

## WORK AND SPORT ON THE CONGO.

A CHAT WITH HENRY M. STANLEY.

I HAD the other day the pleasure of a talk with Mr. Stanley, the great explorer, in his cosy drawing-room overlooking one of the busiest streets of the West End of London. These explorers, travelers and others who spend much time away on the silent highways of the world, or in the pathless deserts, and who thus become used to solitude and to long absences from the companionship of their kind, whenever they return to civilization, invariably pick out the busiest haunts for their abode. They do not seek a quiet place in the country or in the suburbs, but they find them a place in the heart of the throng, in Piccadilly or Bond Street, or within hearing of the noise of the Strand. Only a month or two ago a famous war correspondent, who had the day before reached London from the Soudan, said to me, "Come, let us walk up and down the Strand; I like the crowd; it is perfectly delightful after the desert."

So I could not help contrasting in my own mind the busy scene upon which Mr. Stanley's windows looked with the silent solitudes with which he had become familiar on the Congo, and it seemed to me as the roar of the street came up from below and caught his ear, that a gleam of satisfaction overspread his countenance; and a look came into his eye, that one could interpret to say: "Ah, how often I have longed to hear that sound when I have been far away in the desert; there's music in it—companionship." I must have indicated my thought by a word or look; for Mr. Stanley said: "It is a curious thing that out there the men's thoughts instantly turn to home. They have no sooner reached the place than they begin to long for home. Working at the station, rowing on the river, whatever they may be doing, if you see them silent and tap their thoughts, you find they are away in an English village, on a Dutch canal, or in some quiet home in Germany."

It seemed to me, scanning his face and form very closely, that the climate of tropical Africa and the hard work he has done there have made wonderfully little impression upon him. He looks as robust as ever, and his eye has lost none of its brightness and sparkle. What a wonder-

ful eye it is! and what a striking resemblance it bears to the great Livingstone's! I well remember the first time I saw Stanley; it was in 1878; he came into a London newspaper office and asked to see the manager. He gave no name, but noting his striking face, and especially his eye, I exclaimed mentally: "How like Livingstone's!" And then came the thought, "It must be Stanley!" The climate of the Congo must be either greatly maligned by its traducers or the Press, or else Mr. Stanley's maxims of temperance, which he has so frequently emphasized in his public utterances, have been most vigorously applied in his own case—so well preserved does he appear.

We talked about work and sport on the great river; that is, Mr. Stanley talked, and I listened. I never heard a more charming talker. On his favorite subject he is quite eloquent, and makes his listeners forget everything in their interest in his narrative. "At first, when I went into equinoctial Africa," said Mr. Stanley, "I was lost on sport. I was eager to pursue game, and shot, or shot at, everything that came in my way. From constant practice I became an excellent shot, and any beastie that came within range of my gun had but a poor chance." Mr. Stanley uses the term "beastie" to every creature in the department of *fera nature* that goes on four legs. "When I came to settle down to earnest work on the Congo, however," he continued, "I gave up all that kind of thing as boyish. I found no more pleasure in killing animals for the sake of killing them. On the Congo, now, we let the wild animals pretty much alone, unless they come in our way. Getting all our provisions from Europe, we do not need to hunt them for the sake of replenishing the larder, and having plenty of work to do in the way of establishing stations, making roads, etc., we have not much time to devote to sport. Besides, we do not care to have the wild creatures slaughtered. As a rule, they keep out of man's way, retiring as a section becomes populated.

"Major Vetch was the only one who did much hunting. He shot quite a number of elephants, lions and other large game. There is an abundance of large game, but we see very little of it; it keeps out of the



HENRY M. STANLEY.

way. During my last stay on the Congo I saw only one lion, and he got out of the way as quickly as he could. The lion," Mr. Stanley remarked, "was by no means the ferocious beast he is so often represented to be. He rarely attacks a man, and unless cornered, makes off on his approach. He had known him to quit his prey when surprised and attacked. Major Vetch came across one that had just killed a buffalo; he gave him a shot, and he trotted off into the bush; the buffalo was still hot and the party still supped on it.

"The most dangerous savage foes we have to fear," said Mr. Stanley, "are the crocodile, hippopotamus, and the buffalo. We lost five men during my last visit to the Congo from these animals; three were killed by crocodiles, one by a hippopotamus, and one by a buffalo. There are large numbers of hippopotami along the Congo and its tributaries, and thousands upon thousands of crocodiles. The latter are by far the most insidious foes we have, because they are so silent and so swift. You see a man bathing in the river," said Mr. Stanley, with one of his vivid graphic touches; "he is standing near the shore laughing at you, perhaps, laughing in the keen enjoyment of the bath; suddenly he falls over and you see him no more. A crocodile has approached unseen, has struck him a blow with its tail that knocks him over, and he is instantly seized and carried off. Or, it may be that the man is swimming; he is totally unconscious of danger; there is nothing in sight, nothing to stir a tremor of apprehension; but there, in deep water, under the shadow of that rock, or hidden beneath the shelter of the trees yonder, is a huge crocodile; it has spotted the swimmer, and is watching its opportunity; the swimmer approaches; he is within striking distance; stealthily, silently, unperceived the creature makes for its prey; the man knows nothing till he is seized by the leg and dragged under, and he knows no more! A bubble or two indicate the place where he has gone down, and that is all.

"For a dread, unspeakable horror," Mr. Stanley added, "there is no death by wild beasts like that of being killed by a crocodile. It is worse than being taken by a shark; for the shark must come to the surface and let itself be seen; whereas the crocodile strikes unseen and from below.

"The danger of the hippopotamus is that you come upon it unnoticed. You are floating down the river, or rowing against

the stream, no danger in sight, when you may be suddenly upset by a hippopotamus over which you have unconsciously floated, and the chances are that before you well know where you are you are bitten in two by a snap of the beast's tremendous jaws. But the danger from the hippopotamus is not so great as that from the crocodile, because it does not lie in wait, and is not a stealthy animal. We naturally kill the crocodile whenever we get a chance to do so," said Mr. Stanley; "but the Congo and its tributaries are full of them."

On the subject of sporting, Mr. Stanley said, "We do not care to encourage sportsmen to come to the Congo. The distance a man has to walk and the fatigues he has to endure before he gets on to the ground are so great, that he becomes played out, and gets the fever, and runs imminent risk of succumbing to the climate; and then there is an outcry about the dreadful climate and its terrible effects on Europeans. Sport is all very well in England, where a man may go into the stubble, or on to the heather, and shoot his hares or his grouse, or whatever it may be, and cover his ten or fifteen miles a day, and be back to dinner and bed at night. That is a grand thing; it does a man good. But to go out sporting in Africa is another thing. You go out into the forest to find something to shoot; perhaps, after a mile or two, you sight a beastie; generally, however, you will have to go further; for all wild animals avoid settlements, unless driven to them from lack of food, and go deeper into the bush. In sight your beastie may be at a distance of four or five hundred yards. You at once set to work to approach within one hundred yards. You creep along stealthily through the high grass; the perspiration is pouring from you; you are all a quiver with excitement, and your heart is beating so violently that you can hardly hold your arm steady while your eyes are full of the seed-dust of the grass, which you shake off as you make your way through it. The grass, you must understand, is sometimes as much as fifteen feet high. At length, perhaps, you get as you think, within striking distance; you prepare to fire; but while you are doing so, the beastie has got wind of you, and is gone. Then you have your work over again, or, as is generally the case, to go back worn out and dispirited.

"But after the grass has been burnt, and while the new grass is coming," added Mr. Stanley, "then you may follow this game

with some pleasure. But it only lasts a few weeks before the grass is again too high for comfortable progression after game. Some of our fresh recruits are very eager for sport; but they soon settle down and leave it alone, finding their days work sufficient. When we get our railway built to Stanley Pool, it will be very different. Then those inclined for sport on the Upper Congo will be able to reach their destination fresh and hearty."

I may add that Mr. Stanley's whole soul is at present bent on getting the railway built from Vivi, on the Lower Congo, to Stanley Pool, the capital of the free States of the Congo. The proposed line would

tap the entire basin of the great river, which with its at present explored tributaries, extends to some 8,500 miles of navigable waterway. Its construction is necessitated by the cataracts along the river below Stanley Pool. The line will have to be 230 miles long, and Mr. Stanley estimates that it will cost \$20,000 a mile, but he is sanguine that it would at once give an ample return on the outlay. He may, of course, be over sanguine, as promoters often are, but it would certainly be a good thing for the new State, and indeed very little in the way of developing its resources can be effected until the line be built.

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### SOME PAGES FROM MR. STANLEY'S BOOK.<sup>1</sup>

#### KILLING THE HIPPOPOTAMUS.

WISHING to give our worthy skipper a little taste of the pleasure of African game shooting, on arriving half-way down Palmyra Reach, we searched for the hippopotami, which we supposed usually haunted the shore near by for the sake of the succulent grasses that grew on the low-terraced land. Nor were we disappointed. A hippopotamus was sighted, body in the water, head resting on a bank, either profoundly asleep, or lost in deep meditation.

"That a hippopotamus?" cries sea-bred Thompson. "That's a rock, mun!"

An Express rifle was fired into the animal's brain, and not the slightest movement followed.

"There," cries the sea-wise skipper. "I told you. You've fired a rock sure enough this time. Ain't you ashamed of yourself?" he asks with a beaming look of triumph,

"Well, we shall see. Gently ahead, boy"—to the colored engineer; and a few turns of the screw brought us aground, which enabled Mr. Thompson, who was a jewel of a sea-captain, but a lubber among hippos, to distinguish between a hippo's head and a rock, but who was not quite satisfied until, like another Thomas Didymus, he had buried three fingers in the wound.

I will pass over the complimentary remarks uttered by George Thompson, cap-

tain of the steamship *Albion*, and introduce the reader by a sketch of the scene that followed, when the young Danes and Scotchmen on the *Albion* were brought up in the whaleboat to drag the beast ashore, and cut the meat up for distribution among our people.

Albert, in a frenzy of delight, must first bestride the carcass, that he might write to his papa at Copenhagen how he bestrode a hippopotamus, and Martin must spank the broad rump with open hand to his own grief; and there is opening of the jaws to judge, without peril, of the cavernous extent, count the solid molars and gleaming tusks, which could have nipped the strongest man in twain had the beast been alive, and many other freaks which curious inexperience is prone to indulge in.

#### INTERVIEW WITH THE QUEEN.

ABOUT an hour after we left our camp we were met by two well-manned canoes; in the foremost of which there was a female paddling vigorously for a few strokes, and then in a peculiar style bringing her right arm akimbo to her waist. Ankoli recognized her, and cried out, "There is Gankabi!"

Naturally, to meet such a celebrity, the Queen of Musyë, the friend of Gobila, and the principal person on the river, we halted very quickly, and, without the slightest sign of timidity, she steered her forty-five foot canoe alongside. This very action on

<sup>1</sup> "THE CONGO, AND THE FOUNDING OF ITS FREE STATE," HARPER & BROTHERS, 1885.