous hair on the larynx. Colour considerably redder than in the male. General appearance not unlike that of a Guernsey cow. Has an udder with four teats. Gregarious in large droves. Formerly common, but now extinct, in the Cape Colony, and only found in the open or slightly wooded plains of the interior.
CHAPTER VI.

THE ELAND.

When they call on their graced of grace
But such they hasten with joy;
And the valve now rings to the ground before
All a shooting forth are gone.

If we follow a fat bough then and hold Begey-Nagte
And bend it on the hool side there,
She bend on a bough, quickly hold Begey-Nagte
She say on a bowel foot there.

Obesity forming one of the exclusive prerogatives of African royalty, it is not surprising that the Eland—more lusty, fat, and well looking, than any other wild quadruped—should assume unto himself an air of princely consequence. “Lord of an hundred does,” amongst which he moves with all the pomp and self-importance of a nabob in his harem, the stately bull is at once the most corpulent, one of the most ponderous, and certainly the most magnificent, of all the ruminants. In shape and general aspect, he resembles a well conditioned Guzerat ox, not unfrequently attaining the height of nineteen hands at the withers, and absolutely weighing from fifteen hundred to two thousand pounds! But notwithstanding this enormous bulk of carcase, which is literally enveloped in goodly collapse of quaking fat, the head is strictly that of the antelope—light, graceful, and bony. It is armed with a pair of elegantly diverging horns, which rising from a mask of bright rufous feathers, incline somewhat below the plane of the face, and forming two sides of an isosceles triangle, are encircled by a ponderous spiral ring, the internal nucleus, or bony core of which, is nearly of the consistency and weight of ivory. A deep pendulous dewlap fringed with coarse hair, dangles at his knees; and added to a fatty eminence, which approaches to a slight hump, on the withers, together with sundry rolls of brawn about the collar, produces an extraordinary depth of chest and forehand.

The feelings of exultation which attended my first introduction to this noble quadruped on the wooded banks of the Meritsane, will not readily pass from my recollection. My companion and myself had been for some time engaged in the hot pursuit of a motley group of Brindled Gnoos, Quaggas, Ostriches, Sossobes, and Hartebeests—one of those astounding herbivorous assemblages described in a foregoing chapter—the thunder of whose hoofs, like the sound of a hundred to two thousand pounds! But notwithstanding this enormous bulk of carcase, which is literally enveloped in goodly collapse of quaking fat, the head is strictly that of the antelope—light, graceful, and bony. It is armed with a pair of elegantly diverging horns, which rising from a mask of bright rufous feathers, incline somewhat below the plane of the face, and forming two sides of an isosceles triangle, are encircled by a ponderous spiral ring, the internal nucleus, or bony core of which, is nearly of the consistency and weight of ivory. A deep pendulous dewlap fringed with coarse hair, dangles at his knees; and added to a fatty eminence, which approaches to a slight hump, on the withers, together with sundry rolls of brawn about the collar, produces an extraordinary depth of chest and forehand.

The colour varies considerably with the age, being in some specimens dun—in others, ashy blue with a tinge of ochre—and in many, sandy grey approaching to white. The female—infinitely less voluminous, and more lady-like in her figure—exhibits all those separating characters which distinguish the sexes of domestic horned cattle. She resembles in general conformation, a red Guernsey cow, and is provided with longer and more attenuated horns than her very apoplectic-looking lord.

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As if men fought upon the earth,
And lands in air—

a band of hungry harpies following in our track, tripped nimbly up to each victim as it fell,—completing, by the scientific insertion of the point of an assegai between the vertebrre of the back, the work which our rifle bullets had commenced, and instantly covering the pursuit, by running in advance of our horses, pointing energetically with their fingers, and exclaiming with eager delight,

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How little resemblance did any of the portraits that I had seen of this superb animal, bear to the ponderous original now lying at my feet! In place of the plethora for which the Eland is remarkable, the cunning artist must have surely striven to portray the features indicative of the last stage of a consumption! I was engaged in making a sketch of one of our noble victims, when the savages coming up, breathless with haste, proceeded with cold-blooded ferocity to stab the unfortunate and dying animal—stirring up the blood, and shooting with barbarous exultation as the tide of life gushed from each newly inflicted wound,—regardless alike of our remonstrances, and of the eloquent and pitiful appeal expressed in the beautiful clear black eye of the mild and inoffensive Eland, whose tears might well have wrung remorse from a far more ruthless disciple of Nimrod than myself, and have even caused him to sink the exultation of the sportsman in the feelings of the moralist. The stoutest of our savage attendants could with difficulty transport the head to the waggon, where one of the Hottentots had just arrived with the carcass of a Sausabye, that he had dragged a considerable distance, with the assistance of some twenty barbarians, who were no sooner made acquainted with the occurrences of the morning, than they set off at speed upon the fresh tracks of our horses, returning about sunset gorged to the throat, and groaning under an external load of meat, which they had found it quite impossible to make room for, and had therefore thriftily stung about their necks for a future occasion.

By all classes in Africa, the flesh of the Eland is deservedly esteemed over that of any other animal—

"For here, our fatste,
For weight, a bull, or warp'd on a plateine."

Both in grain and color it resembles beef, but is far better tasted and more delicate, possessing a pure game flavor, and exhibiting the most tempting looking layers of fat and lean—the surprising quantity of the former ingredient with which it is interlarded, exceeding that of any other game quadruped with which I am acquainted. The venison fairly melts in the mouth; and as for the brisket,—that is absolutely a cut for a monarch! With what satisfaction would not King Jamie of hunting memory, have drawn his good blade adown the goodliest bulls leading the van: whereas during a retreat, these it

...
measured nineteen and a half hands at the shoulder, and was armed, unicorn-like, with a single horn, nearly two feet six inches in length. The oldest and stoutest bull not unfrequently expels all other males from the herd; and compelling them to flock together, takes the ladies under his own especial charge. It is, however, more usual to see both sexes feeding indifferently together, and the cows being found in calf all the year round, there can be no determined season for rearing. Although in disposition the Eland is too extremely docile that it may be trained without the smallest difficulty, its strength is neither proportioned to its gigantic bulk, nor are its apparently massive shoulders possessed of sufficient solidity to bear the yoke of domesticity, or render it capable of labouring with advantage to the agriculturist. The existence of a second species, the Boselaphus Cana of naturalists, yoked by the Colonists the Bustard Eland, is, I think, extremely questionable in Southern Africa. I could never myself meet with any such variety, and all the descriptions given of it answer exactly to the appearance of a growing bull, the horns and colour of which, as in other quadrupeds, are then constantly changing. The word Eland, in the Dutch jargon, signifies ES, an animal to which I need hardly say the subject of the annexed portrait bears little resemblance beyond the fact of its being the proprietor of four legs. In days of yore, the species was abundant in the Cape Colony, but it has long since become extinct within the boundary—the value of its flesh and hide, added to its inability to escape from the mounted pursuer, having soon led to its utter extermination. Large parties of Boors, however, occasionally proceed across the boundary, and return with waggon loads of beef, salted and packed away in the skins. The Griquas, also persecute these noble creatures unceasingly; and even the savages who have no horses, not unfrequently take them down on foot, and stab them with their assagais; converting the horns into tobacco-pipes, which, from their large dimensions, admit of the weed being inhaled after the most approved fashion.

The slot or mark left by the foot of the Eland resembles that of the buffalo in point of size, but is readily distinguishable from it by a practised eye; nor did it ever occur on the sandy plain, without eliciting from the Hottentot discoverer some apt comment, prefixed by the exclamation of Eland's boot! Eland's cow! according as the sex was denoted by the spacer.* Whilst hunting Elands on the Molopo, a curious scene occurred, which I shall here adduce as a fair specimen of the every-day behaviour of our exemplary and attached retainers. Having ridden down a portly bull, and brought the Hottentots to the spot, they proceeded with unwonted alacrity to divest the animal of its valuable hide, and had nearly completed the operation, when Richardson casually remarked that it would make magnificent shoes, or halters, which were much required for securing our horses. The villains looked at each other askance—every knife was instantly closed, and returned to the pocket of the owner with the remark that they had been having the councils for the purpose of manufacturing solid shoes, or country boots, for their own feet; but since we required it, would give themselves no further concern on the subject—a determination to which, be it known, they most rigorously adhered.

Returning one day from hunting the Gieraffs to the Northward of the Cashan mountains, and looking for our waggon which had moved a march in the meantime, we mistook a large herd of Elands grazing in a nimbus haze, for our own oxen, and were literally amongst them before we had discovered the truth. But by far the largest herd seen during the expedition was on the plain of the gurgling Chonapas, shortly after moving to the Southward of the Cashan mountains, on our way towards the Vaal river. It may probably have consisted of three hundred head, or more, and in appearance could only be compared to a vast drove of stall-fed oxen.

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* Spacer. The Dutch word for the mark or foot print.
seemed with difficulty to force their way through the reeds which choked the channel. Not a single twig could be obtained for fuel in the whole neighbourhood, but after breaking up some useless waggon boxes, the feasting became general; nor can I better describe the proceedings of this day of carnage, than by drawing again upon the Water Poet, who in his work entitled the “Pennyless Pilgrimage,” has favoured us with the following graphic description of the finale of a great hunt celebrated by the Earl of Marr in 1618, at which he had the good fortune to be present. “In the space of two hours,” says he, “four score fat buckes were slain, which after were disposed of, some one way and some another; more than enough being left for us to make merrey withall at our rendezvous; and being come to our lodgings there was such baking, boyling, rosting, and stewing, as if cook Ruffian himself had been there to have scalded the deyvill in his feathers.”

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![Harte's Heads of Elands as preserved by Capt. Harris](image-url)