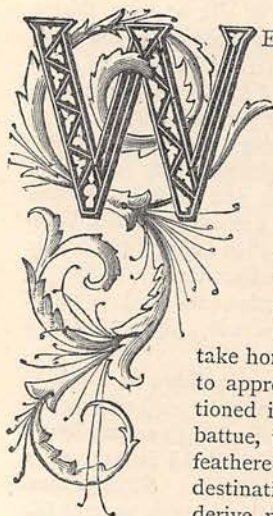


TRAVEL AND SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA.



WE have always secretly demurred to the word "pot-hunter," when used as a term of reproach, and in contradistinction to the supposed true sportsman, who is to be actuated by vanity or a love of adventure and excitement alone. We had sooner potter about all day with dog and gun, and only get two or three brace of birds, which we could

take home to our own larder, or send to appreciative friends, than be stationed in the warmest corner at a battue, to slay scores of furred and feathered creatures of whose ultimate destination we were ignorant. We derive more satisfaction from catching

a quarter of a pound trout than the largest uneatable chub or barbel. In fact the sole *raison-d'être* of sport seem to be the obtaining of edible and the destruction of harmful animals. But we have hardly dared to utter such sentiments above our breath, and it gave us therefore genuine delight to read the words with which Captain Parker Gillmore, an arch-authority, commences the preface to his new book, "The Great Thirst Land."

"I shoot for the pot—*id est*, to fill the pot—when that is done I cease to take the lives of valuable food-furnishing animals." We settled down to the reading of the narrative with avidity, confident that we should not be disgusted with those repeated accounts of useless, wanton, wholesale slaughter which disfigure the pages of several other adventurous travellers and good shots, and which sometimes tempt us to hope that a portion, at least, of their victims fell to that early English weapon which is not so deadly as the rifle.

Journeying by waggon sounds very delightful. You always have your home with you. Who, when a boy, has not envied the inhabitants of those travelling caravans which go about the country from fair to race meeting? It is like yachting by land. And besides the advantage of a roof over your head every night, you have that of not being stinted in luggage. You have not to consult seriously as to how small a quantity of clothing, medicine, ammunition, you can possibly do with, as you have to when every package has to be carried on sumpter animals' backs or men's heads. A waggon gives you a good margin. And yet our travellers sound like overburdening themselves when we hear that the weight of their luggage was four tons and a half! But then they took out eleven guns, twenty thousand rounds of ball cartridge, one hundred pounds of gunpowder, five hundred pounds of pig-lead, and five hundred pounds of shot. It reads like the preparation for a little war. They got all this luggage stowed away in the hold of a steamer bound for the

Cape of Good Hope, and sighted Table Mountain on the twenty-third day. One of their fellow-passengers, whose name was Holly, a resident in the Colony, attached himself to them and begged to be taken on their staff. He said that he could speak Dutch, knew the ways of settlers and Kaffirs, was thoroughly up in the management and driving of cattle, and, in short, could save them any amount of delay, trouble, and expense. Such a man, no doubt, would be very useful; the drawback was that Mr. Holly's habits did not seem to be very sober. However, they made allowances for an idle life on board ship, and were willing to believe his assertions that he was not habitually intemperate, and as they liked him in other respects they agreed to allow him to join them in their trip up-country.

Their original intention had been to hire a small coaster at Cape Town, sail to Walwich Bay, and start for the game country from thence; but they could not obtain a suitable vessel in the first instance, and were assured that it would be difficult to buy draught-oxen on their arrival if they got there. So they had to re-ship their four and a half tons of luggage, *plus* a waggon bought for £110 in Cape Town, and go on to Natal. The prices asked for oxen there were so exorbitant that they proceeded to Pieter-Maritzburg, the political capital, and then their difficulties commenced in earnest.

It seems that there are a set of cattle-dealers and other agents who arrogate to themselves the right of fitting out travellers at the most ruinous rates, and if their impositions are resisted, and fairer bargains obtained from outsiders, they make use of every device which suggests itself to adepts acting against novices to thwart the expedition, often with such success that the disappointed sportsmen are obliged to give up their proposed journey, and sell off their stores, &c., for what they will fetch, much to the profit of the rapacious conspirators.

Then Holly was a lazy fellow, who did nothing but sing "The Red, White, and Blue," unless he was perpetually being bullied; and then picked up the first Zulus who offered their services, thus getting together a very inexperienced staff. Another difficulty was about horses, since in hunting big game, elephants especially, a man's life often depends upon his being well mounted. Now it is not a light matter to buy a horse anywhere, but in Africa there is something extra to be considered besides soundness, sure-footedness, freedom from vice, and speed; you have to ascertain whether a horse has been *saulted*. It seems that horses there are subject to a disease corresponding to the distemper in some breeds of dogs—*i.e.*, they all have it, and most of them die of it, but they never have it twice. When they have passed through the ordeal they are said to be *saulted*.

At last horses, dogs, oxen, Zulus were procured, and a start was made, but a break-down occurred almost immediately, owing in great measure to the careless-

ness of Holly, who got drunk again, and was summarily dismissed. But accidents were perpetually recurring; the head driver, the most important man of the party, was in league with their enemies, and paid to stop them. When he saw an ant-bear-hole he guided one of the wheels into it, and it took many hours of severe labour to get the waggon out again; he put the drag on going up-hill; he tampered with the trek-tow, which snapped whenever a severe strain was put upon it, leaving the vehicle in a morass or the bed of a river till a blacksmith and an extra team could be obtained, to repair damages and drag it out.

When at last Captain Gillmore discovered his tricks he lost his temper, and went at him with his fists, *more Britannico*, a procedure which, if not legally defensible, must surely be condoned considering the provocation. A piece of impatience far more lamentable was that which, about this time, led him to attempt the self-extraction of an aching tooth with a pair of pincers; for though he managed to pull out a large molar, it proved to be the *wrong* one.

What the travellers would have done for a proper conductor; the driving of oxen being a difficult art which it takes many years' practice to acquire, it is hard to imagine, had they not been overtaken by a party of Dutch Boers who were returning with their waggons to their settlement at Potschefstrom, which was 400 miles on their journey, and made a bargain with them to keep in company for that distance; one of their number, William, agreeing to act as their driver.

Another bright spot was the gratitude of a poor destitute Kaffir boy whom Captain Gillmore picked up and took into his service, calling him Umganey, after the falls where he met with him. Umganey proved a most useful and faithful servant. To balance this, Holly turned up again, having ridden after them to beg forgiveness and another trial, which was given him. But he proved quite useless, and soon had to leave again.

They were now in a fair way of getting to their hunting-grounds, though with upwards of four tons weight in their waggon, it is no wonder that they were brought to a standstill occasionally, and there was a good deal of toil connected with their journey. In going up steep hills, for example, the two travellers had to keep close behind the waggon with large blocks of stone in their hands, ready to jam them under the hind wheels directly the word "Klip" was shouted: a service of some danger to the hands and arms. However, the advantage of several waggons travelling in company is that when one gets stuck the oxen can be brought from the others to help it out of its difficulties; and so they got on pretty well, though the Boers were in such a hurry to get home to their *frows* and *kinderkins*, that the sportsmen found little opportunity for making excursions in pursuit of game. But they consoled themselves with the thought that they would have plenty of shooting by-and-by.

One of them, unhappily, was doomed to disappointment. Morris was soon attacked with fever, and had to be left behind, to his companion's great regret; and

though he was able to rejoin him after a few days' rest, he was unable to remain long. He had a few days' spring-buck and coram shooting, but his ambition to encounter the lion and the elephant was not for that time to be gratified. He grew worse and worse till they reached Potschefstrom, where it became evident that it was no use struggling against fate any longer. So he took advantage of a mail-cart going to the Diamond Fields, from whence there was constant communication with Port Elizabeth, and started with the intention of getting to England as soon as possible. Captain Gillmore, thus left to pursue his journey alone, lightened his luggage by leaving behind what articles he could dispense with, had the waggon thoroughly repaired, and made a fresh start.

William the Boer driver's engagement was now over, and Captain Gillmore found it difficult to replace him, but having had some experience in the management of teams by this, he was not so dependent, and two Scotch settlers, whose hospitality he soon afterwards enjoyed, did their best to assist him. Among other troubles, some of the men deserted for the Diamond Fields; and his clothes had been stitched with a sewing-machine, so that when a rip began in one of the seams it ran right up, giving him a good deal of uncongenial tailoring to do. Game, however, became more and more plentiful, and that was the principal thing.

The traveller's object was big game, with some ivory and ostrich feathers to help pay his expenses, and his programme was to hunt in the Bechuana country, where elephants still abound. Kama, King of the Bechuanas, however, is very particular as to whom he allows the shooting, and the Boers and other traders warned Captain Gillmore over and over again that he was wasting his time—Kama had refused everybody lately; and quite right too, considering the wanton way in which the game had been destroyed. But the Englishman had his own reasons for expecting that an exception would be made in his favour, and pursued his journey to Soshong, the capital where Kama resides, situated on the verge of the Kalahari Desert, or Great Thirst Land. This part of his expedition, from Potschefstrom to Soshong, appears to have been the pleasantest, for though his friend had gone he was seldom without genial companionship. He generally outspanned in the neighbourhood of a settler, and though sometimes this was a Boer who anticipated that annexation which has since become a fact, and bore no love to the English, he also fell in with Scotchmen who had married Dutch wives, and who could not make enough of a countryman in that distant land; with an Irishman who was, if possible, equally delighted to see him, and who kept repeating that it was a great day for Ireland, entirely—why, he did not explain; and with other friendly folk. He also joined waggons with a young white trader and keen sportsman who was going his way, and they travelled together through Gordon Cumming's ground, on the Limpopo river. The sport comprised pig-sticking, hunting jackal with the dogs, hartebeest and quagga shooting. Above all, he was at that period in pretty good health.

On outspanning one evening in a particularly charming spot, they found that they had for neighbours another trader, who was travelling with his newly married wife and her sister. Fraternisation took place, it was agreed to rest there all the next day, and the gallant captain organised a fishing party and picnic in honour of the ladies. The fishing proved a success; so did the luncheon.

After the meal the unmarried damsel wandered in search of water-plants amongst the reeds on the bank. Suddenly she stumbled upon a lion, which seemed inclined to spring at her, but she faced him and screamed, so he hesitated. The men seized their rifles, ran up, and shot him before he had made up his mind whether to fight or fly.

Two or three journeys from this place, the traveller came to the boomslang-tree from which Hendrick, Gordon Cumming's faithful driver, was carried off from under the waggon by a lion. The tree bore the name of the mighty hunter, as well as those of Baynes, Hartley, and Mauch.

At Soshong the traveller was most kindly received by the missionaries resident there, and introduced to King Kama, to read the account of whom quite revolutionises one's ideas of African potentates. He is described as an affable, courteous gentleman, excessively well-bred. He at once gave leave to hunt in his country, explaining his reason for refusing permission to Boers and traders; and it was not long before Captain Gillmore made a fresh start. But though he was now soon in the midst of that big game to encounter which is the sportsman's highest ambition, all zest for the wild life seems to have died out. Cut off now from all white companionship, he regretted his friend Morris continually. His boy, Umganey, was literally the only friend he had; a conversation amongst his other followers, overheard at starting by one who could interpret it, showed the nature of their feelings towards him. "Our boss is a fat cow, he has plenty of milk: let us milk the cow," was the burden of their song. He does not dwell on his discomforts, but it is evident that from that time he was never free from fever. Whether he had typhoid or dysentery he does not say; but if not, how he escaped is wonderful. For the water he had to drink was so full of animalculæ and every description of impurity that it clogged a filter at once; boiling converted it into a sort of soup, and the only way to get any use out of it at all was to drain it through a stocking. Still he appears to have kept up his spirits pretty well, till he got a nasty fall from his mare's putting her feet in a hole while chasing giraffes at full speed. After that, though he went to work again in a week, it is evident that he was thoroughly done up, and only excess of pluck kept him going at all. His Kaffirs took advantage of his condition, and were in a chronic state of mutiny.

One night as he lay in his waggon, exhausted with fever, he felt his favourite mare jerking and straining at the fore-wheel to which she was tethered; and knowing that this must be from fear of wild beasts, roused out to find that the fires which it is necessary to keep burning to scare the lions, &c., had been

allowed to go very low. He called, but there was no response; all his boys, including the faithful Umganey, had gone off to have a jollification with some other Kaffirs in the neighbourhood. So he had to see to the fires himself, and in tearing down wood to replenish them with, was twice stung by a scorpion—a fact which is mentioned without any allusion to the after-effects, as if the sting of a scorpion were no more than that of a hornet. That must have been a bad night he passed—enfeebled by accident and fever, deserted by all, surrounded by lions, and suffering from the agony of two scorpion-stings! Some men would have gone mad; but so far from losing his reason, Captain Gillmore even kept his temper with the two mutinous ringleaders who led the rest into mischief, and forbore to shoot them even when they threatened his life. He was obliged at last, indeed, to knock them down; and then they deserted in real earnest, leaving the fever-stricken traveller a frightful amount of hard work to do, which was still further increased when Umganey fell ill and could not assist him.

It is the old story of African travel—a constant strain upon the physical, moral, and mental energies of the sportsman or explorer, which one would deem beyond human endurance if there were not living proof to the contrary.

The awkward part of travelling across this Great Thirst Land seems to be this: you are forced to outspan close to the rare and far-distant pools of water, and the lions, panthers, &c., that must drink once in the twenty-four hours, assemble at the same spots, so that the oxen and horses must necessarily be taken every night into the very midst of their enemies. The impossibility of judging where a lion is from his roaring is owing to his putting his mouth close to the earth, which causes the sound to roll along like thunder, producing at the same time a vibration which is very trying to weak nerves.

The wild animals drink at these sparse watering-places in regular order: first the small antelopes, then the larger, the zebras and buffaloes; after these the giraffes, then the rhinoceros, and lastly the elephant. The lion, however, drinks whenever he chooses.

At last the returning traveller reached the Diamond Fields and civilisation, to be assaulted, knocked down, and stripped of everything about him, by white highwaymen, and left to find his way on foot to Kimberly, one hundred and fifty miles distant. Arrived at this place, however, his adventures were over, and all that was left for him was to return to England and recover his health, which we take the liberty of heartily hoping that he has done. For our space is filled, and those who wish to hear how the Kaffir beauty teased the white man by eating live caterpillars; how hyænas bite off people's cheeks as they lie asleep around the bivouac fire; how Mr. Finnety shot lions right and left, as good shots at home do partridges, and many other entertaining and instructive facts connected with natural history, ethnology, geography, and sport, must turn to the book entitled "The Great Thirst Land" itself.

LEWIS HOUGH.