ROBERT MICHAEL BALLANTYNE

THE GORILLA HUNTERS

Robert Michael Ballantyne

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Содержание

R. M. Ballantyne
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Chapter One.
In which the hunters are introduced

It was five o'clock in the afternoon. There can be no doubt whatever as to that. Old Agnes may say what she pleases—she has a habit of doing so—but I know for certain (because I looked at my watch not ten minutes before it happened) that it was exactly five o'clock in the afternoon when I received a most singular and every way remarkable visit—a visit which has left an indelible impression on my memory, as well it might; for, independent of its singularity and unexpectedness, one of its results was the series of strange adventures which are faithfully detailed in this volume.

It happened thus:—

I was seated in an armchair in my private study in a small town on the west coast of England. It was a splendid afternoon, and it was exactly five o'clock. Mark that. Not that there is anything singular about the mere fact, neither is it in any way mixed up with the thread of this tale; but old Agnes is very obstinate—singularly positive—and I have a special desire that she should see it in print, that I have not given in on that point. Yes, it was five precisely, and a beautiful evening. I was ruminating, as I frequently do, on the pleasant memories of bygone days, especially the happy days that I spent long ago among the coral islands of the Pacific, when a tap at the door aroused me.

"Come in."

"A veesiter, sir," said old Agnes (my landlady), "an' he'll no gie his name."

Old Agnes, I may remark, is a Scotchwoman.

"Show him in," said I.

"Maybe he's a pickpocket," suggested Agnes.

"I'll take my chance of that."

"Ay! that's like 'ee. Cares for naethin'. Losh, man, what if he cuts yer throat?"

"I'll take my chance of that too; only *do* show him in, my good woman," said I, with a gesture of impatience that caused the excellent (though obstinate) old creature to depart, grumbling.

In another moment a quick step was heard on the stair, and a stranger burst into the room, shut the door in my landlady's face as she followed him, and locked it.

I was naturally surprised, though not alarmed, by the abrupt and eccentric conduct of my visitor, who did not condescend to take off his hat, but stood with his arms folded on his breast, gazing at me and breathing hard.

"You are agitated, sir; pray be seated," said I, pointing to a chair.

The stranger, who was a little man and evidently a gentleman, made no reply, but, seizing a chair, placed it exactly before me, sat down on it as he would have seated himself on a horse, rested his arms on the back, and stared me in the face.

"You are disposed to be facetious," said I, smiling (for I never take offence without excessively good reason).

"Not at all, by no means," said he, taking off his hat and throwing it recklessly on the floor. "You are Mr Rover, I presume?"

"The same, sir, at your service."

"Are you? oh, that's yet to be seen! Pray, is your Christian name Ralph?"

"It is," said I, in some surprise at the coolness of my visitor.

"Ah! just so. Christian name Ralph, t'other name Rover—Ralph Rover. Very good. Age twenty-two yesterday, eh?"

"My birthday *was* yesterday, and my age *is* twenty-two. You appear to know more of my private history than I have the pleasure of knowing of yours. Pray, sir, may I—but, bless me! are you unwell?"

I asked this in some alarm, because the little man was rolling about in his seat, holding his sides, and growing very red in the face.

"Oh no! not at all; perfectly well—never was better in my life," he said, becoming all at once preternaturally grave. "You were once in the Pacific—lived on a coral island—"

"I did."

"Oh, don't trouble yourself to answer. Just shut up for a minute or two. You were rather a soft green youth then, and you don't seem to be much harder or less verdant now."

"Sir!" I exclaimed, getting angry.

"Just so," continued he, "and you knew a young rascal there—"

"I know a rascal *here*," I exclaimed, starting up, "whom I'll kick—"

"What!" cried the little stranger, also starting up and capsizing the chair; "Ralph Rover, has time and sunburning and war so changed my visage that you cannot recognise Peterkin?"

I almost gasped for breath.

"Peterkin—Peterkin Gay!" I exclaimed.

I am not prone to indulge in effeminate demonstration, but I am not ashamed to confess that when I gazed on the weather-beaten though ruddy countenance of my old companion, and observed the eager glance of his bright blue eyes, I was quite overcome, and rushed violently into his arms. I may also add that until that day I had had no idea of Peterkin's physical strength; for during the next five minutes he twisted me about and spun me round and round my own room until my brain began to reel, and I was fain to cry him mercy.

"So, you're all right—the same jolly, young old wiseacre in whiskers and long coat," cried Peterkin. "Come now, Ralph, sit down if you can. I mean to stay with you all evening, and all night, and all to-morrow, and all next day, so we'll have lots of time to fight our battles o'er again. Meanwhile compose yourself, and I'll tell you what I've come about. Of course, my first and chief reason was to see your face, old boy; but I have another reason too—a very peculiar reason. I've a proposal to make and a plan to unfold, both of 'em stunners; they'll shut you up and screw you down, and altogether flabbergast you when you hear 'em, so sit down and keep quiet—do."

I sat down accordingly, and tried to compose myself; but, to say truth, I was so much overjoyed and excited by the sight of my old friend and companion that I had some difficulty at first in fixing my attention on what he said, the more especially that he spoke with extreme volubility, and interrupted his discourse very frequently, in order to ask questions or to explain.

"Now, old fellow," he began, "here goes, and mind you don't interrupt me. Well, I mean to go, and I mean you to go with me, to—but, I forgot, perhaps you won't be able to go. What are you?"

"What am I?"

"Ay, your profession, your calling; lawyer, M.D., scrivener—which?"

"I am a naturalist."

"A what?"

"A naturalist."

"Ralph," said Peterkin slowly, "have you been long troubled with that complaint?"

"Yes," I replied, laughing; "I have suffered from it from my earliest infancy, more or less."

"I thought so," rejoined my companion, shaking his head gravely. "I fancied that I observed the development of that disease when we lived together on the coral island. It don't bring you in many thousands a year, does it?"

"No," said I, "it does not. I am only an amateur, having a sufficiency of this world's goods to live on without working for my bread. But although my dear father at his death left me a small

fortune, which yields me three hundred a year, I do not feel entitled to lead the life of an idler in this busy world, where so many are obliged to toil night and day for the bare necessaries of life. I have therefore taken to my favourite studies as a sort of business, and flatter myself that I have made one or two not unimportant discoveries, and added a few mites to the sum of human knowledge. A good deal of my time is spent in scientific roving expeditions throughout the country, and in contributing papers to several magazines."

While I was thus speaking I observed that Peterkin's face was undergoing the most remarkable series of changes of expression, which, as I concluded, merged into a smile of beaming delight, as he said,—"Ralph, you're a trump!"

"Possibly," said I, "you are right; but, setting that question aside for the present, let me remind you that you have not yet told me where you mean to go to."

"I mean," said Peterkin slowly, placing both hands on his knees and looking me steadily in the face—"I mean to go a-hunting in—but I forgot. You don't know that I'm a hunter, a somewhat famous hunter?"

"Of course I don't. You are so full of your plans and proposals that you have not yet told me where you have been or what doing these six years. And you ye never written to me once all that time, shabby fellow. I thought you were dead."

"Did you go into mourning for me, Ralph?"

"No, of course not."

"A pretty fellow you are to find fault. You thought that I, your oldest and best friend, was dead, and you did not go into mourning. How could I write to you when you parted from me without giving me your address? It was a mere chance my finding you out even now. I was taking a quiet cup of coffee in the commercial room of a hotel not far distant, when I overheard a stranger speaking of his friend 'Ralph Rover, the philosopher,' so I plunged at him promiscuously, and made him give me your address. But I've corresponded with Jack ever since we parted on the pier at Dover."

"What! Jack—Jack Martin?" I exclaimed, as a warm gush of feeling filled my heart at the sound of his well-remembered name. "Is Jack alive?"

"Alive! I should think so. If possible, he's more alive than ever; for I should suppose he must be full-grown now, which he was not when we last met. He and I have corresponded regularly. He lives in the north of England, and by good luck happens to be just now within thirty miles of this town. You don't mean to say, Ralph, that you have never met!"

"Never. The very same mistake that happened with you occurred between him and me. We parted vowing to correspond as long as we should live, and three hours after I remembered that we had neglected to exchange our addresses, so that we could not correspond. I have often, often made inquiries both for you and him, but have always failed. I never heard of Jack from the time we parted at Dover till to-day."

"Then no doubt you thought us both dead, and yet you did not go into mourning for either of us! O Ralph, Ralph, I had entertained too good an opinion of you."

"But tell me about Jack," said I, impatient to hear more concerning my dear old comrade.

"Not just now, my boy; more of him in a few minutes. First let us return to the point. What was it? Oh! a—about my being a celebrated hunter. A very Nimrod—at least a miniature copy. Well, Ralph, since we last met I have been all over the world, right round and round it. I'm a lieutenant in the navy now—at least I was a week ago. I've been fighting with the Kaffirs and the Chinamen, and been punishing the rascally sepoys in India, and been hunting elephants in Ceylon and tiger-shooting in the jungles, and harpooning whales in the polar seas, and shooting lions at the Cape; oh, you've no notion where all I've been. It's a perfect marvel I've turned up here alive. But there's one beast I've not yet seen, and I'm resolved to see him and shoot him too—"

"But," said I, interrupting, "what mean you by saying that you were a lieutenant in the navy a week ago?"

"I mean that I've given it up. I'm tired of the sea. I only value it as a means of getting from one country to another. The land, the land for me! You must know that an old uncle, a rich old uncle of mine, whom I never saw, died lately and left me his whole fortune. Of course he died in India. All old uncles who die suddenly and leave unexpected fortunes to unsuspecting nephews are old Indian uncles, and mine was no exception to the general rule. So I'm independent, like you, Ralph, only I've got three or four thousand a year instead of hundreds, I believe; but I'm not sure and don't care—and I'm determined now to go on a long hunting expedition. What think ye of all that, my boy?"

"In truth," said I, "it would puzzle me to say what I think, I am so filled with surprise by all you tell me. But you forget that you have not yet told me to which part of the world you mean to go, and what sort of beast it is you are so determined to see and shoot if you can."

"If I can!" echoed Peterkin, with a contemptuous curl of the lip. "Did not I tell you that I was a *celebrated* hunter? Without meaning to boast, I may tell you that there is no peradventure in my shooting. If I only get there and see the brute within long range, I'll—ha! won't I!"

"Get *where*, and see *what*?"

"Get to Africa and see the gorilla!" cried Peterkin, while a glow of enthusiasm lighted up his eyes. "You've heard of the gorilla, Ralph, of course—the great ape—the enormous puggy—the huge baboon—the man monkey, that we've been hearing so much of for some years back, and that the niggers on the African coast used to dilate about till they caused the very hair of my head to stand upon end? I'm determined to shoot a gorilla, or prove him to be a myth. And I mean you to come and help me, Ralph; he's quite in your way. A bit of natural history, I suppose, although he seems by all accounts to be a very unnatural monster. And Jack shall go too—I'm resolved on that; and we three shall roam the wild woods again, as we did in days of yore, and—"

"Hold, Peterkin," said I, interrupting. "How do you know that Jack will go?"

"How do I know? Intuitively, of course. I shall write to him to-night; the post does not leave till ten. He'll get it to-morrow at breakfast, and will catch the forenoon coach, which will bring him down here by two o'clock, and then we'll begin our preparations at once, and talk the matter over at dinner. So you see it's all cut and dry. Give me a sheet of paper and I'll write at once. Ah! here's a bit; now a pen. Bless me, Ralph, haven't you got a quill? Who ever heard of a philosophical naturalist writing with steel. Now, then, here goes:– 'B'luv'd Jack,'—will that do to begin with, eh? I'm afraid it's too affectionate; he'll think it's from a lady friend. But it can't be altered,—'Here I am, and here's Ralph—Ralph Rover!!!!!! think of that,' (I say, Ralph, I've put six marks of admiration there); 'I've found him out. Do come to see us. Excruciatingly important business. Ever thine—Peterkin Gay.' Will that bring him, d'ye think?"

"I think it will," said I, laughing.

"Then off with it, Ralph," cried my volatile friend, jumping up and looking hastily round for the bell-rope. Not being able to find it, my bell-pull being an unobtrusive knob and not a rope, he rushed to the door, unlocked it, darted out, and uttered a tremendous roar, which was followed by a clatter and a scream from old Agnes, whom he had upset and tumbled over.

It was curious to note the sudden change that took place in Peterkin's face, voice, and manner, as he lifted the poor old woman, who was very thin and light, in his arms, and carrying her into the room, placed her in my easy-chair. Real anxiety was depicted in his countenance, and he set her down with a degree of care and tenderness that quite amazed me. I was myself very much alarmed at first.

"My poor dear old *woman*," said Peterkin, supporting my landlady's head; "my stupid haste I fear you are hurt."

"Hech! it's nae hurt—it's deed I am, fair deed; killed be a whaumlskamerin' young blagyird. Oh, ma puir heed!"

The manner and tone in which this was said convinced me that old Agnes was more frightened than injured. In a few minutes the soothing tones and kind manner of my friend had such an effect upon her that she declared she was better, and believed after all that she was only a "wee bit

frichtened." Nay, so completely was she conciliated, that she insisted on conveying the note to the post-office, despite Peterkin's assurance that he would not hear of it. Finally she hobbled out of the room with the letter in her hand.

It is interesting to note how that, in most of the affairs of humanity, things turn out very different, often totally different, from what we had expected or imagined. During the remainder of that evening Peterkin and I talked frequently and much of our old friend Jack Martin. We recalled his manly yet youthful countenance, his bold, lion-like courage, his broad shoulders and winning gentle smile, and although we knew that six years must have made an immense difference in his personal appearance—for he was not much more than eighteen when we last parted—we could not think of him except as a hearty, strapping sailor-boy. We planned, too, how we would meet him at the coach; how we would stand aside in the crowd until he began to look about for us in surprise, and then one of us would step forward and ask if he wished to be directed to any particular part of the town, and so lead him on and talk to him as a stranger for some time before revealing who we were. And much more to the same effect. But when next day came our plans and our conceptions were utterly upset.

A little before two we sauntered down to the coach-office, and waited impatiently for nearly twenty minutes. Of course the coach was late; it always is on such occasions.

"Suppose he does not come," said I.

"What a fellow you are," cried Peterkin, "to make uncomfortable suppositions! Let us rather suppose that he does come."

"Oh, then, it would be all right; but if he does not come, what then?"

"Why, then, it would be all wrong, and we should have to return home and eat our dinner in the sulks, that's all."

As my companion spoke we observed the coach come sweeping round the turn of the road about half a mile distant. In a few seconds it dashed into the town at full gallop, and finally drew up abruptly opposite the door of the inn, where were assembled the usual group of hostlers and waiters and people who expected friends by the coach.

"He's not there," whispered Peterkin, in deep disappointment—"at least he's not on the outside, and Jack would never travel inside of a coach even in bad weather, much less in fine. That's not him on the back-seat beside the fat old woman with the blue bundle, surely! It's very like him, but too young, much too young. There's a great giant of a man on the box-seat with a beard like a grenadier's shako, and a stout old gentleman behind him with gold spectacles. That's all, except two boys farther aft, and three ladies in the cabin. Oh, *what* a bore!"

Although deeply disappointed at the non-arrival of Jack, I could with difficulty refrain from smiling at the rueful and woe-begone countenance of my poor companion. It was evident that he could not bear disappointment with equanimity, and I was on the point of offering some consolatory remarks, when my attention was attracted by the little old woman with the blue bundle, who went up to the gigantic man with the black beard, and in the gentlest possible tone of voice asked if he could direct her to the white house.

"No, madam," replied the big man hastily; "I'm a stranger here."

The little old woman was startled by his abrupt answer. "Deary me, sir, no offence, I hope."

She then turned to Peterkin and put the same question, possibly under a vague sort of impression that if a gigantic frame betokened a gruff nature, diminutive stature must necessarily imply extreme amiability. If so, she must have been much surprised as well as disappointed, for Peterkin, rendered irascible by disappointment, turned short round and said sharply, "Why, madam, how can *I* tell you where the white house is, unless you say which white house you want? Half the houses of the town are white—at least they're *dirty* white," he added bitterly, as he turned away.

"I think I can direct you, ma'am," said I, stepping quickly up with a bland smile, in order to counteract, if possible, my companion's rudeness.

"Thank you, sir, kindly," said the little old woman; "I'm glad to find *some* little civility in the town."

"Come with me, ma'am; I am going past the white house, and will show you the way."

"And pray, sir," said the big stranger, stepping up to me as I was about to move away, "can you recommend me to a good hotel?"

I replied that I could; that there was one in the immediate vicinity of the white house, and that if he would accompany me I would show him the way. All this I did purposely in a very affable and obliging tone and manner; for I hold that example is infinitely better than precept, and always endeavour, if possible, to overcome evil with good. I offered my arm to the old woman, who thanked me and took it.

"What!" whispered Peterkin, "you don't mean me to take this great ugly gorilla in tow?"

"Of course," replied I, laughing, as I led the way.

Immediately I entered into conversation with my companion, and I heard "the gorilla" attempt to do so with Peterkin; but from the few sharp cross replies that reached my ear, I became aware that he was unsuccessful. In the course of a few minutes, however, he appeared to have overcome his companion's ill-humour, for I overheard their voices growing louder and more animated as they walked behind me.

Suddenly I heard a shout, and turning hastily round, observed Peterkin struggling in the arms of the gorilla! Amazed beyond measure at the sight, and firmly persuaded that a cowardly assault had been made upon my friend, I seized the old woman's umbrella, as the only available weapon, and flew to the rescue.

"Jack, my boy! can it be possible?" gasped Peterkin.

"I believe it is," replied Jack, laughing.—"Ralph, my dear old fellow, how are you?"

I stood petrified. I believed that I was in a dream.

I know not what occurred during the next five minutes. All I could remember with anything like distinctness was a succession of violent screams from the little old woman, who fled shouting thieves and murder at the full pitch of her voice. We never saw that old woman again, but I made a point of returning her umbrella to the "white house."

Gradually we became collected and sane.

"Why, Jack, how did you find us out?" cried Peterkin, as we all hurried on to my lodgings, totally forgetful of the little old woman, whom, as I have said, we never saw again, but who, I sincerely trust, arrived at the white house in safety.

"Find you out! I knew you the moment I set eyes on you. Ralph puzzled me for a second, he has grown so much stouter; but I should know your nose, Peterkin, at a mile off."

"Well, Jack, I did not know you," retorted Peterkin, "but I'm safe never again to forget you. Such a great hairy Cossack as you have become! Why, what do you mean by it?"

"I couldn't help it, please," pleaded Jack; "I grew in spite of myself; but I think I've stopped now."

"It's time," remarked Peterkin.

Jack had indeed grown to a size that men seldom attain to without losing in grace infinitely more than they gain in bulk, but he had retained all the elegance of form and sturdy vigour of action that had characterised him as a boy. He was fully six feet two inches in his stockings, but so perfect were his proportions that his great height did not become apparent until you came close up to him. Full half of his handsome manly face was hid by a bushy black beard and moustache, and his curly hair had been allowed to grow luxuriantly, so that his whole aspect was more like to the descriptions we have of one of the old Scandinavian Vikings than a gentleman of the present time. In whatever company he chanced to be he towered high above every one else, and I am satisfied that, had he walked down Whitechapel, the Horse Guards would have appeared small beside him, for he possessed not only great length of limb but immense breadth of chest and shoulders.

During our walk to my lodgings Peterkin hurriedly stated his "plan and proposal," which caused Jack to laugh very much at first, but in a few minutes he became grave, and said slowly, "That will just suit—it will do exactly."

"What will do exactly? Do be more explicit, man," said Peterkin, with some impatience.

"I'll go with you, my boy."

"Will you?" cried Peterkin, seizing his hand and shaking it violently; "I knew you would. I said it; didn't I, Ralph? And now we shall be sure of a gorilla, if there's one in Africa, for I'll use you as a stalking-horse."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Jack.

"Yes; I'll put a bear-skin or some sort of fur on your shoulders, and tie a lady's boa to you for a tail, and send you into the woods. The gorillas will be sure to mistake you for a relative until you get quite close; then you'll take one pace to the left with the left foot (as the volunteers say), I'll take one to the front with the right—at fifty yards, ready—present—bang, and down goes the huge puggy with a bullet right between its two eyes! There. And Ralph's agreed to go too."

"O Peterkin, I've done nothing of the sort. You *proposed* it."

"Well, and isn't that the same thing? I wonder, Ralph that you can give way to such mean-spirited prevarication. What? 'It's not prevarication!' Don't say that now; you know it is. Ah! you may laugh, my boy, but you have promised to go with me and Jack to Africa, and go you shall."

And so, reader, it was ultimately settled, and in the course of two weeks more we three were on our way to the land of the slave, the black savage, and the gorilla.

Chapter Two.
Life in the wild woods

One night, about five or six weeks after our resolution to go to Africa on a hunting expedition was formed, I put to myself the question, “Can it be possible that we are actually here, in the midst of it?”

“Certainly, my boy, in the very thick of it,” answered Peterkin, in a tone of voice which made Jack laugh, while I started and exclaimed—

“Why, Peterkin, how did you come to guess my thoughts?”

“Because, Ralph, you have got into a habit of thinking aloud, which may do very well as long as you have no secrets to keep but it may prove inconvenient some day, so I warn you in time.”

Not feeling disposed at that time to enter into a bantering conversation with my volatile companion, I made no reply, but abandoned myself again to the pleasing fancies and feelings which were called up by the singular scene in the midst of which I found myself.

It seemed as if it were but yesterday when we drove about the crowded streets of London making the necessary purchases for our intended journey, and now, as I gazed around, every object that met my eye seemed strange, and wild, and foreign, and romantic. We three were reclining round an enormous wood fire in the midst of a great forest, the trees and plants of which were quite new to me, and totally unlike those of my native land. Rich luxuriance of vegetation was the feature that filled my mind most. Tall palms surrounded us, throwing their broad leaves overhead and partially concealing the starlit sky. Thick tough limbs of creeping plants and wild vines twisted and twined round everything and over everything, giving to the woods an appearance of tangled impenetrability; but the beautiful leaves of some, and the delicate tendrils of others, half concealed the sturdy limbs of the trees, and threw over the whole a certain air of wild grace, as might a semi-transparent and beautiful robe if thrown around the form of a savage.

The effect of a strong fire in the woods at night is to give to surrounding space an appearance of ebony blackness, against which dark ground the gnarled stems and branches and pendent foliage appear as if traced out in light and lovely colours, which are suffused with a rich warm tone from the blaze.

We were now in the wilds of Africa, although, as I have said, I found it difficult to believe the fact. Jack and I wore loose brown shooting coats and pantaloons; but we had made up our minds to give up waistcoats and neckcloths, so that our scarlet flannel shirts with turned-down collars gave to us quite a picturesque and brigand-like appearance as we encircled the blaze—Peterkin smoking vigorously, for he had acquired that bad and very absurd habit at sea. Jack smoked too, but he was not so inveterate as Peterkin.

Jack was essentially moderate in his nature. He did nothing violently or in a hurry; but this does not imply that he was slow or lazy. He was leisurely in disposition, and circumstances seldom required him to be otherwise. When Peterkin or I had to lift heavy weights, we were obliged to exert our utmost strength and agitate our whole frames; but Jack was so powerful that a comparatively slight effort was all that he was usually obliged to make. Again, when we two were in a hurry we walked quickly, but Jack’s long limbs enabled him to keep up with us without effort. Nevertheless there were times when he was called upon to act quickly and with energy. On those occasions he was as active as Peterkin himself, but his movements were tremendous. It was, I may almost say, awful to behold Jack when acting under powerful excitement. He was indeed a splendid fellow, and not by any means deserving of the name of gorilla, which Peterkin had bestowed on him.

But to continue my description of our costume. We all wore homespun grey trousers of strong material. Peterkin and Jack wore leggings in addition, so that they seemed to have on what are

now termed knickerbockers. Peterkin, however, had no coat. He preferred a stout grey flannel shirt hanging down to his knees and belted round his waist in the form of a tunic. Our tastes in headdress were varied. Jack wore a pork-pie cap; Peterkin and I had wide-awakes. My facetious little companion said that I had selected this species of hat because I was always more than half asleep! Being peculiar in everything, Peterkin wore his wide-awake in an unusual manner—namely, turned up at the back, down at the front, and curled very much up at the sides.

We were so filled with admiration of Jack's magnificent beard and moustache, that Peterkin and I had resolved to cultivate ours while in Africa; but I must say that, as I looked at Peterkin's face, the additional hair was not at that time an improvement, and I believe that much more could not have been said for myself. The effect on my little comrade was to cause the lower part of his otherwise good-looking face to appear extremely dirty.

"I wonder," said Peterkin, after a long silence, "if we shall reach the niggers' village in time for the hunt to-morrow. I fear that we have spent too much time in this wild-goose chase."

"Wild-goose chase, Peterkin!" I exclaimed. "Do you call hunting the gorilla by such a term?"

"*Hunting* the gorilla? no, certainly; but *looking* for the gorilla in a part of the woods where no such beast was ever heard of since Adam was a schoolboy—"

"Nay, Peterkin," interrupted Jack; "we are getting very near to the gorilla country, and you must make allowance for the enthusiasm of a naturalist."

"Ah! we shall see where the naturalist's enthusiasm will fly to when we actually do come face to face with the big puggy."

"Well," said I, apologetically, "I won't press you to go hunting again; I'll be content to follow."

"Press me, my dear Ralph!" exclaimed Peterkin hastily, fearing that he had hurt my feelings; "why, man, I do but jest with you—you are so horridly literal. I'm overjoyed to be pressed to go on the maddest wild-goose chase that ever was invented. My greatest delight would be to go gorilla-hunting down Fleet Street, if you were so disposed.—But to be serious, Jack, do you think we shall be in time for the elephant-hunt to-morrow?"

"Ay, in capital time, if you don't knock up."

"What! *I* knock up! I've a good mind to knock you down for suggesting such an egregious impossibility."

"That's an impossibility anyhow, Peterkin, because I'm down already," said Jack, yawning lazily and stretching out his limbs in a more comfortable and *dégagé* manner.

Peterkin seemed to ponder as he smoked his pipe for some time in silence.

"Ralph," said he, looking up suddenly, "I don't feel a bit sleepy, and yet I'm tired enough."

"You are smoking too much, perhaps," I suggested.

"It's not that," cried Jack; "he has eaten too much supper."

"Base insinuation!" retorted Peterkin.

"Then it must be the monkey. That's it. Roast monkey does not agree with you."

"Do you know, I shouldn't wonder if you were right; and it's a pity, too, for we shall have to live a good deal on such fare, I believe. However, I suppose we shall get used to it.—But I say, boys, isn't it jolly to be out here living like savages? I declare it seems to me like a dream or a romance. —Just look, Ralph, at the strange wild creepers that are festooned overhead, and the great tropical leaves behind us, and the clear sky above, with the moon—ah! the moon; yes, that's one comfort—the moon is unchanged. The same moon that smiles down upon us through a tangled mesh-work of palm-leaves and wild vines and monkeys' tails, is peeping down the chimney-pots of London and Edinburgh and Dublin!"

"Why, Peterkin, you must have studied hard in early life to be so good a geographer."

"Rather," observed Peterkin.

"Yes; and look at the strange character of the tree-stems," said I, unwilling to allow the subject to drop. "See those huge palmettoes like—like—"

"Overgrown cabbages," suggested Peterkin; and he continued, "Observe the quaint originality of form in the body and limbs of that bloated old spider that is crawling up your leg, Ralph!"

I started involuntarily, for there is no creature of which I have a greater abhorrence than a spider.

"Where is it? oh! I see," and the next moment I secured my prize and placed it with loathing, but interest, in my entomological box.

At that moment a hideous roar rang through the woods, seemingly close behind us. We all started to our feet, and seizing our rifles, which lay beside us ready loaded, cocked them and drew close together round the fire.

"This won't do, lads," said Jack, after a few minutes' breathless suspense, during which the only sound we could hear was the beating of our own hearts; "we have allowed the fire to get too low, and we've forgotten to adopt our friend the trader's advice, and make two fires."

So saying, Jack laid down his rifle, and kicking the logs with his heavy boot, sent up such a cloud of bright sparks as must certainly have scared the wild animal, whatever it was, away; for we heard no more of it that night.

"You're right, Jack," remarked Peterkin; "so let us get up a blaze as fast as we can, and I'll take the first watch, not being sleepy. Come along."

In a few minutes we cut down with our axes a sufficient quantity of dry wood to keep two large fires going all night; we then kindled our second fire at a few yards distant from the first, and made our camp between them. This precaution we took in order to scare away the wild animals whose cries we heard occasionally during the night. Peterkin, having proposed to take the first watch—for we had to watch by turns all the night through—lighted his pipe and sat down before the cheerful fire with his back against the stem of a palm-tree, and his rifle lying close to his hand, to be ready in case of a surprise. There were many natives wandering about in that neighbourhood, some of whom might be ignorant of our having arrived at their village on a peaceful errand. If these should have chanced to come upon us suddenly, there was no saying what they might do in their surprise and alarm, so it behoved us to be on our guard.

Jack and I unrolled the light blankets that we carried strapped to our shoulders through the day, and laying ourselves down side by side with our feet to the fire and our heads pillowed on a soft pile of sweet-scented grass, we addressed ourselves to sleep. But sleep did not come so soon as we expected. I have often noted with some surprise and much interest the curious phases of the phenomenon of sleep. When I have gone to bed excessively fatigued and expecting to fall asleep almost at once, I have been surprised and annoyed to find that the longer I wooed the drowsy god the longer he refused to come to me; and at last, when I have given up the attempt in despair, he has suddenly laid his gentle hand upon my eyes and carried me into the land of Nod. Again, when I have been exceedingly anxious to keep awake, I have been attacked by sleep with such irresistible energy that I have been utterly unable to keep my eyelids open or my head erect, and have sat with my eyes blinking like those of an owl in the sunshine, and my head nodding like that of a Chinese mandarin.

On this our first night in the African bush, at least our first night on a hunting expedition—we had been many nights in the woods on our journey to that spot—on this night, I say, Jack and I could by no means get to sleep for a very long time after we lay down, but continued to gaze up through the leafy screen overhead at the stars, which seemed to wink at us, I almost fancied, jocosely. We did not speak to each other, but purposely kept silence. After a time, however, Jack groaned, and said softly—

"Ralph, are you asleep?"

"No," said I, yawning.

"I'm quite sure that Peterkin is," added Jack, raising his head and looking across the fire at the half-recumbent form of our companion.

"Is he?" said Peterkin in a low tone. "Just about as sound as a weasel!"

"Jack," said I.

"Well?"

"I can't sleep a wink. Ye-a-ow! isn't it odd?"

"No more can I. Do you know, Ralph, I've been counting the red berries in that tree above me for half an hour, in the hope that the monotony of the thing would send me off; but I was interrupted by a small monkey who has been sitting up among the branches and making faces at me for full twenty minutes. There it is yet, I believe. Do you see it?"

"No; where?"

"Almost above your head."

I gazed upward intently for a few minutes, until I thought I saw the monkey, but it was very indistinct. Gradually, however, it became more defined; then to my surprise it turned out to be the head of an elephant! I was not only amazed but startled at this.

"Get your rifle, Jack!" said I, in a low whisper.

Jack made some sort of reply, but his voice sounded hollow and indistinct. Then I looked up again, and saw that it was the head of a hippopotamus, not that of an elephant, which was looking down at me. Curiously enough, I felt little or no surprise at this, and when in the course of a few minutes I observed a pair of horns growing out of the creature's eyes and a bushy tail standing erect on the apex of its head, I ceased to be astonished at the sight altogether, and regarded it as quite natural and commonplace. The object afterwards assumed the appearance of a lion with a crocodile's bail, and a serpent with a monkey's head, and lastly of a gorilla, without producing in me any other feeling than that of profound indifference. Gradually the whole scene vanished, and I became totally oblivious.

This state of happy unconsciousness had scarcely lasted—it seemed to me—two minutes, when I was awakened by Peterkin laying his hand on my shoulder and saying—

"Now then, Ralph, it's time to rouse up."

"O Peterkin," said I, in a tone of remonstrance, "how could you be so unkind as to waken me when I had just got to sleep? Shabby fellow!"

"Just got to sleep, say you? You've been snoring like an apoplectic alderman for exactly two hours."

"You don't say so!" I exclaimed, getting into a sitting posture.

"Indeed you have. I'm sorry to rouse you, but time's up, and I'm sleepy; so rub your eyes, man, and try to look a little less like an astonished owl if you can. I have just replenished both the fires, so you can lean your back against that palm-tree and take it easy for three-quarters of an hour or so. After that you'll have to heap on more wood."

I looked at Jack, who was now lying quite unconscious, breathing with the slow, deep regularity of profound slumber, and with his mouth wide open.

"What a chance for some waggish baboon to drop a nut or a berry in!" said Peterkin, winking at me with one eye as he lay down in the spot from which I had just risen.

He was very sleepy, poor fellow, and could hardly smile at his own absurd fancy. He was asleep almost instantly. In fact, I do not believe that he again opened the eye with which he had winked at me, but that he merely shut the other and began to slumber forthwith.

I now began to feel quite interested in my responsible position as guardian of the camp. I examined my rifle to see that it was in order and capped; then leaning against the palm-tree, which was, as it were, my sentry-box, I stood erect and rubbed my hands and took off my cap, so that the pleasant night air might play about my temples, and more effectually banish drowsiness.

In order to accomplish this more thoroughly I walked round both fires and readjusted the logs, sending up showers of sparks as I did so. Then I went to the edge of the circle of light, in the centre of which our camp lay, and peered into the gloom of the dark forest.

There was something inexpressibly delightful yet solemn in my feelings as I gazed into that profound obscurity where the great tree-stems and the wild gigantic foliage nearest to me appeared ghost-like and indistinct, and the deep solitudes of which were peopled, not only with the strange

fantastic forms of my excited fancy, but, as I knew full well, with real wild creatures, both huge and small, such as my imagination at that time had not fully conceived. I felt awed, almost oppressed, with the deep silence around, and, I must confess, looked somewhat nervously over my shoulder as I returned to the fire and sat down to keep watch at my post.

Chapter Three.
Wherein I mount guard, and how I did it, etcetera

Now it so happened that the battle which I had to fight with myself after taking my post was precisely the converse of that which I fought during the earlier part of that night. Then, it was a battle with wakefulness; now, it was a struggle with sleep; and of the two fights the latter was the more severe by far.

I began by laying down my rifle close by my side, leaning back in a sitting posture against the palm-tree, and resigning myself to the contemplation of the fire, which burned merrily before me, while I pondered with myself how I should best employ my thoughts during the three long hours of my watch. But I had not dwelt on that subject more than three minutes, when I was rudely startled by my own head falling suddenly and heavily forward on my chest. I immediately roused myself. "Ah! Ralph, Ralph," said I to myself in a whisper, "this won't do, lad. To sleep at your post! shame on you! Had you been a sentinel in time of war that nod would have cost you your life, supposing you to have been caught in the act."

Soliloquising thus, I arose and shook myself. Then I slapped my chest several times and pulled my nose and sat down again. Only a few minutes elapsed before the same thing occurred to me again, so I leaped up, and mended the fires, and walked to and fro, until I felt thoroughly awake, but in order to make sure that it should not occur again, I walked to the edge of the circle of light and gazed for some time into the dark forest, as I had done before. While standing thus I felt my knees give way, as if they had been suddenly paralysed, and I awoke just in time to prevent myself falling to the ground. I must confess I was much amazed at this, for although I had often read of soldiers falling asleep standing at their posts, I had never believed the thing possible.

I now became rather anxious, "for," thought I, "if I go to sleep and the fires die down, who knows but wild beasts may come upon us and kill us before we can seize our arms." For a moment or two I meditated awaking Jack and begging him to keep me company, but when I reflected that his watch was to come immediately after mine, I had not the heart to do it. "No!" said I (and I said it aloud for the purpose of preventing drowsiness)—"no; I will fight this battle alone! I will repeat some stanzas from my favourite authors. Yes, I will try to remember a portion of 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream.' It will be somewhat appropriate to my present circumstances."

Big with this resolve, I sat down with my face to the fire and my back to the palm-tree, and —fell sound asleep instantly!

How long I lay in this condition I know not, but I was suddenly awakened by a yell so appalling that my heart leaped as if into my throat, and my nerves thrilled with horror. For one instant I was paralysed; then my blood seemed to rebound on its course. I sprang up and attempted to seize my rifle.

The reader may judge of my state of mind when I observed that it was gone! I leaped towards the fire, and grasping a lighted brand, turned round and glared into the woods in the direction whence the yell came.

It was grey dawn, and I could see things pretty distinctly; but the only living object that met my gaze was Peterkin, who stood with my rifle in his hand laughing heartily!

I immediately turned to look at Jack, who was sitting up in the spot where he had passed the night, with a sleepy smile on his countenance.

"Why, what's the meaning of this?" I inquired.

"The meaning of it?" cried Peterkin, as he advanced and restored the rifle to its place. "A pretty fellow you are to mount guard! we might have been all murdered in our sleep by niggers or eaten alive by gorillas, for all that you would have done to save us."

"But, Peterkin," said I gravely, "you ought not to have startled me so; you gave me a terrible fright. People have been driven mad before now, I assure you, by practical jokes."

"My dear fellow," cried Peterkin, with much earnestness, "I know that as well as you. But, in the first place, you were guilty of so heinous a crime that I determined to punish you, and at the same time to do it in a way that would impress it forcibly on your memory; and in the second place, I would not have done it at all had I not known that your nerves are as strong as those of a dray-horse. You ought to be taking shame to yourself on account of your fault rather than objecting to your punishment."

"Peterkin is right, my boy," said Jack, laughing, "though I must say he had need be sure of the nerves of any one to whom he intends to administer such a ferocious yell as that. Anyhow, I have no reason to complain; for you have given me a good long sleep, although I can't say exactly that you have taken my watch. It will be broad daylight in half an hour, so we must be stirring, comrades."

On considering the subject I admitted the force of these remarks, and felt somewhat crestfallen. No doubt, my companions had treated the thing jocularly, and, to say truth, there was much that was comical in the whole affair; but the more I thought of it, the more I came to perceive how terrible might have been the consequences of my unfaithfulness as a sentinel. I laid the lesson to heart, and I can truly say that from that day to this I have never again been guilty of the crime of sleeping at my post.

We now busied ourselves in collecting together the dying embers of our fire and in preparing breakfast, which consisted of tea, hard biscuit, and cold monkey. None of us liked the monkey; not that its flesh was bad—quite the contrary—but it looked so like a small roasted baby that we could not relish it at all. However, it was all we had; for we had set off on this hunting excursion intending to live by our rifles, but had been unfortunate, having seen nothing except a monkey or two.

The kettle was soon boiled, and we sat down to our meagre fare with hearty appetites. While we are thus engaged, I shall turn aside for a little and tell the reader, in one or two brief sentences, how we got to this place.

We shipped in a merchant ship at Liverpool, and sailed for the west coast of Africa. Arrived there we found a party, under the command of a Portuguese trader, about to set off to the interior. He could speak a little English; so we arranged to go with him as far as he intended to proceed, learn as much of the native language as possible while in his company, and then obtain a native guide to conduct us to the country in which the gorillas are found. To this native guide, we arranged, should be explained by the trader our object in visiting the country, so that he might tell the tribes whom we intended to visit. This, we found, was an absolutely needful precaution, on the following ground.

The natives of Africa have a singular and very bad style of carrying on trade with the white men who visit their shores. The traffic consists chiefly of ivory, barwood (a wood much used in dyeing), and indiarubber. The natives of the far interior are not allowed to convey these commodities directly to the coast, but by the law of the land (which means the law of the strongest, for they are absolute savages) are obliged to deliver their goods to the care of the tribe next to them; these pass them on to the next tribe; and so on they go from tribe to tribe till they reach the coast, where they are sold by the tribe there. The price obtained, which usually consists of guns, powder and shot, looking-glasses, cloth, and sundry other articles and trinkets useful to men in a savage state, is returned to the owners in the far interior through the same channel; but as each tribe deducts a percentage for its trouble, the price dwindles down as it goes, until a mere trifle, sometimes nothing at all, remains to be handed over to the unfortunate people of the tribe who originally sent off the goods for sale. Of course, such a system almost paralyses trade. But the intermediate tribes between the coast and the interior being the gainers by this system, are exceedingly jealous of anything like an attempt to carry on direct trade. They are ready to go to war with the tribes of the interior, should they attempt it, and they throw all the opposition they can in the way of the few white men who ever penetrate the interior for such a purpose.

It will thus be seen that our travels would be hindered very much, if not stopped altogether, and ourselves be regarded with jealousy, or perhaps murdered, if our motives in going inland were not fully and satisfactorily explained to the different tribes as we passed through their lands. And we therefore proposed to overcome the difficulty by taking a native guide with us from the tribe with which we should chance to be residing when obliged to separate from the Portuguese trader.

We had now reached this point. The day before that on which we encamped in the woods, as above related, we arrived at a native village, and had been received kindly by the king. Almost immediately after our arrival we heard so many stories about gorillas that I felt persuaded we should fall in with one if we went a-hunting, and being exceedingly anxious to add one to my collection of animals—for I had a small museum at home—I prevailed on Jack and Peterkin to go one day's journey into the bush to look for them. They laughed very much at me indeed, and said that we were still very far away from the gorilla country; but I had read in some work on Africa a remark to the effect that there is no cordillera, or mountain range, extending across the whole continent to limit the *habitat* of certain classes of animals, and I thought that if any animal in Africa would not consent to remain in one region when it wished to go to another, that animal must be the ferocious gorilla. The trader also laughed at me, and said that he had never seen any himself in that region, and that we would have to cross the desert before seeing them. Still, I felt a disposition to try; besides, I felt certain that we should at least fall in with some sort of animals or plants or minerals that would be worth collecting; so it was agreed that we should go out for a single day, and be back in time for a great elephant-hunt which was about to take place.

But to return from this digression. Having finished breakfast, we made three bundles or packages of our blankets, provisions, and camp equipage; strapped them on our backs; and then, shouldering our rifles, set out on our return to the negro village.

Of course we gave Jack the largest and heaviest bundle to carry. Peterkin's and mine were about equal, for although I was taller than Peterkin, I was not by any means so powerful or active. I often wondered at the great strength that lay in the little frame of my friend. To look at him, no one would believe that he was such a tough, wiry, hardy little fellow. He was the same hearty, jovial creature that I had lived with so pleasantly when he and Jack and I were cast away on the coral island. With the exception of a small scrap of whisker on each cheek, a scar over the right eye, and a certain air of manliness, there was little change in my old comrade.

"Ralph," said Jack, as we strode along through the forest, "do you remember how we three used to wander about together in the woods of our coral island?"

"Remember!" I cried with enthusiasm, for at that moment the thought occurred to my own mind; "how can I ever forget it, Jack? It seems to me just like yesterday. I can hardly believe that six long years have passed since we drank that delicious natural lemonade out of the green cocoa-nuts, and wandered on the coral beach, and visited Penguin Island, and dived into the cave to escape the pirates. The whole scene rises up before me so vividly that I could fancy we were still there. Ah! these were happy times."

"So they were," cried Peterkin; "but don't you go and become sentimentally sad, Ralph, when you talk of those happy days. If we were happy there, are we not happy *here*?—There's no change in us—except, indeed, that Jack has become a gorilla."

"Ay, and you a monkey," retorted Jack.

"True; and Ralph a naturalist, which is the strangest beast of all," added Peterkin.—"Can you tell me, Ralph, by the way, what tree that is?"

"I'm sure I cannot tell. Never saw or heard of one like it before," I replied, looking at the tree referred to with some interest. It was a fine tree, but the great beauty about it was the gorgeous fruit with which it was laden. It hung in the form of bunches of large grapes, and was of the brightest scarlet colour. The glowing bunches seemed like precious gems glittering amongst the green foliage, and I observed that a few monkeys and several parrots were peeping at us through the branches.

"It seems good for food," said Jack. "You'd better climb up, Peterkin, and pull a few bunches. The puggies won't mind you, of course, being one of themselves."

"Ralph," said Peterkin, turning to me, and deigning no reply to Jack, "you call yourself a naturalist; so I suppose you are acquainted with the habits of monkeys, and can turn your knowledge to practical account."

"Well," I replied, "I know something about the monkey tribes, but I cannot say that at this moment I remember any particular habit of which we might avail ourselves."

"Do you not? Well, now, that's odd. I'm a student of nature myself, and I have picked up a little useful knowledge in the course of my travels. Did you ever travel so far as the Zoological Gardens in London?"

"Of course I have done so, often."

"And did you ever observe a peculiar species of monkey, which, when you made a face at it, instantly flew into a towering passion, and shook the bars of its cage until you expected to see them broken?"

"Yes," said I, laughing; "what then?"

"Look here, you naturalist, and I'll put a wrinkle on your horn. Yonder hangs a magnificent bunch of fruit that I very much desire to possess."

"But it's too high to reach," said I.

"But there's a monkey sitting beside it," said Peterkin.

"I see. You don't expect him to pull it and throw it down, do you?"

"Oh no, certainly not; but—" Here Peterkin stepped up to the tree, and looking up at the monkey, said, "O-o-o-oo-o!" angrily.

"*O-o-o-oo-oo*!" replied the monkey, stretching out its neck and looking down with an expression of surprise and indignation, as if to say, "What on earth do you mean by that?"

"Oo-o-o-oo-o!" roared Peterkin.

Hereupon the monkey uttered a terrific shriek of passion, exposed all its teeth and gums, glared at its adversary like a little fiend, and seizing the branch with both hands, shook it with all its might. The result was, that not only did the coveted bunch of fruit fall to the ground, but a perfect shower of bunches came down, one of which hit Jack on the forehead, and, bursting there, sent its fragrant juice down his face and into his beard, while the parrots and all the other monkeys took to flight, shrieking with mingled terror and rage.

"You see I'm a practical man," observed Peterkin quietly, as he picked up the fruit and began to eat it. "Knowledge is power, my boy. A man with a philosophical turn of mind like yourself ought to have been up to a dodge of this sort. How capital this fruit is, to be sure!—Does it make good pomade, Jack?"

"Excellent; but as I'm not in the habit of using pomade, I shall wash this out of my beard as quickly as possible."

While Jack went to a brook that ran close to where we stood, I tasted the fruit, and found it most excellent, the pulp being juicy, with a very pleasant flavour.

While we were thus engaged a wild pig ran grunting past us.

"Doesn't that remind you of some of our doings on the coral island, Ralph?" said Peterkin.

Before I could reply a herd of lovely small gazelles flew past. Our rifles were lying on the ground, and before either of us could take aim the swift creatures were lost sight of in the thick underwood. Peterkin fired one shot at a venture, but without any result.

We were still deploring our stupidity in not having our rifles handy, when a strange sound was heard in the distance. By this time Jack had come up, so we all three seized our rifles and listened intently. The sound was evidently approaching. It was a low, dull, booming roar, which at one moment seemed to be distant thunder, at another the cry of some huge animal in rage or pain. Presently

the beating of heavy hoofs on the turf and the crash of branches were heard. Each of us sprang instinctively towards a tree, feeling that if danger were near its trunk would afford us some protection.

Being ignorant, as yet, of the cries of the various wild beasts inhabiting those woods, we were greatly at a loss to determine what creature it could be that approached at such headlong speed. That its mad career was caused by fear soon became apparent, for the tones of terror either in man or beast, when distinctly heard, cannot be mistaken.

Immediately in front of the spot where we stood was an open space or glade of considerable extent. Towards this the animal approached, as was evident from the increasing loudness of its wild roar, which was almost continuous. In another moment the thick wall of underwood at its farther extremity was burst asunder with a crash, and a wild buffalo bull bounded into the plain and dashed madly across. On its neck was crouched a leopard, which had fixed its claws and teeth deep in the flesh of the agonised animal. In vain did the bull bound and rear, toss and plunge. At one moment it ran like the wind; the next it stopped with such violence as to tear up the turf and scatter it around. Then it reared, almost falling back; anon it plunged and rushed on again, with the foam flying from its mouth, and its bloodshot eyes glaring with the fire of rage and terror, while the woods seemed to tremble with its loud and deep-toned bellowing. Twice in its passage across the open glade it ran, in its blind fury, straight against a tree, almost beating in its skull, and for a moment arresting its progress; but it instantly recovered the shock and burst away again as madly as ever. But no effort that it was capable of making could relieve the poor creature from its deadly burden, or cause the leopard in the slightest degree to relax its fatal gripe.

It chanced that the wild bull's mad gallop was in a direction that brought it within a few yards of the spot where we stood, so we prepared to put an end to its misery. As it drew near, Jack, who was in advance, raised his rifle. I, being only a short distance from him, also made ready to fire, although I confess that in the agitation of the moment I could not make up my mind whether I should fire at the buffalo or the leopard. As far as I can recall my rapid and disjointed thoughts on that exciting occasion, I reasoned thus: "If I shoot the leopard the bull will escape, and if I shoot the bull the leopard will escape." It did not occur to me at that trying moment, when self-possession and decision were so necessary, that I might shoot the bull with one barrel, and the leopard with the other. Still less did it occur to me that I might miss bull and leopard altogether.

While I was engaged in this hurried train of troubled thought, Jack fired both barrels of his rifle, one after the other, as quickly as possible. The bull stumbled forward upon its knees. In order to make assurance doubly sure, I aimed at its head and fired both barrels at once. Instantly the bull rose, with a hideous bellow, and stood for one moment irresolute, glaring at its new enemies. The leopard, I observed, was no longer on its back. At this moment I heard an exclamation of anger, and looking round I observed Peterkin struggling violently in the grasp of one of the wild vines or thorny plants which abound in some parts of the African forests and render them almost impassable. It seems that as the bull drew near, Peterkin, who, like Jack and me, was preparing to shoot, found that a dense thicket came between him and the game, so as to prevent his firing. He leaped nimbly over a bush, intending to run to another spot, whence he could more conveniently take aim, but found himself, as I have related, suddenly entangled among the thorns in such a way that the more he struggled the more firmly he became ensnared. Being of an impatient disposition, he did struggle violently, and it was this, probably, that attracted the attention of the bull and decided its future course and its ultimate fate; for after remaining one moment, as I have stated, in an irresolute attitude, it turned suddenly to the left and rushed, with its head down and its tail up, straight at Peterkin.

I cannot describe the sensations that overwhelmed me on observing the imminent danger of my friend. Horror almost overwhelmed me as I gazed with a stare of fascination at the frightful brute, which with flashing eyes and bloody foam dripping from its mouth charged into the thicket, and crashed through the tough boughs and bushes as if they were grass. A film came over my eyes. I tried to reload my rifle, but my trembling hand refused to act, and I groaned with mingled shame and

despair on finding myself thus incapable of action in the hour of extreme peril. At that moment I felt I would joyfully have given my own life to have saved that of Peterkin. It takes me long to describe it, but the whole scene passed with the rapidity almost of a flash of light.

Jack did not even attempt to load, but uttering a fearful cry, he sprang towards our friend with a bound like that of an enraged tiger. A gleam of hope flashed through my soul as I beheld his gigantic form dash through the underwood. It seemed to me as if no living creature could withstand such a furious onset. Alas for Peterkin, had his life depended on Jack, strong and lion-like though he was! His aid could not have been in time. A higher Power nerved his arm and steeled his heart at that terrible moment. As I gazed helplessly at Peterkin, I observed that he suddenly ceased his struggles to get free, and throwing forward the muzzle of his piece, stood boldly up and awaited the onset with calm self-possession. The bull was on him almost in an instant. One stride more and he would have been lost, but that stride was never taken. His rifle poured its deadly charge into the skull of the wild bull, which fell a mass of dead flesh, literally at his feet.

It were vain to attempt to describe the state of our feelings on this memorable occasion—the fervour with which we thanked our heavenly Father for our friend's deliverance—the delight with which we shook his hands, again and again, and embraced him. It was with considerable difficulty that we extricated Peterkin from his entanglement. When this was accomplished we proceeded to examine our prize.

We were not a little puzzled on discovering that only three bullets had struck the bull. For my part, I fired straight at its forehead, and had felt certain at the time that my shots had taken effect; yet there was but one ball in the animal's head, and that was undoubtedly Peterkin's, for the hair all round the hole was singed off, so near had it been to him when he fired. The other two shots were rather wide apart—one in the shoulder, the other in the neck. Both would have proved mortal in the long run, but neither was sufficiently near to a vital spot to kill speedily.

"Now, Ralph, my boy," said Jack, after our excitement was in some degree abated, "you and I must divide the honour of these two shots, for I fear we can't tell which of us fired them. Peterkin only fired once, and that was pretty effectual."

"Yes," I replied, "it is rather perplexing; for although I have no objection whatever to your having all the honour of those two shots, still one likes to know with certainty who actually made them."

"You'd better toss for them," suggested Peterkin, who was seated on the trunk of a fallen tree, examining, with a somewhat rueful countenance, the tattered condition of his garments.

"There would not be much satisfaction in that," replied Jack, laughing.

"It is probable," said I, "that each of us hit with one barrel and missed with the other."

"And it is possible," added Jack, "that one of us hit with both, and the other missed with both. All that I can positively affirm is that I fired both barrels at his shoulder—one after the other."

"And all that I am certain of," said I, "is that I fired both barrels at his forehead, and that I discharged them both at once."

"Did you?" said Peterkin, looking up quickly; "then, Ralph, I'm afraid you must give all the honour to Jack, for you have missed altogether."

"How do you know that?" I asked, in a somewhat piqued tone.

"Simply enough. If you fired both shots together at so short a distance, they would have been found close together wherever they had struck, whereas the two shots in the neck and shoulder are more than two feet apart."

I was compelled to admit that there was much truth in the observation, but still felt unwilling to give up all claim to having assisted in slaying our first buffalo. I pondered the subject a good deal during the remainder of the time we spent in cutting up and packing part of the buffalo meat, and in preparing to continue our journey, but could come at no satisfactory conclusion in my own mind, and, to say truth, I felt not a little crestfallen at my conduct in the whole affair.

While wandering in this mood near the spot where the buffalo had been first wounded, I received a sudden and severe start on observing the leopard crouching within a couple of yards of me. I saw it through the bushes quite distinctly, but could not make quite sure of its attitude. With a mingled cry of alarm and astonishment I sprang back to the place where I had left my rifle.

Jack and Peterkin instantly ran up with their pieces cocked.

“Where is it?” they cried in a breath.

“There, crouching just behind that bush.”

Jack darted forward.

“Crouching!” he cried, with a loud laugh, seizing the animal by the tail and dragging it forth; “why, it’s dead—stone dead.”

“Dead as mutton,” said Peterkin. “Hallo! what’s this?” he added in surprise. “Two holes close together in its forehead, I do declare! Hooray! Ralph, my boy, give us your paw! You’ve missed the bull and hit the leopard! If you haven’t been and put two bullets right between its two eyes, I’m a Dutchman!”

And so, in truth, it turned out. I had aimed at the bull and hit the leopard. So I left that spot not a little pleased with my bad aim and my good fortune.

Chapter Four.
Wherein will be found much that is philosophical

Having skinned the leopard and cut off as much of the buffalo meat as we could carry, we started for the negro village at a round pace, for we had already lost much time in our last adventure. As we walked along I could not help meditating on the uncertainty of this life, and the terrible suddenness with which we might at any unexpected moment be cut off. These thoughts led me naturally to reflect how important a matter it is that every one, no matter how young, should be in a state of preparedness to quit this world.

I also reflected, and not without a feeling of shame, on my want of nerve, and was deeply impressed with the importance of boys being inured from childhood to trifling risks and light dangers of every possible description, such as tumbling into ponds and off trees, etcetera, in order to strengthen their nervous system. I do not, of course, mean to say that boys ought deliberately to tumble into ponds or climb trees until they fall off; but they ought not to avoid the risk of such mishaps. They ought to encounter such risks and many others perpetually. They ought to practise leaping off heights into deep water. They ought never to hesitate to cross a stream on a narrow unsafe plank *for fear of a ducking*. They ought never to decline to climb up a tree to pull fruit merely because there is a *possibility* of their falling off and breaking their necks. I firmly believe that boys were intended to encounter all kinds of risks, in order to prepare them to meet and grapple with the risks and dangers incident to man's career with cool, cautious self-possession—a self-possession founded on experimental knowledge of the character and powers of their own spirits and muscles. I also concluded that this reasoning applies to some extent to girls as well as boys, for they too are liable through life to occasional encounters with danger—such as meeting with mad bulls, being run away with on horseback, being upset in boats, being set on fire by means of crinoline; in all of which cases those who have been trained to risk slight mishaps during early life will find their nerves equal to the shock, and their minds cool and collected enough to look around and take hasty advantage of any opportunity of escape that may exist; while those who have been unhappily nurtured in excessive delicacy, and advised from the earliest childhood to "take care of themselves and carefully avoid all risks," will probably fall victims to their nervous alarms and the kind but injudicious training of parents or guardians.

The more I pondered this subject the more deeply impressed did I become with its great importance to the well-being of mankind, and I was so profoundly engrossed with it that my companions utterly failed to engage me in general conversation as we walked briskly along through the forest. Jack again and again attempted to draw my attention to the splendour of the curious specimens of tropical foliage and vegetation through which we passed; but I could not rouse myself to take interest therein. In vain did Peterkin jest and rally me, and point out the monkeys that grinned at us ever and anon as we passed beneath them, or the serpents that glided more than once from our path, I was fascinated with my train of meditation, and as I could not then give it up until I had thought it out, so now I cannot pass from the subject until I have at least endeavoured to guard myself from misconception.

I beg, then, that it will be understood that I do not by any means inculcate hare-brained recklessness, or a course of training that will foster that state of mind. On the contrary, the course of training which I should like to see universally practised would naturally tend to counteract recklessness, for it would enable a boy to judge correctly as to what he could and could not do. Take an illustration. A naturally bold boy has been unwisely trained to be exceedingly careful of himself. He does not know the extent of his own courage, or the power and agility of his own muscles; he

knows these things to some extent indeed, but owing to restraint he does not know them fully. Hence he is liable both to over and under estimate them.

This bold boy—we shall call him Tom—takes a walk into the country with a friend, whom we shall name Pat. Pat is a bad boy, but he has been permitted to train his muscles as he pleased, and his natural disposition has led him to do difficult and sometimes slightly dangerous things.

"You can't jump over that river, Tom," says Pat.

"Perhaps not," replies Tom: "I never tried such a jump, because my mother tells me never to go where I am likely to tumble into the water."

"Oh, your mother's a muff!" cries Pat.

"Pat," says Tom, flushing with indignation and confronting his friend, "don't you ever say that again, else the friendship between you and me will come to an end. I know you don't really mean what you say; but I won't allow you to speak disrespectfully of my mother."

"Well, I won't," says Pat, "but *you're* a muff, anyhow."

"Perhaps I am," replies Tom.

"Of course you are, because you're afraid to jump over that river, and I'm not. So here goes."

Pat thereupon jumps the river (he is a splendid leaper), and Tom hesitates.

"Come along, Tom; don't be a hen."

Tom gives way, alas! to a disobedient impulse, and dashing at the leap comes to the edge, when he finds, somehow, that he has not got the proper foot first for the spring—almost every boy knows the feeling I allude to; his heart fails, and he balks.

"O Tom, what a nimini-pimini muff you are, to be sure!"

Tom, as I have said, is a bold boy. His blood boils at this; he rushes wildly at the bank, hurls himself recklessly into the air, barely reaches the opposite side with a scramble, and falls souse into the river, from which he issues, as Pat says amid peals of laughter, "like a half-drowned rat."

Now, had Tom been permitted to follow the bent of his own bold impulses, he would have found out, years ago, how far and how high he could leap, and how far exactly he could depend on his own courage in certain circumstances; and he would either, on the one hand, have measured the leap with an accustomed eye, and declined to take it with a good-humoured admission that it was beyond his powers, or, on the other hand, he would calmly have collected his well and oft tried energies for the spring. The proper foot, from long experience, would have come to the ground at the right time. His mind, freed from all anxiety as to what he could accomplish, would have received a beneficial impulse from his friend's taunt. No nervous dread of a ducking would have checked the completeness of his bound, because he would have often been ducked before, and would have discovered that in most cases, if the clothes be changed at once, a ducking is not worth mentioning—from a hydropathic point of view is, in fact, beneficial—and he would have cleared the river with comfort to himself and confusion to his friend, and without a ducking or the uneasiness of conscience caused by the knowledge that he had disobeyed his mother. Had Peterkin not been trained to encounter danger, his natural boldness alone would never have enabled him to stand the charge of that buffalo bull.

There are muffs in this world. I do not refer to those hairy articles of female apparel in which ladies are wont to place their hands, handkerchiefs, and scent-bottles. Although not given to the use of slang, I avail myself of it on this occasion, the word "muff" being eminently expressive of a certain class of boys, big as well as little, old as well as young. There are three distinct classes of boys—namely, muffs, sensible fellows, and boasters. I say there are three distinct classes, but I do not say that every boy belongs to one or other of those classes. Those who have studied chemistry know that nature's elements are few. Nearly all kinds of matter, and certainly all varieties of mind, are composite. There are no pure and simple muffs. Most boasters have a good deal of the muff in them, and many muffs are boasters; while sensible fellows are occasionally tinged with a dash of both the bad qualities—they are, if I may be allowed to coin a word, *sensible-boasto-muffers*! Still, for the sake of lucidity, I will maintain that there are three distinct phases of character in boys.

The muff is a boy who from natural disposition, or early training, or both, is mild, diffident, and gentle. So far he is an estimable character. Were this all, he were not a muff. In order to deserve that title he must be timid and unenthusiastic. He must refuse to venture anything that will subject him to danger, however slight. He must be afraid of a shower of rain; afraid of dogs in general, good and bad alike; disinclined to try bold things; indifferent about learning to swim. He must object to the game called "dumps," because the blows from the ball are sometimes severe; and be a sworn enemy to single-stick, because the whacks are uncommonly painful. So feeling and acting, he will, when he becomes a man, find himself unable to act in the common emergencies of life—to protect a lady from insolence, to guard his house from robbery, or to save his own child should it chance to fall into the water. The muff is addicted to boasting sometimes, especially when in the company of girls; but when on the playground he hangs on the skirts of society, and sings very small. There are many boys, alas! who are made muffs by injudicious training, who would have grown up to be bold, manly fellows had they been otherwise treated. There are also many kinds of muffs. Some are good-hearted, amiable muffs; others are petty, sneaking muffs.

With many of the varieties I have a strong sympathy, and for their comfort I would say that muffs may cure themselves if they choose to try energetically.

Courage and cowardice are not two distinct and entirely antagonistic qualities. To a great extent those qualities are the result of training. Every courageous man has a slight amount of cowardice in his composition, and all cowards have a certain infusion of courage. The matador stands before the infuriated bull, and awaits its charge with unflinching firmness, not because he has more courage than his comrades in the ring who run away, but because long training has enabled him to make almost certain of killing the bull. He knows what he has done before, he feels that he can do it again, therefore he stands like a hero. Were a doubt of his capacity to cross his mind for an instant, his cheek would blanch, his hand would tremble, and, ten to one, he would turn and flee like the rest.

Let muffs, therefore, learn to swim, to leap, and to run. Let them wrestle with boys bigger than themselves, regardless of being thrown. Let them practise "jinking" with their companions, so that if even they be chased by a mad bull, they will, if unable to get out of his way by running, escape perhaps by jinking. Let them learn to leap off considerable heights into deep water, so that, if ever called on to leap off the end of a pier or the side of a ship to save a fellow-creature, they may do so with confidence and promptitude. Let them even put on "the gloves," and become regardless of a swelled nose, in order that they may be able to defend themselves or others from sudden assault. So doing they will become sensible fellows, whose character I have thus to some extent described. Of course, I speak of sensible fellows only with reference to this one subject of training the nerves and muscles. Let it never be forgotten that there are men who, although sensible in this respect, are uncommonly senseless in regard to other things of far higher moment.

As to boasters, I will dismiss them with a few words. They are too easily known to merit particular description. They are usually loud and bold in the drawing-room, but rather mild in the field. They are desperately egotistical, fond of exaggeration, and prone to depreciate the deeds of their comrades. They make bad soldiers and sailors, and are usually held in contempt by others, whatever they may think of themselves. I may wind up this digression—into which I have been tempted by an earnest desire to warn my fellow-men against the errors of nervous and muscular education, which, in my case, led to the weak conduct of which I had been guilty that day—I may wind up this digression, I say, by remarking that the boys who are most loved in this world are those who are lambs, *almost* muffs, in the drawing-room, but lions in the field.

How long I should have gone on pondering this subject I know not, but Peterkin somewhat rudely interrupted me by uttering a wild scream, and beginning to caper as if he were a madman. I was much alarmed as well as surprised at this course of conduct; for although my friend was an inveterate joker, he was the very reverse of what is termed a buffoon, and never indulged in personally grotesque actions with a view to make people laugh—such as making faces, a practice which, in

ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, causes the face-makers to look idiotical rather than funny, and induces beholders to pity them, and to feel very uncomfortable sensations.

Peterkin's yells, instead of ceasing, continued and increased.

"Why, what's wrong?" I cried, in much alarm.

Instead of answering, Peterkin darted away through the wood like a maniac, tearing off his clothes as he went. At the same moment Jack began to roar like a bull, and became similarly distracted. It now flashed across me that they must have been attacked by an army of the Bashikouay ant, a species of ant which is so ferocious as to prove a perfect scourge to the parts of the country over which it travels. The thought had scarcely occurred to me when I was painfully convinced of its accuracy. The ants suddenly came to me, and in an instant I was covered from head to foot by the passionate creatures, which hit me so severely that I also began to scream and to tear off my garments; for I had been told by the trader who accompanied us to this part of the country that this was the quickest method of getting rid of them.

We all three fled, and soon left the army of Bashikouay ants behind us, undressing, as we ran, in the best way we could; and when we at length came to a halt we found ourselves almost in a state of nudity. Hastily divesting ourselves of the remainder of our apparel, we assisted each other to clear away the ants, though we could not rid ourselves of the painful effects of the bites with which we were covered.

"What dreadful villains!" gasped Peterkin, as he busied himself in hastily picking off the furious creatures from his person.

"It would be curious to observe the effect of an army of soldiers stepping into an army of Bashikouays," said Jack. "They would be routed instantly. No discipline or courage could hold them together for two minutes after they were attacked."

I was about to make some reply, when our attention was attracted by a shout at no great distance, and in a few seconds we observed, to our confusion, the trader and a band of negroes approaching us. We hurried on our clothes as rapidly as possible, and were a little more presentable when they arrived. They had a good laugh at us, of course, and the naked blacks seemed to be much tickled with the idea that we had been compelled to divest ourselves, even for a short time, of what they considered our unnecessary covering.

"We thought you were lost," said the trader, "and I began to blame myself for letting you away into the woods, where so many dangers may be encountered, without a guide. But what have you got there? meat of some kind? Your guns seem to have done service on this your first expedition."

"Ay, that they have," answered Jack. "We've killed a buffalo bull, and if you send your black fellows back on our track for some hours they'll come to the carcass, of which we could not, of course, bring very much away on our shoulders, which are not accustomed yet to heavy loads."

"Besides," added Peterkin, "we were anxious to get back in time for your elephant-hunt, else we should have brought more meat with us. But Jack has not mentioned what I consider our chief prize, the honour of shooting which belongs to my friend Ralph Rover.—Come, Ralph, unfasten your pack and let them see it."

Although unwilling to put off more time, I threw down my pack, and untying it, displayed my leopard skin. The shout of delight and surprise which the sight of it drew from the negroes was so enthusiastic that I at once perceived I was considered to have secured a great prize.

"Why, Mr Rover, you're in luck," said the trader, examining the skin; "it's not every day that one falls in with such a fine leopard as that. And you have already made a reputation as a daring hunter, for the niggers consider it a bold and dangerous thing to attack these critters; they're so uncommon fierce."

"Indeed I do not by any means deserve such a reputation," said I, refastening my pack, "for the shot was entirely accidental; so I pray you, good sir, to let the negroes know that, as I have no desire to go under a false flag, as my friend Peterkin would say—"

"Go under a false flag!" exclaimed Peterkin, in contempt. "Sail under false colours, man! That's what you should have said. Whatever you do, Ralph, never misquote a man. Go under a false flag! ha, ha! Why, you might just as well have said, 'progress beneath assumed bunting.'"

"Well, accidental or otherwise," said the trader, "you've got credit for the deed, and your fame will be spread among the tribe whether you will or not; for these fellows are such incorrigible liars themselves that they will never believe you if you tell them the shot was accidental. They will only give you credit for some strange though unknown motive in telling such a falsehood."

While the trader was speaking I observed that the negroes were talking with the eager looks and gesticulations that are peculiar to the Africans when excited, and presently two or three of them came forward and asked several questions, while their eyes sparkled eagerly and their black faces shone with animation as they pointed into the woods in the direction whence we had come.

"They want to know where you have left the carcass of the leopard, and if you have taken away the brains," said the trader, turning to me. "I daresay you know—if not you'll soon come to find out—that all the nigger tribes in Africa are sunk in gross and cruel superstitions. They have more fetishes, and greegrees, and amulets, and wooden gods, and charms, than they know what to do with, and have surrounded themselves with spiritual mysteries that neither themselves nor anybody else can understand. Among other things, they attach a very high value to the brains of the leopard, because they imagine that he who possesses them will be rendered extraordinarily bold and successful in hunting. These fellows are in hopes that, being ignorant of the value of leopard brains, you have left them in the carcass, and are burning with anxiety to be off after them."

"Poor creatures!" said I, "they are heartily welcome to the brains; and the carcass lies not more than four hours' march from this spot, I should think,—Is it not so, Jack?"

My friend nodded assent, and the trader, turning to the expectant crowd of natives, gave them the information they desired. No sooner had he finished than with loud cries they turned and darted away, tossing their arms wildly in the air, and looking more like to a band of scared monkeys than to human beings.

"They're queer fellows," remarked Peterkin.

"So they are," replied the trader, "and they're kindly fellows too—jovial and good-humoured, except when under the influence of their abominable superstitions. Then they become incarnate fiends, and commit deeds of cruelty that make one's blood run cold to think of."

I felt much saddened by these remarks, and asked the trader if the missionaries accomplished any good among them.

"Oh yes," he replied, "they do much good, such of them at least as really are missionaries; for it does not follow that every one who wears a black coat and white neck-cloth, and goes abroad, is a missionary. But what can a few men scattered along the coast here and there, however earnest they be, do among the thousands upon thousands of savages that wander about in the interior of Africa? No good will ever be done in this land, to any great extent, until traders and missionaries go hand in hand into the interior, and the system of trade is entirely remodelled."

"From what you remark," said I, feeling much interested, "I should suppose that you have given this subject a good deal of attention."

"I have. But there are people in this world who, supposing that because I am a trader I am therefore prone to exalt trade to an equality with religion, do not give me credit for disinterestedness when I speak. Perhaps you are one of these."

"Not I, in truth," said I, earnestly. "My chief desire in conversing with mankind is to acquire knowledge; I therefore listen with attention and respect to the opinions of others, instead of endeavouring to assert my own. In the present instance, being ignorant, I have no opinions to assert."

"I wish there were more people in your country," replied the trader, "who felt as you do. I would tell them that, although a trader, I regard the salvation of men's souls as the most important work in this world. I would argue that until you get men to listen, you cannot preach the gospel to them; that

the present system of trade in Africa is in itself antagonistic to religion, being based upon dishonesty, and that, therefore, the natives will not listen to missionaries—of course, in some cases they will; for I believe that the gospel, when truly preached, is never preached in vain—but they will throw every possible impediment in their way. I would tell them that in order to make the path of the missionary practicable, the system of trade must be inverted, the trader and the missionary must go hand in hand, and commerce and religion—although incomparably different in their nature and ends—must act the part of brother and sister if anything *great* is to be done for the poor natives of Africa."

Conversing thus we beguiled the time pleasantly while we proceeded rapidly on our way, for the day was drawing to a close, and we were still at a considerable distance from the native village.

Chapter Five.
Preparations for a grand hunt

All was bustle, noise, and activity in the village, or, more correctly speaking, in the native town of his Majesty King Jambai, early in the morning after our arrival. A great elephant-hunt had been resolved on. The hunters were brushing up their spears and old guns—all of which latter were flint-locks that had been procured from traders, and were not worth more than a few shillings. The women were busy preparing breakfast, and the children were playing around their huts.

These huts were of the simplest construction—made of bamboo, roofed with large palm-leaves, and open in front. The wants of savages are generally few; their household furniture is very plain, and there is little of it. A large hut near to that of his sable majesty had been set apart for the trader and his party during our residence at the town. In this we had spent the night as pleasantly as we could, but the mosquitoes kept up an unceasing warfare upon us, so that daylight was welcomed gladly when it came.

On going to the hut of King Jambai, who had invited us to breakfast with him, we found the Princess Oninga alone, seated in the king's armchair and smoking her pipe with uncommon gusto. She had spent the early part of the morning in preparing breakfast for her father and ourselves, and was now resting from her labours.

"You are early astir, Princess Oninga," said the trader as we entered and took our seats round the fire, for at that hour the air felt chilly.

The princess took her pipe from her lips and admitted that she was, blowing a long thin cloud of smoke into the air with a sigh of satisfaction.

"We are ready for breakfast," added the trader. "Is the king at home?"

"He is in the woods, but will be back quickly." With this remark the princess rose, and knocking the ashes out of her pipe, left the tent.

"Upon my word, she's a cool beauty," said Peterkin.

"I should rather say a black one," remarked Jack.

"Perhaps an odd one would be the most appropriate term," said I. "Did you ever see such a headdress?"

The manner in which the Princess Oninga had seen fit to dress her head was indeed peculiar, I may say ludicrous. Her woolly hair had been arranged in the form of a cocked hat, with a horn projecting in front, and at a short distance off it might easily have been mistaken for the headpiece of a general officer minus the feathers. There was little in the way of artificial ornament about it, but the princess wore a number of heavy brass rings on her arms and ankles. Those on the latter reached half-way up to her knees, and they were so heavy that her walk was little better than a clumsy waddle. Before we could pass further comment on her appearance, King Jambai entered, and saluted us by taking us each separately and rubbing noses with us. This done, he ordered in breakfast, which consisted of roast and boiled plantains, ground nuts, roast fowl, and roast pig; so we fell to at once, and being exceedingly hungry after our long walk of the day before, made a hearty meal.

"Now, sir," said Jack, when our repast was about concluded, "as you are going to leave us soon, you had better arrange with the king about getting us an interpreter and supplying us with a few men to carry our goods. I think you said there was once a man in the tribe who spoke a little English. Have you found out whether he is alive?"

"Yes; I have heard that he is alive and well, and is expected in every day from a hunting expedition. He is a splendid hunter and a capital fellow. His name is Makarooroo, and if you get him you will be fortunate."

"Then ask his black majesty," said Peterkin, "as quick as you please, for, to say truth, I'm rather anxious on this point. I feel that we should never get on without a good interpreter."

To our satisfaction we found that the king was quite willing to do all that we wished and a great deal more. In fact, we soon perceived that he felt highly honoured by our visit, and had boasted not a little of "*his white men*" to the chiefs of neighbouring tribes, some of whom had come a considerable distance to see us.

"You have made quite a conquest, gentlemen, of worthy Jambai," said the trader, after translating the king's favourable reply. "The fact is he is pleased with the liberality you have shown towards him in the way of gifts, and is proud of the confidence you have placed in him. Had you been bent on a trading expedition, he would have opposed your further progress; but knowing that you are simply hunters, he is anxious to assist you by all the means at his command. He is surprised, indeed, at your taking so much trouble and coming so far merely to kill wild animals, for he cannot understand the idea of sporting. He himself hunts for the sake of procuring meat."

"Can he not understand," said Peterkin, "that *we* hunt for fun?"

"No, he don't quite see through that. He said to me a few minutes ago, 'Have these men no meat at home, that they come all this long way to get it?' I told him that you had plenty, and then endeavoured to explain your idea of hunting 'for fun.' But he shook his head, and I think he does not believe you."

At this point in our conversation the king rose and gave the signal to set out on the hunting expedition. Instantly the whole population of the town turned out and rushed to the banks of the river, near which it stood, where canoes were prepared for us. Suddenly there arose a great shout, and the name "Makarooroo, Makarooroo," passed from mouth to mouth. Presently a fine, tall, deep-chested and broad-shouldered negro stepped up to the king and laid a leopard skin at his feet, while the people shouted and danced with delight at the success of their companion; for, as I have already stated, it is deemed a bold feat to attack and slay a leopard single-handed.

While the commotion caused by this event was going on, I said to the trader—

"How comes it that Makarooroo can speak English?"

"He spent a couple of years on the coast, in the service of a missionary, and during that time attended the missionary school, where he picked up a smattering of English and a trifle of geography and arithmetic; but although a stout, sturdy hunter, and an intelligent man, he was a lazy student, and gave the good missionary much trouble to hammer the little he knows into his thick skull. At last he grew tired of it, and returned to his tribe; but he brought his Bible with him, and I am told is very diligent in the study of it. His education has gained for him a great reputation as a fetishman, or doctor of mysteries, among his people. I used often to see him at school hammering away at m-a, ma-b-a, ba, and so on, amid a group of children. He used to sit beside the king—"

"The king!" said I, in surprise.

"Ay; the king of that district became a Christian, and he and the queen, with one or two others of the royal household, used to attend school with the children every day, and their diligence in studying the A B C was beyond all praise. But they were terribly stupid. The children beat them easily, showing how true is the saying that 'youth is the time to learn.' The king was always booby, and Makarooroo was always beside him."

As the trader spoke, Makarooroo came forward and shook hands with him in the English fashion. He was then introduced to us, and expressed his willingness to become our interpreter in somewhat curious but quite comprehensible English. As I looked at his intelligent, good-natured countenance, I could not help thinking that the trader had underrated his intellectual powers.

"He's a funny dog that Makarooroo," said Peterkin, as our interpreter hastened away to fetch his rusty old gun and spears; for he meant to join our hunting expedition, although he had only that moment arrived from a long and fatiguing chase.

"Do you think so?" said Jack.

"I don't agree with you," said I; "to me he seems rather of a grave and quiet disposition."

"O Ralph, what a bat you are! He was grave enough just now, truly; but did you not observe the twinkle in his eye when he spoke to us in English? Depend on it he's a funny dog."

"There must be freemasonry, then, among funny dogs," I retorted, "for Jack and I don't perceive it."

"Is this our canoe?" inquired Jack of the trader.

"It is."

"Then let's jump in."

In a few seconds the river was crowded with a fleet of small canoes, and we all paddled quickly up the stream, which was sluggish at that part. We did not intend to proceed more than a few miles by water, as the place where game was expected was at some distance from the river. I felt some regret at this, for the trip up the river was to me most enchanting.

Every yard we advanced new beauties of scenery were revealed to view. The richness of the tropical vegetation seemed in this place to culminate, it was so rank and gorgeous. The day was fine, too, and all the strange-looking creatures—ugly and beautiful, large and small—peculiar to those regions, seemed to have resolved on a general peace in order to bask in the sunshine and enjoy the glorious weather. Man alone was bent on war, and our track, alas! was marked with blood wherever we passed along. I pondered much on this subject, and wondered at the bloodthirsty spirit which seems to be natural to man in all conditions and climes. Then I thought of the difficulty these poor Africans have at times in procuring food, the frequency with which they are reduced almost to a state of starvation, and I ceased to wonder that they shot and speared everything that came in their way.

We proceeded up the left bank of the river, keeping close in to the shore in order to obtain the protection of the overhanging boughs and foliage; for the sun soon began to grow hot, and in the middle of the day became so intense that I sometimes feared that I or my companions would receive a sunstroke. I confess that the subject of health often caused me much anxiety; for although I knew that we were all old experienced travellers—though young in years—and had become in a great degree inured to hardships, I feared that the deadly climate of Central Africa might prove too much for our European constitutions. By the free use of quinine, however, and careful attention to the roles of health as far as circumstances would permit, we were fortunate enough to keep in excellent health and spirits during the whole course of our sojourn there; for which, when I thought of the hundreds of Europeans who had perished on that deadly coast without even venturing into the interior, I felt very thankful. One of our chief delights, to which I in a great degree attribute our uninterrupted health, was bathing daily in the streams and ponds with which we fell in, or on which we paddled during our travels. On these occasions we were fain, however, to be exceeding careful in the selection of our bathing-pool, as crocodiles and alligators, and I know not what other hideous animals, were constantly on the lookout for prey, and I make no doubt would have been very ready to try the flavour of a morsel of English food had we given them the chance.

On these occasions, when we had made sure of our pool, we were wont to paddle about in the cool refreshing stream, and recall to mind the splendid dips we had had together six years before in the clear waters of the coral island. Since that time Peterkin had learned to swim well, which was not only a source of much satisfaction and gratification to himself now, but, he told me, had been the means of preserving not only his own life on more than one occasion, but the life of a little child which he had the good fortune to rescue from drowning when cruising off the island of Madagascar.

Peterkin used to speak very strongly when talking on this subject, and I observed, from the unusual seriousness of his manner, that he felt deeply too.

"Ralph," he said to me one day, "half the world is mad—I am not sure that I might not say three-quarters of the world is mad—and I'm quite certain that all the *ladies* in the world are mad with the exception of the brown ladies of the South Seas, and a few rare specimens elsewhere; they're all mad together in reference to the matter of swimming. Now that I have learned it nothing is so easy, and any one who is not as blind as a rheumatic owl must see that nothing is more important; for every

one almost is subject to being pitched now and then into deep water, and if he can't swim it's all up with him. Why, every time an angler goes out to *fish* he runs the chance of slipping and being swept into a deep hole, where, if he cannot swim, he is certain to be drowned. And yet five strokes would save his life. *Good* swimming is by no means what is wanted; swimming of any kind, however poor, is all that is desiderated. Every time a lady goes to have a row on a lake she is liable to be upset by the clumsiness of those who accompany her, and although it may be close to shore, if she cannot swim, down she goes to the bottom. And *floating* won't do. Some ladies delude themselves with the idea that floating is of great value. In nine cases out of ten it is of no value at all; for unless water be perfectly smooth and still, a person cannot float so as to keep the waves from washing over the face, in which case choking is the certain result. There is no excuse for not learning to swim. In most large cities there are swimming-baths; if the sea is not available, a river is, everywhere. I tell you what it is, Ralph: people who don't learn to swim are—are—I was going to say asses, but that would be an insult to the much-maligned long-eared animal; and parents who don't teach their offspring to swim deserve to be drowned in butter-milk; and I wish I saw—no, I *don't* quite wish I saw them all drowned in that way, but I do wish that I could impress upon mankind over the length and breadth of this rotund world the great, the immense, the intense importance of boys *and girls* being taught to swim."

"You make use of strong language," said I.

"Quite a powerful orator," added Jack, laughing.

"Bah!" exclaimed Peterkin; "your reception of this grand truth is but a type of the manner in which it will be received by the pig-headed world. What's the use of preaching common sense? I'm a perfect donkey!"

"Nay, Peterkin," said Jack; "I appreciate what you say, and have no doubt whatever that your remarks, if made public, would create quite a revolution in the juvenile world, and convert them speedily into aquatic animals. Did you ever think of sending your views on that subject to the *Times*?"

"The *Times*!" cried Peterkin.

"Yes, the *Times*; why not?"

"Because," said Peterkin slowly, "I once sent a letter to that great but insolent periodical, and what do you think it did?"

"Can't tell, I'm sure."

"*Took no notice of it whatever*!" said Peterkin, with a look of ineffable disgust.

But to return from this digression. I was much struck with the splendid contrast of colours that met my eye everywhere here. The rich variety of greens in the different trees harmonised with the bright pink plums and scarlet berries, and these latter were almost dimmed in their lustre by the bright plumage of the birds, which I felt intense longing to procure, many of them being quite new to me, and, I am certain, totally unknown to naturalists, while others I recognised with delight as belonging to several of the species of which I had read in ornithological works. I tried hard to shoot several of these lovely creatures, intending to stuff them, but, to my regret, was utterly unable to hit them. Seeing this, Peterkin took pity on me, and sitting down in the bow of our canoe, picked off all the birds I pointed out to him as we passed, with unerring precision. Most of them fell into the water, and were easily secured, while one or two toppled off the branches into the canoe. Several of them he shot on the wing—a feat which even filled Jack with surprise, and so astounded the natives that they surrounded our canoe at last, and gazed open-mouthed at my friend, whom they evidently regarded as the greatest fetishman that had ever come amongst them.

He was obliged to stop at last and lay down his gun in order to make the natives cease from crowding round us and delaying our voyage. A number of iguanas were observed on the branches of the trees that overhung the stream. They dropped into the water as we approached; but the natives succeeded in spearing a good many, and I afterwards found that they considered them excellent food.

If I was charmed with the birds, Peterkin was no less delighted with the monkeys that chattered at us as we passed along. I never saw a man laugh as he did that day. He almost became hysterical,

so much was he tickled with their antics; and the natives, who have a keen sense of the ludicrous, seemed quite to sympathise with his spirit, although, of course, what amused him could not have similarly affected them, seeing that they were used to monkeys from infancy.

"There's something new!" exclaimed Jack, as we rounded a bend in the river and came in view of an open flat where it assumed somewhat the aspect of a pond or small lake. He pointed to a flock of birds standing on a low rock, which I instantly recognised to be pelicans.

"Surely," said I, "pelicans are not new to you!"

"Certainly not; but if you look a little more attentively, I think you will find material for your note-book."

Jack was right. I observed a very fine fish-hawk circling over the head of one of the pelicans. Its head and neck were white, and its body was of a reddish chocolate colour. Just as we came in sight, the pelican caught a fine fish, which it stowed away safe in the pouch under its chin. The sly hawk, which had been watching for this, immediately made a descent towards its victim, making a considerable noise with its wings as it came down. Hearing this, the pelican looked hastily up, and supposing that a terrible and deadly assault was about to be made, opened its mouth and screamed in terror. This was just what the hawk wanted. The open bill revealed the fish in the pouch. Down he swooped, snatched it out, and then soared away with his ill-gotten gains in his talons.

"Oh, what a thief!" exclaimed Peterkin.

"And the pelican seems to take his loss in a remarkably philosophical manner," observed Jack.

To my surprise the great stupid bird, instead of flying away, as I had expected, quietly resumed his fishing as if nothing had happened. No doubt he was well pleased to find himself still alive, and it is not improbable that the hawk made several more meals at the expense of his long-beaked friend after we had passed by.

We soon put him to flight, however, by landing near the spot where he stood, this being the place where we were to quit our canoes and pass through the jungle on foot. The hunters now prepared themselves for action, for the recent tracks of elephants were seen on the bank of the stream, and the natives said they could not be far off. Jack and Peterkin were armed with immensely heavy rifles, which carried balls of the weight of six-ounces. I carried my trusty, double-barrelled fowling-piece, which is of the largest size, and which I preferred to a rifle, because, not being a good shot, I resolved, on all occasions, to reserve my fire until we should come to close quarters with game, leaving my more expert comrades to take the longer shots. We had also two natives—one being our guide, Makarooroo, who carried Jack and Peterkin's double-barrelled guns as a reserve. These were loaded, of course, with ball.

"This looks something like business," said Jack, as he leaned on his heavy rifle and looked at the natives, who were selecting their spears and otherwise making preparations.

"It does," replied Peterkin. "Are you loaded?"

"Ay, and I have just examined the caps to see that they are dry; for it's not like grouse-shooting on the Scottish hills this African hunting, depend upon it. A snapping cap might cost us our lives,—Ralph, my boy, you must keep well in rear. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but it won't do to go in front when you cannot depend on your nerves."

I experienced a feeling of sadness not unmingled with shame as my friend said this, but I could not question the justness of his remark, and I knew well that he would not have made it at all, but for his anxiety lest I should run recklessly into danger, which I might find myself, when too late, unable to cope with. I was careful, however, to conceal my feelings as I replied with a smile—

"You are right, Jack. I shall act the part of a support, while you and Peterkin skirmish in advance."

"And be careful," said Peterkin, solemnly, "that you don't fire into us by mistake."

Somewhat of Peterkin's own spirit came over me as I replied, "Indeed, I have been thinking of that, and I'm not sure that I can restrain myself when I see a chimpanzee monkey and a gorilla walking through the woods before me."

"I think we'd better take his gun from him," suggested Jack.

At this moment the king gave the signal to advance, so we shouldered our weapons and joined him. As we walked rapidly along, Jack suggested that we should allow the natives to kill any elephants we might fall in with in their own way, so as to observe how they managed it, rather than try to push ourselves forward on this our first expedition. We all agreed to this, and shortly after we came to the place which elephants were known to frequent.

Here great preparations had evidently been made for them. A space of more than a mile was partially enclosed by what might be termed a vine wall. The huge, thorny, creeping vines had been torn down from the trees and woven into a rude sort of network, through which it was almost impossible for any animal except an elephant to break. This was intended—not to stop the elephant altogether, but to entangle and retard him in his flight, until the hunters could kill him with their spears. The work, we were given to understand, was attended with considerable danger, for some of the natives were occasionally caught by the thorny vines when flying from the charge of the infuriated animal, and were instantly stamped to death by his ponderous feet.

I felt a new and powerful excitement creep over me as I saw the natives extend themselves in a wide semicircle of nearly two miles in extent, and begin to advance with loud shouts and cries, in order to drive the game towards the vines, and the flashing eyes and compressed lips of my two companions showed that they were similarly affected. We determined to keep together and follow close on that part of the line where the king was.

"You no be 'fraid?" said Makarooroo, looking down at Peterkin, who, he evidently supposed, was neither mentally nor physically adapted for an African hunter.

Peterkin was so tickled with the question that he suddenly began to tremble like an aspen leaf, and to chatter with his teeth and display all the symptoms of abject terror. Pointing over Makarooroo's shoulder into the bush behind him, he gasped, "The leopard!"

The negro uttered a hideous yell, and springing nearly his own height into the air, darted behind a tree with the agility of a wild-cat.

Instantly Peterkin resumed his composure, and turning round with a look of cool surprise, said —

"What! you're not afraid, Makarooroo?" The good-humoured fellow burst into a loud laugh on perceiving the practical joke that had been passed on him, and it was evident that the incident, trifling though it was, had suddenly raised his estimation of Peterkin to a very exalted pitch.

We now began to draw near to the enclosure, and I was beginning to fear that our hunt was to prove unsuccessful that day. A considerable quantity of small game had passed us, alarmed by the cries of the natives; but we purposely withheld our fire, although I saw that Jack was sorely tempted once or twice, when several beautiful gazelles and one or two wild pigs ran past within shot. Presently we heard a shrill trumpeting sound, which Peterkin, who had hunted in the forests of Ceylon, told us, in an excited voice, was the cry of the elephant. We hastened forward with our utmost speed, when suddenly we were brought to a stand by hearing a tremendous roar close in front of us. Immediately after, a large male lion bounded from among the bushes, and with one stroke of his enormous paw struck down a negro who stood not twenty yards from us. The terrible brute stood for an instant or two, lashing his sides with his tail and glaring defiance. It chanced that I happened to be nearest to him, and that the position of the tangled underwood prevented my companions from taking good aim; so without waiting for them, being anxious to save, if possible, the life of the prostrate negro, I fired both barrels into the lion's side. Giving utterance to another terrible roar, he bounded away into the bush, scattering the negroes who came in his way, and made his escape, to our great disappointment.

We found, to our horror, on going up to the fallen hunter, that he was quite dead. His skull had been literally smashed in, as if it had received a blow from a sledge-hammer.

I cannot describe my feelings on beholding thus, for the first time, the king of beasts in all the savage majesty of strength and freedom, coupled with the terrible death of a human being. My brain was in a whirl of excitement; I scarce knew what I was doing. But I had no time to think, for almost immediately after firing the shots at the lion, two elephants came crashing through the bushes. One was between ten and eleven feet high, the other could not have been less than twelve feet. I had never seen anything like this in the menageries of England, and their appearance, as they burst thus suddenly on my vision, was something absolutely appalling.

Those who have only seen the comparatively small and sluggish animals that are wont to ring their bells to attract attention, and to feed on gingerbread nuts from the hands of little boys, can form no idea of the terrible appearance of the gigantic monsters of Africa as they go tearing in mad fury through the forests with their enormous ears, and tails, and trunks erect, their ponderous tusks glistening in the sunshine, and their wicked little eyes flashing like balls of fire as they knock down, rend asunder, and overturn all that comes in their way.

The two that now approached us in full career were flying before a crowd of negroes who had already fixed a number of spears in their sides, from which the blood was flowing copiously. To say that the bushes went down before them like grass would not give a correct idea of the ponderous rush of these creatures. Trees of three and four inches diameter were run against and snapped off like twigs, without proving in any degree obstructive.

By this time the negroes had crowded in from all sides, and as the elephants approached the place where we stood, a perfect cloud of spears and javelins descended on their devoted sides. I observed that many of the active natives had leaped up into the trees and discharged their spears from above, while others, crouching behind fallen trees or bushes, threw them from below, so that in a few seconds dozens of spears entered their bodies at every conceivable angle, and they appeared as if suddenly transformed into monstrous porcupines or hedgehogs. There was something almost ludicrous in this, but the magnitude and aspect of the animals were too terrible, and our danger was too imminent, to permit anything like comic ideas to enter our brains. I observed, too, that the natives were perfectly wild with excitement. Their black faces worked convulsively, and their white eyes and teeth glittered as they leaped and darted about in a state of almost perfect nudity, so that their aspect was quite demoniacal.

The suddenness and violence of the attack made near to us had the effect of turning the elephants aside, and the next instant they were tearing and wrenching themselves through the meshes of the tough and thorny vines. The natives closed in with wild cries and with redoubled energy. Nothing surprised me so much as to observe the incredible number of spears that were sticking all over these creatures, and the amount of blood that they lost, without any apparent diminution of strength resulting. It seemed as if no human power could kill them, and at that moment I almost doubted Peterkin's assertion that he had, while in Ceylon, actually killed elephants with a single ball.

While Jack and Peterkin and I were gazing in deep interest and surprise at the curious struggle going on before us, and holding ourselves in readiness to act, should there be any chance of our game escaping, the larger of the two elephants succeeded in disentangling himself by backing out of the snare. He then wheeled round and charged straight at King Jambai, who stood close to us, with incredible fury. The beast, as it came on with the bristling spears all over it, the blood spirting from its innumerable wounds, and trumpeting shrill with rage, seemed to me like some huge unearthly phantom. It was with difficulty I could believe the whole scene other than a hideous dream. Jambai launched his javelin into the animal's chest, and then turned and fled. The other natives also darted and scattered hither and thither, so that the elephant could not make up its mind on which of its enemies to wreak its vengeance. We, too, turned and took to our heels at once with right good will. All at once I heard Jack utter a wild shout or yell, very unlike to anything I ever heard from him

before. I looked back, and saw that his foot had got entangled in a thorny shrub, and that the elephant was making at him.

To this day I have never been able to account for the remarkable condition of mind and body that ensued on this occasion. Instead of being paralysed as I had been when Peterkin was in imminent danger, all sensation of fear or hesitancy seemed to vanish on thine instant. I felt my nerves and muscles strung, as it were, and rendered firm as a rock, and with calm deliberation, yet with the utmost rapidity of which I was capable, I turned round, sprang between Jack and the enraged beast, and presented my piece at his head.

"Right in the centre of his forehead," gasped Jack, as he endeavoured to wrench his foot from the entanglement.

At that moment I observed Peterkin leap to my side; the next instant the report of both our guns rang through the woods; the elephant bounded completely over Jack, as Peterkin and I leaped to either side to let it pass, and fell to the ground with such violence that a tree about six inches thick, against which it struck, went down before it like a willow wand.

We immediately assisted Jack to extricate himself; but we had no time to congratulate ourselves on our narrow escape, for mingled shouts and yells from the men in the bushes ahead apprised us that some new danger menaced them in that direction.

Reloading as fast as we could, we hastened forward, and soon gained the new scene of battle. Here stood the other elephant, trying to break down a small tree up which King Jambai had climbed, partly for safety and partly in order to dart a javelin down on the brute as it passed.

This was a common custom of the natives; but the king, who was a bold, reckless man, had neglected to take the very necessary precaution of selecting a strong tree. The elephant seemed actually to have observed this, for instead of passing on, it suddenly rushed headlong against the tree and began to break it down. When we came up the beast was heaving and straining with all its might, the stout tree was cracking and rending fearfully, so that the king could scarcely retain his position on it. The natives were plying their spears with the utmost vigour; but although mortally wounded, it was evident that in a few more seconds the elephant would succeed in throwing down the tree and trample the king to death.

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