

ANTELOPE SHOOTING IN CAPE COLONY

By H. A. Bryden

(Author of "Gun and Camera in Southern Africa," "Kloof and Karroo, etc., etc.)

IT is quite a mistake to suppose, as many people do, that there is at the present time little game to be shot in Cape Colony. The average traveler in South Africa nowadays seldom halts long in the old Cape settlements. He is in a hurry to get up country to the diamond fields of Kimberley, or the gold fields of Johannesburg or Rhodesia. He scurries by train across the five hundred or six hundred miles that lie between the southern ports and the Orange River; he sees, especially if he travels from Cape Town, immense stretches of sun-baked, desolate-looking karoo country, upon which little of animal life is to be seen, and he at once comes to the conclusion that wild game no longer exists in the Cape Colony. There he makes a great mistake. There is still plenty of game, four-footed and feathered, to be found within the 270,000 square miles of the Old Colony, as it is called, if the wanderer is a true sportsman who understands his business, and has the time and the inclination to quit the trunk lines of railway, and seek the quieter and remoter parts of the country. Here, upon the parched karoo plains of Central Cape Colony, or in the vast and little-known wildernesses of the almost untrodden northwest, or among the wild and magnificent mountain interiors and splendid kloofs and valleys of the southern and eastern portions of the country, he will yet find a fairly plentiful store of game, and ample occupation for many a wild sporting ramble.

It is not, of course, to be supposed that the game of this part of South Africa is anything like what it used to be—in the days when lions, elephants, the rhinoceros and the hippopotamus thronged the veldt and the river, and thirty-odd species of antelope overran the country from Cape Agulhas to the Orange River. But the list of antelopes alone still to be found in Cape Colony is a not inconsiderable one. Here it is: Koodoo, gemsbok, hartebeest, bon-

tebok, springbok, vaal rhebok, rooi rhebok, klipspringer, duyker, steinbok, grysbok or grys (grizzled) steinbok, bushbuck, oribi, and blaauwbok. It is possible that a few reedbuck may be found in the eastern part of the colony; but they are very scarce, and must now be looked upon as practically exterminated. The black wildebeest, or white-tailed gnu, existed until a few years back south of the Orange River, on one or two Boer farms in the Victoria West division; but I believe these have finally vanished from the scene. These strange and grotesque-looking antelopes, thirty or forty years ago numbering tens of thousands, have now nearly disappeared even in the Orange Free State, which with Cape Colony formed their great natural stronghold. It is probable that not more than one thousand or twelve hundred black wildebeest are to be found even in that territory. These are preserved by three or four Dutch farmers, who permit Englishmen to shoot them at the rate of one hundred dollars a head! They are not likely, I fear, to escape complete extinction within the next few years.

As for other larger game in the Cape Colony proper, the lion has retired from business, exterminated by the rifles of the frontier Boers; the elephant is represented by a few strong herds which, protected by government, find a sanctuary in the dense bush veldt of the southern part of the Colony and the great forest region of the Knysna. Buffaloes, similarly protected, also haunt these regions, and, like the elephant, are only to be shot by special permit from the governor, for which a license of fifty dollars has to be paid. Only a single specimen is allowed to be shot. The hippopotamus lingers in the Orange River, finding safe harborage in a stretch of inaccessible canyons some three hundred miles in length, walled in by immense mountains of naked brown granite, the river gorges of which have never yet been explored by the white man.

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A few score mountain zebras, the rarest of their kind, which are also protected by government, haunt some few of the wildest ranges of the Cape Colony. These splendid and now exceedingly scarce equines, which are found in no other part of the African continent, are, rightly enough, not permitted to be killed. Even as it is, they are preserved from extinction with great difficulty. Leopards are numerous, and are to be found in every mountain chain from the vicinity of the Cape in every part of the Colony. If a man seeks the chase of the leopard—absurdly called by the Dutch and English colonists "tiger" all over South Africa—he can find no better hunting ground in the world than the wild mountain interiors of Cape Colony.

To return now to my list of antelopes. The noble koodoo, with its magnificent spiral horns, splendid form and great size (it stands considerably higher and is more robust than a Highland stag, and weighs some two hundred pounds heavier), is at the present day principally to be found south of the Orange River, in the Uitenhage district, where considerable numbers are now preserved by English farmers. Hunting takes place during the winter months, and some good bags are made.

The gemsbok, or oryx (*oryx gazella*), is purely a desert-loving species, haunting the waterless tracts of the northwestern regions of Cape Colony—marked Great Bushmanland on the maps. This peerless beast of chase, with its warm gray coat handsomely marked with black, white head and face curiously painted with black markings, as if to imitate a headstall, and long, sharp, spearlike horns—often well over three feet in length—may still be sought in the waterless and arid grass steppes of that desolate region. Here, in company with a few bands of hartebeest and countless legions of springbok, the gemsbok grazes, thanks to scarcity of water, in fair security. Even the roaming Trek-Boers of the adjacent region find it a hard matter to bag a head of these noble antelopes, and a gemsbok slain in Bushmanland, south of the Orange River, may be looked upon as one of the primest rewards of the hunter's skill and endurance. To be lost in these deserts of the northwest is no trifling matter, and the European, unused to the veldt and ignorant of the nearest pit of water, may, if he is not careful, find himself perilously near dying of thirst.

The oryx of Africa and Arabia is, I think, without doubt the original of the fabled unicorn. The shape of the unicorn of the British arms is distinctly oryx-like, and the two long horns, when seen in profile, look exactly like one. All that the original delineator of the unicorn seems to have done was to draw an oryx with a single horn upon its forehead protruding forward instead of slanting backwards. When the gemsbok is set up at bay, especially by dogs, he will often place his head between his knees, and with the sharp points of his thirty-six-inch horns bristling outward, will deal destruction among his tormentors. The gemsbok, when attacked by a lion or other dangerous *arnivora*, often throws itself to the ground, and, presenting its horns to every side of attack, beats off its opponents. It is a curious fact that among the Hottentots and Bushmen who are principally found in the country of the oryx of South Africa, there is a persistent legend that in these encounters the gemsbok occasionally slays even the lion itself. Natives and Boers have repeatedly assured travelers that the carcasses or skeletons of lion and gemsbok, the lion impaled upon the long horns of the antelope, have been found rotting together on the plains.

The man who has once enjoyed a gallop after a troop of gemsbok is never likely to forget it. These antelopes, heavy though they appear, have a high turn of speed and great staying powers, and only the hunter mounted upon a first-rate Cape hunting horse is likely to run one down. After a desperate chase of from four to seven miles the sportsman, if the retreating game are fat and in good condition, succeeds, possibly, in turning one of the animals out of the troop and closes upon his quarry. At last the gemsbok, the spume dripping from its mouth and flecking its vinous-buff sides and thick neck, can run no longer; its bolt is shot. Halting in its tracks, it turns and faces the mounted man. Steady, my friend! this is a courageous, nay, even a dangerous antelope, and those long, spearlike horns, driven with all the force of that stout body and muscular neck, will spit a man easily through and through. Don't approach nearer, or the beast will charge you to a certainty. The rifle goes up, the report rings out, and down sinks the slain antelope, its life-blood soaking into the parched, red sandy soil. It was a desperate

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gallop, and the finding of the game has been a long and tedious business amidst those scorching, sun-blasted plains. Yet that magnificent head well repays all. It is a notable fact, by the way, that unlike most other antelopes—among many of which the females are hornless altogether—the gemsbok cow carries longer and finer horns than the bull.

In the great Kalahari Desert, which stretches for hundreds of miles north of the Orange River, gemsbok are very numerous, and as they are capable of existing for six or seven months together without touching water, they are to be found in that wild, trackless and waterless waste in large troops. The Kalahari carries absolutely no surface water, except in a few pans and vleis during the summer rains. Nevertheless, curiously enough, it is well grassed and timbered, and in places maintains plenty of bush. Here, in addition to gemsbok, giraffe, eland, hartebeest, and other desert-loving antelopes, creatures all capable of sustaining life for many months together without drinking are to be found.

The hartebeest (*bubalis caama*), the Kama or Khama of the Hottentots and Bechuanas, with its handsome bay coat and long, old-fashioned-looking, narrow head, black as to the front of the face, is now scarce in Cape Colony. Occasionally it may be met with in this same Bushmanland country, towards the Orange River, but the few troops left are scant and far between. The true headquarters of this fine if quaint-looking antelope lie in the Bechuana country northward, where, especially in the park-like giraffe acacia forest regions bordering upon the Kalahari, and upon the dry grass plains, large numbers of hartebeests are to be found. No beast in Africa is fleetier or more enduring than the Cape hartebeest, with drooping quarters, high withers, and long machine-like, untiring stride. You cannot run them down, even upon the best horse in Africa. You must circumvent them. Sometimes in forest country you can get a fairly easy stalk, or, chancing suddenly upon a troop, you may obtain a shot at shortish range. A mounted hunter who understands these animals—a Boer, for instance—is able without great difficulty to bag specimens.

Hartebeests, like many other antelopes, are extremely curious, and if you will be content to canter quietly after a troop and not attempt to push them too hard, you

will find presently that the fleeing beasts will suddenly wheel round, evenly and gracefully, like a well-drilled troop of cavalry, and stand for a few minutes to stare at, and take stock of, the hunter. Then is your time. Slip off your horse, cock your rifle, and take aim at that nearest buck, the bull with the thick, rugged, corrugated horns. He is two hundred and fifty yards distant, but you may do it. Squatting on the ground, with your elbows on your knees, you take aim. If the bullet flies true you will perhaps get your buck, though even with a Martini-Henry bullet through its heart one of these tough antelopes may run two or three hundred yards. If your missile strikes too far back and wounds the hartebeest in a not immediately vital spot, the chances are you will never see your quarry again. No beast in the world is so tough; it can make its escape under such wounds as would paralyze other kinds of game. Hartebeests run in troops numbering from a dozen to as many as fifty. Larger bands are to be met with in remote and little disturbed country.

I come now to the fleet, the fecund, and the graceful springbok (*antidorcas eucyore*) which, even in Cape Colony, after two hundred and fifty years of settlement, is extremely abundant over immense areas of country. Going up country from Cape Town or Port Elizabeth you will find them in considerable numbers, so soon as you have attained the plateau of the karoo region. Upon the Great Karoo, where, sixty or seventy years ago, before the pastoral farmers had spread themselves over the wild-looking terrain, the springbok ranged in uncomfortable myriads. Even at the present time, sharing the scrubby, arid-looking pasturage with sheep and Angora goats and tame ostriches, these dainty creatures may be seen flecking the vast plains in hundreds and even thousands. I do not mean to say that you will see a thousand springbok rounded up in a space of five hundred acres. But upon a twenty or thirty thousand acre run, which is no great size of farm for the karoo, you will probably find, scattered in little bands about the veldt, a thousand head or so of springbok. I remember, when staying on a big karoo run some years ago, in the neighborhood of Aberdeen, at the eastern angle of the Great Karoo, my host reckoned that upon his 62,000 morgen of land (130,000 odd acres) he had usually running some 4,000 head of springbok. The run then

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was quite unfenced, and the antelopes had free range over thousands of miles of country if they wished. Even from the farmstead stoep (veranda), as we sat in the mellow evenings, smoking our pipes after a warm day of work or sport, we could see the springbucks grazing peacefully within some six hundred yards of the dwelling. A truly charming spectacle, still more effective when seen, as it may still be seen, in Bushmanland and much further up country, with no sort of white man's dwelling but a teat or a wagon within a hundred miles.

Plenty of excellent springbuck shooting may be obtained in Cape Colony among the hospitable farmers of the Groat Karoo and the districts further north. Many of the runs are, however, nowadays fenced with wire, and the essential wildness and freedom necessary to the lover of real and unadulterated African shooting is to some extent gone. Nevertheless the big hunts among the farmers on the Queen's birthday, when from fifty to seventy head of buck are often obtained by fair shooting, are well worth seeing. It is not every man, even among first-rate rifle-shots from Europe, who finds himself able to bring down these antelopes successfully in his first essays, the sun-blaze is so intense, the mirage often so troublesome, and the difficulty of judging distances amid new and trying surroundings so great. Add to these the fact that the springbuck of the more settled parts of Cape Colony nowadays seldom allows the gunner to approach within less than from three hundred and fifty to four hundred yards distance, and that its light body, mounted on tall, slender legs, offers but a small target, and the tyro will find that at first he wastes an inordinate number of cartridges.

The best sport to be obtained in Cape colony is, of course, in the far northwest—the Bushmanland country—where the wonderful Trek-bokken, or migrations of these antelopes, still periodically occur. In these Trek-bokken tens of thousands of springbuck still migrate bodily in one vast moving mass from one part of the country to another, in search of fresh pastures. The Trek-Boers turn out and shoot them in scores and hundreds, and any fairly good rifle-shot can bag his forty or fifty head in a day. At these seasons the antelopes show little fear of mankind. In Bushmanland, once in a cycle of years, the springbucks, normally independent of water for long periods, are

attacked by raging thirst and trek for water. Not many years since, hundreds of thousands of them headed straight for the Atlantic, "dashed into the waves, drank the salt water, and died. Their bodies lay in one continuous pile along the shore for thirty miles, and the stench drove the Trek-Boers who were camped along the coast, far inland." This is fact and not fiction, related in the words of a magistrate of the district in which this extraordinary event happened.

Springbuck stalking is a most fascinating sport. It is, perhaps, best enjoyed by aid of a knowing old Cape stalking horse, behind which the gunner can creep down upon his game and obtain his shot. The wonderful leaping powers of this graceful antelope, from which it takes its name, are of course well known. When excited or at play, the animal arches its back, erects the curious fan-like blaze of long white hair which normally reposes along its croup, partly covered by the neighboring cinnamon-colored hair, and begins, as a Boer would say, to "pronk," or prank. Bounding clean up into the air from all four legs, which are very rigid, to a height of eight or ten feet, the pretty creature seems for a moment to hang suspended in mid-air. Then down it comes again, only to be propelled upwards in that marvelous flight as before. This may happen half a dozen times or more, and then away the fleet buck scours across the endless plain. Nothing in African wild life is more elegant, more wonderful, or more characteristic, especially if, as usually happens, a number of the antelopes are taking part.

But the sportsman may tire of the sun-scorched grass plains of Bushmanland or the parched, red-soiled karoo. He has no need, even in Cape Colony, to wander far. Does he desire mountain stalking amid some of the wildest and most rugged scenery to be found in Southern Africa? He has but to betake himself to some of the great mountain ranges of the southern parts of the Colony—the Zwartberg, or Witberg, or Winterhoek, or many another, where he will find really excellent sport with vaal (gray) and rooi (red) rhebok, or that most charming little mountaineer, the klipspringer, the chamois of Africa. In these haunts he will find himself often passing through deep kloofs and passes brilliant with some of the most lovely wild flowers imaginable—wonderful irises, gladioli, ixias, amaryllids, orchids, heliophilas, masses of

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The best sport to be obtained in Cape colony is, of course, in the far northwest—the Bushmanland country—where the wonderful Trek-bokken, or migrations of these antelopes, still periodically occur. In these Trek-bokken tens of thousands of springbuck still migrate bodily in one vast moving mass from one part of the country to another, in search of fresh pastures. The Trek-Boers turn out and shoot them in scores and hundreds, and any fairly good rifle-shot can bag his forty or fifty head in a day. At these seasons the antelopes show little fear of mankind. In Bushmanland, once in a cycle of years, the springbucks, normally independent of water for long periods, are

attacked by raging thirst and trek for water. Not many years since, hundreds of thousands of them headed straight for the Atlantic, "dashed into the waves, drank the salt water, and died. Their bodies lay in one continuous pile along the shore for thirty miles, and the stench drove the Trek-Boers who were camped along the coast, far inland." This is fact and not fiction, related in the words of a magistrate of the district in which this extraordinary event happened.

Springbuck stalking is a most fascinating sport. It is, perhaps, best enjoyed by aid of a knowing old Cape stalking horse, behind which the gunner can creep down upon his game and obtain his shot. The wonderful leaping powers of this graceful antelope, from which it takes its name, are of course well known. When excited or at play, the animal arches its back, erects the curious fan-like blaze of long white hair which normally reposes along its croup, partly covered by the neighboring cinnamon-colored hair, and begins, as a Boer would say, to "prunk," or prank. Bounding clean up into the air from all four legs, which are very rigid, to a height of eight or ten feet, the pretty creature seems for a moment to hang suspended in mid-air. Then down it comes again, only to be propelled upwards in that marvelous flight as before. This may happen half a dozen times or more, and then away the fleet buck scours across the endless plain. Nothing in African wild life is more elegant, more wonderful, or more characteristic, especially if, as usually happens, a number of the antelopes are taking part.

But the sportsman may tire of the sun-scorched grass plains of Bushmanland or the parched, red-soiled karoo. He has no need, even in Cape Colony, to wander far. Does he desire mountain stalking amid some of the wildest and most rugged scenery to be found in Southern Africa? He has but to betake himself to some of the great mountain ranges of the southern parts of the Colony—the Zwartberg, or Witberg, or Winterhoek, or many another, where he will find really excellent sport with vaal (gray) and rooi (red) rhebok, or that most charming little mountaineer, the klipspringer, the chamois of Africa. In these haunts he will find himself often passing through deep kloofs and passes brilliant with some of the most lovely wild flowers imaginable—wonderful irises, gladioli, ixias, amaryllids, orchids, heliophilas, masses of

lovely pelargoniums, all sown by the hand of nature, often in the most lavish fashion. Many a wild hill among these vast solitudes, seldom traversed by the foot of man, sparkles with innumerable lovely heaths.

Turning to the more densely bushed country eastward from Port Elizabeth into the Transkei and Pondoland, excellent bushbuck shooting is to be obtained. Here, too, is to be found and shot that pigmy antelope, the blaauwbok, or bluebuck, a creature no bigger than a hare. The handsome grysbok, with its brilliant red coat curiously grizzled with white hairs, is to

be obtained on the lower hill-slopes in many parts of southern and especially of southwestern Cape Colony. Even within a few miles of Cape Town, numbers of these beautiful little antelopes are to be found ranging. Steinbok and duiker, two smallish antelopes, affording excellent shooting, are common in most parts of Cape Colony; but go where you will, armed with a few introductions you are certain to obtain—in time of peace—whether among Dutch or British farmers, a hearty welcome, much hospitality, and good sport with many kinds of antelope, in nearly every portion of the Cape settlements.*

JOHN BURROUGHS

By Clifton Johnson

AMONG the many letters received by Mr. Burroughs the naturalist, from correspondents who want to express their pleasure and interest in his works, was recently one from a schoolboy, who said: "I got one of your books through the mail, marked on the wrapper *second-class matter*. But it isn't *second-class matter*. I have read it, and it is *first-class matter*. The binding and the get-up may be *second class*, but the *matter* is *first class*."

The protest this boy was stirred to make, and his attempt to set things right, illustrates very forcibly the close relationship which Mr. Burroughs establishes with his readers. They feel that in his writings they are taken into his companionship and confidence, and they unconsciously become his friends. Few authors put so much of themselves into their books, yet there is never any flavor of pride or self-consciousness, and the personal incidents, thoughts, mishaps, and scraps of autobiography add much to the allurements of the narrative. His openness and genuineness are without a flaw, and his youthful, contagious enthusiasm is perennially renewed.

Few other nature-writers win the affection of readers to the same degree. In others there is either some reserve, or else the companionableness is not quite free from being acted and assumed. Charm is often present, but vary little fire. They are more apt to make you contemplate nature as an on-looker than as a participant in its affairs. They do not enkindle the imagination as Burroughs does, or inspire the same love of the country, the woods, and of simple living; for John Burroughs is a prophet and a seer in his way—not an observer and reporter only. His is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Repent ye, of all this folly of city life, with its din and grime, its artificiality and pretension, and come out to the fields and forests and make friends with the wild flowers, and the little creatures of the air and earth. Have done with conventionalism, and show, and sham, and be content with the plainer things of life. Have all the comfort you choose, but avoid luxury as you would the plague; for you may gain the whole world and yet lose your own soul—not as a matter of theology, but in losing the sweetest and best possibilities in yourself."

*Of course it is necessary to remember the close times which obtain nowadays in Cape Colony, as in other parts of South Africa. Speaking generally, the shooting season at the Cape may be said to extend from the end of January or February to August or September. It varies in particular districts and in different years.

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