



“WHEN I CAME TO, THE LION WAS STANDING OVER ME WITH HER CLAWS IN MY SHOULDER.”

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A HAND-TO-HAND BATTLE WITH A LIONESS.

THE TRUE STORY OF A BOER HUNTER.

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I HAD spent the three summer months of November, December, and January in the Moremi country, prospecting along the south banks of Lake Ngami, or "Nghabe," as the Moremis call it. Although I found a small amount of friable ore among the picturesque range of hills known as the Quebe Koppies, the expedition proved a decided failure, and it was with feelings of disappointment, mingled with disgust, that I at last gave orders to pack camp and strike for the Segana River, which I intended to follow to its confluence with the Zouga, and along the latter to Lake Kumadua.

At the end of January we arrived in sight of the kraal of that prince of hunters (and entertainers), in south-central Africa, Van Stremboom, whose small ranch and trading-post has furnished hospitality to wandering hunters and prospectors for nearly a score of years. When we reached the kraal, we were met by the old Dutchman's Matabele tracker, Suntag, who informed us his master had been confined to his bed for nearly a month past, as the result of injuries inflicted by a wounded lioness.

Hastening into the hut, I found the old fellow lying upon a kind of bunk at one end of the room; his face and arms covered with partly healed scars.

Stremboom is a striking fellow, several inches above six feet in height, and, notwithstanding his fifty-odd years, when well, as lithe and active as a panther. He essayed to rise as I entered, but when he had nearly reached his feet, the effort proved too much, and he sank back among the pile of skins, extending his left hand (the right hung helplessly at his side) in my direction.

"Well, well, Brother Jennig!" (Stremboom speaks English quite fluently) "what has brought you to old Van's kraal again? Is it to kill another rhino?" (referring to an episode which occurred several years previously).

"Well—hardly," I replied, grasping the outstretched hand. "Judging from appear-

ances, I should, as far as your company goes, have to take such a hunt alone just at present. And so at last you met your match, eh? and a lioness, too, at that! I would—"

"Not a lioness, Brother Jennig, but a devil. Yes, a regular *devil*, without the hoofs and horns, but with an extra set of teeth and claws, to make it up; at least, it seemed to me she had 'em. But sit down, and I will tell you how it happened."

When I had seated myself, the old fellow raised himself, with difficulty, to a sitting posture, and, after gazing thoughtfully through the open doorway for a moment, began his story, speaking slowly and with apparent difficulty.

"It is more than a month ago; just before the beginning of the rainy season. I left the kraal early in the morning to look for buffalo, with Suntag and two of my best dogs. I had my single-barrel eight-bore rifle, but I only took three balls, as my supply of them was getting low, and I did not expect to be gone long, only wanting a young bull for meat. We went toward the river, and when we had entered the thick bush the dogs took a scent and went rushing off, while, we followed as fast as we could. I expected they were after either a buffalo or an oryx, as they were both trained not to chase small game, and was listening every minute for the baying which would tell me they had brought the game to a standstill, when I was startled to hear one of them give a yelp of death agony. Hurrying on, we soon came upon the body of the smaller of the two, badly torn and gashed, and a moment later heard the other dog give his death yell. When we came near the spot, we looked about for a minute, but could see nothing, and I was about to press on, when suddenly my Matabele shouted '*Ka dig! ka dig!*' and began to make tracks for the brush. At the same instant I discerned the form of a gray-throated old lioness', the largest I ever saw, lying at the edge of a thick growth of bushes, her paws

across my dog's body. She crouched low when she saw me, looking very wicked.

"Ah, you thief!" I cried. "So it was you that killed my fine dogs, was it? Oh, you don't need to look savage; you can't scare Van Stremboom. You have killed my dogs, you old she-devil, and I will kill you."

"At that she looked even more wicked, drawing back her ears and giving a kind of snarling whine, just as though she understood what I had said, and was warning me to go slow. Taking a careful aim at her neck, I fired, and with a screech she sprang away into the thicket, where she roared terribly.

"After I had reloaded my gun, the Matabele begged me to leave, as the lioness must soon die from the wound I had given her. The bullet, as I had noted from where I stood after the shot, had entered in front of the shoulder and passed out behind the opposite flank.

"The Matabele's advice was good, and I followed it; but we had not gone far when he caught my arm warningly, and, pointing ahead, whispered, "There she is again, master!"

"Sure enough, there she was, the devil, lying in the path some sixty yards off! I was inwardly glad; for I did not like to leave her behind after she had killed my dogs, and it seemed as though she was challenging me for turning away from her at first. She was lying as flat as a snake on the ground, and I could only see the top of her head and back.

"I stepped a few paces nearer, and then fired at her head, but made a bad shot, the bullet piercing her ear, but not touching the skull. For a wonder, she did not charge, but lay growling loudly in the grass, while I loaded the gun with my last ball. Taking a careful aim between the eyes, I fired again, but my luck seemed to be gone; for the bullet only cut a ridge down her back—and then she came!

"I started to club my rifle, but the next thing I knew I was flying through the air, and landed, half stunned, on my stomach. When I came to, the lion was standing over me, with her claws in my shoulder" (here he pulled away the flannel from his right shoulder to show the wound), "and so I lay still and thought what I should best do. I was sure that she would soon try to strangle me, and that if I wanted to save myself at all (and I didn't feel

very hopeful) I must try to wrestle with her.

"I jerked myself round, and when she saw my face she tried to bite my throat, but I put my right arm in her mouth, and she bit that through and through. Then I thought of my knife under me in its sheath, and I beat her with my left hand until she dropped my right arm and seized the other. With my right hand I felt for the knife, but I could not grasp it, for the sinews of my right thumb were lacerated. Then I thought to put the powder flask in her mouth, and when I did so she bit it full of holes, as you can see"—pointing to it hanging on the wall—"and all the time I could hardly breathe, for her claws were fastened in my chest—and a lion is heavy! I realized I was rapidly suffocating, and that I would soon be unconscious if something did not happen quickly to relieve me.

"In biting my arm, she kind of 'wooled' me over on my side, and I saw my knife lying on the ground. I seized it with my left hand, and, maddened with pain, plunged it into her eye. When she drew back for an instant, I rose on one knee, but she quickly threw me down. Exerting all my strength, I rose again on both knees, holding her by the shoulders, and ducking my head against her neck so that she could not bite me.

"Although she was clawing my arms and side, I could feel she was getting weaker. Suddenly my brain grew like fire, and, nerved with rage and frenzy, I grappled the brute, threw her, and buried my fingers in her throat. She was by this time very weak from the first wound I had given her, or I could not have thrown her.

"From then on my memory is confused. I can recall nothing definite as to how the fight ended. The next I remember was when I woke up on this pile of skins, with an English missionary, who had been staying with me for a week or more past, bending over me, and tying up my wounds, while the Matabele stood in the doorway, his eyes all whites, with no pupils.

"From what they tell me, it seems that the lioness presently, probably presuming I was dead, made tracks for the brush. When she had done so, the Matabele, who had been watching from a nearby tree, came down and carried me to the kraal.

"But that was not all," added Strem-

boom, noting my expression of intense interest, "for the very next day my son, who lives forty miles up the Segana, arrived here, and as soon as he learned of the encounter he started out to settle accounts with the lioness.

"The dogs struck her spoor a short distance from where she had killed the other two, and soon had her at bay. But although the boy put no less than four eight-bore balls in her hide, she not only managed to get away, but killed two of the three dogs, wounding the third so badly they had to shoot it afterwards."

"Rather an unusual beast," I remarked, as the old fellow sank back, exhausted, on the couch. "I suppose she is surely done for now, though; a lioness never lived that could carry for very long wounds made by six eight-bore balls through the body."

"That's the queerest part of it; she is not only alive, but is very much alive, and has made two raids on my flocks of goats since, killing seven in all. My boys (Matabeles) saw her each time, but were afraid to fire at her. She does not venture out in the light of day, however, but comes at dusk, and is as cautious and crafty as a tiger."

"I suppose you will have no objection to my trying my hand at her?" I asked, thinking that perhaps the old hunter was anxious to settle the account himself as soon as he was able.

"Not in the least, my boy. But remember—*take no chances with the devil!* When you meet up with her, think of old Van," and he smiled at me pathetically.

I had intended to remain over with the old Dutchman for a day or two, and so made preparations for a lion hunt on the following day. Early the next morning I started out, accompanied by my Zulu hunter and guide, Ulani, and a half-dozen Matabeles. Although we spent the entire day in the search, and the day following as well, we saw no sign of our quarry, and I began to think the beast had either died of her wounds or had left the neighborhood. On the evening of the third day one of the Matabeles rushed into my tent with the startling information that he had seen the lioness at the river bank, not more than a thousand yards from the kraal, and from his cover in the bushes had watched her take her evening drink.

All was excitement in an instant, and a

kind of "council of war" was held in Stremboom's hut, when it was decided not to molest her until the following evening, when Ulani and I would post ourselves in one of the trees along the river bank.

On the following evening, a half-hour or more before sunset, the Zulu and I repaired to the bank of the river, and after a careful examination of the tracks in the soft sand, finally selected a tree, into which we climbed to a height of perhaps twenty feet, reaching a place where two large limbs extended from the trunk on either side. The tree was rather bare, and so the Zulu broke some branches from a bush and wove them in front of us, making our concealment more perfect, although even then it would have been an easy matter for the beast to have seen us, had it glanced in our direction. As a rule, however, these animals do not look up, unless their attention is attracted.

By degrees the sun sank beneath the horizon, and the heat diminished somewhat, although, as there was not the slightest breeze, the air continued fairly stifling. Doves of jungle fowl were winging their way toward the river, to take their evening's drink and bath, and their loud, complaining cries sounded weird and startling through the otherwise silent jungles. A spotted doe emerged from one of the jungle paths and moved along as unconcernedly as though such animals as lions, leopards, and panthers were not in existence. This unconsciousness of impending danger seems to be in the line of a wise provision of nature—a case of "blissful ignorance," as it were, of the fact that the beasts of prey use the same paths through the jungle, and that a lion and its victim may meet face to face at any moment.

On excessively hot days lions do not move until just after sunset, and we were now on the eve of expectation, straining our eyes and ears to catch the first sign of the game. Presently I thought I heard a light, humming sound in the bushes to our right, like the buzzing of a large bee. It lasted a few seconds only, but after a minute was repeated, this time nearer and more pronounced. The Zulu touched my arm, and then pointed toward the sound, with a significant nod. It was the low, purring call of a lioness!

The light was now failing rapidly, and I was in a state of uncertainty as to

whether it would be possible for me to make a sure shot when she appeared. After a few minutes' silence she again began the low, purring call, and this time it sounded farther away. Alas! I thought; she has winded us and changed her course. I had about given up all hope, when I made out a shadowy form at the edge of the jungle, in almost the exact spot occupied by the doe a few minutes before. She was standing with her head turned away from us, gazing half-lazily, half-suspiciously about, and lashing her sides with her tail, to keep off the gnats. She was standing about twenty yards distant from us in the foot-path, at the edge of a line of heavy bushes.

I took advantage of her head being turned away to raise my rifle, Ulani following my example. It was so dark I could not see the sights, and so ran my hand along the barrel, pointing my finger at her exposed shoulder, and, after a mo-

ment's hesitation, pressed the trigger. Our shots rang out, simultaneously, startling the silent jungle into life, and were followed by an angry screech from the lioness. For a few seconds the smoke completely hid her from view, although we could hear her thrashing about in the bushes. For several minutes the sound of breaking and crushing underbrush continued, and then all became quiet. After a little we descended to the ground and returned to the kraal, where I found Stremboom in a state of feverish anxiety.

On the following morning we repaired to the scene of the one-sided conflict, expecting to find the lioness stretched out among the bushes. But we were doomed to disappointment, for, instead, we found her spoor leading toward the dense jungles which line the south bank of the Segana for miles, while the small amount of blood on the bushes indicated she was not badly hurt, after all.

NORTH AMERICAN GAME-BIRDS:

THEIR POPULAR BUT INCORRECT NAMES.

By D. G. Elliot.

THERE would at first blush seem to be very little in the title of this article of interest to the general reader, or even to the sportsman, for classification smacks of science, or of some mysterious thing with which the expert is alone fitted to deal. Yet for non-scientific persons there is a homely usefulness, if I may so term it, in acquiring a knowledge which enables them to distinguish the different characteristics of the animals and birds with the general appearance of which they are familiar, and to call them by their right names.

In the United States it is not seldom that one hears of some sportsman going pheasant or quail shooting, when, as a matter of fact, there never was a quail or pheasant indigenous to North America. There are partridges and grouse in this western world, but no quail or pheasant. Of course, since, in various parts of the land, the last-named game-bird has been introduced, and, in some localities, has

increased greatly, one may in such places very properly say he is going pheasant shooting; but if he has regard to the eternal fitness of things he may never say he is going quail shooting, for no such bird is found on the North American continent. I believe I have heard that at one time some English partridges and migratory quail had been imported and turned out in some of the States, but I have learned nothing of them since, and for all practical purposes they are as if they had never been.

Now, why is it not correct to speak of quail or pheasant shooting in North America, and what are the characters that distinguish quail from partridges, grouse from ptarmigan, and pheasants from them all? The chief offenses against popular nomenclature are committed with the Rasores, or scraping game-birds, those that scratch the ground when seeking food or taking a dust-bath. Geese and ducks are simply ducks and geese all the