

WALTER RICHARDSON WRITES FROM WHERE THE HIPPOPOTAMUS LIVES

Hunting in South Africa—Wild Monkeys Sporting About the Camp in the Cream of Tartar Trees

Writing from Waltham, Mass., under date of October 24, C. H. Richardson says to the News: "I send you today a paper with another of my son Walter's letters. I leave the first of the next week for California. Shall stop a few days in Buffalo and Chicago."

The paper contains Walter Richardson's letter as follows, from South Africa, where he is hunting big game:

Head Waters of Big Ameti River,
August 23, 1901.

I think there will be a chance to mail this at Fontesvilla, and as I know you will be anxious to hear from me, so I will try to tell you what we have been doing since we left Beira. We left there on the 8th inst, and the first night found us camped up the river opposite Hippopotamus Island. In the evening one came up just in front of our boat, but we did not have a chance to shoot him for his ugly head went under the water before we could get our rifles. The next day we made good progress and night found us a long way up the river.

The tides run very strong in the river, so we had to wait there a half a day before we could go up again on the rising tide, so we went up into the brush to see if we could find any buck. We were not in a very good place for them and so didn't get any. There was a pool in from the river where the "hippos" kept up a continual bellowing, but the brush was too thick to go through unless one cut his way, and we didn't have time for that. These brutes come out of the water at night to feed, and we found the country all around the camp marked with their great foot prints. I shot an iguana five feet long in a tree near camp. The river begins to narrow up here; sometimes it is only 300 or 400 yards wide. The brush along the banks is very thick and overgrown, with creepers varying in size from a tiny thread-like vine to the size of a hawser. Some of them are covered with flowers and those thorny mimosa trees are just beginning to bloom now and look very pretty. There are many tall palms like our date palm, but growing sometimes 50 feet high, and wine palms which have fan-like leaves curved like crescents. The river swarms with crocodile. At low tide the banks of the river are covered with mud and here the crocodiles lie and bask in the sunshine. We had some good fun shooting them from our boat. The third day from Beira found us camped near an opening in the brush about five miles below Fontesvilla. As it looked like a pretty good game country we decided to camp there a few days and see what we could find. The country back from the river is pretty well open, only the small streams being fringed with brush. All of the open country I have seen so far is covered with a rank grass that grows five or six feet high and is most difficult to walk through, for it becomes blown over and matted together at this season, so that a person can scarcely force one foot before the other in some places. The first morning I went out I shot a Reed buck. They are a beautiful little red buck with horns about eight inches long. The next day I got a fine zebra. We have shot several since and their skins make fine rugs. Then I got three fine water buck. They are magnificent animals, weighing 400 or 500 pounds, with fine horns two and one-half feet long. There are

any amount of duck and spur-winged geese in the river, as well as many kinds of beautiful herons, ibis and other water birds. Here are found some of the most curious and beautiful of the feathered tribes.

We did not stop long in the camp, for Goodyer, who is familiar with this country, said that the game had pretty much all left that section, although I thought there ought to be enough to satisfy any ordinary man. We came down the river to the Ameti and are camped up this little river just as far as we are able to go. The river ends here in a succession of reedy pools in which a lot of hippopotamus are living.

South of us is a large open stretch of country which is alive with game. Water-buck, wilde-beest, harte-beest, zebra, tsesebi, and reed-buck. Some of them go in large herds. Yesterday I saw a herd of over a hundred zebra and any morning we can go out and shoot water-buck within a few hundred yards of camp. About five miles from here and beyond this opening there is a thick belt of timber.

Goodyer and I went over there day before yesterday. We found fresh spoor of a herd of elephant and tracked them a long way into the forest, but did not find them. We found one of those cream of tartar trees, as they are called, here, I believe. This one was about 12 feet in diameter and about 50 feet high. The tree has no leaves and the trunk and branches are dull silvery white, a most conspicuous mark in the forest. It bears a long green pod full of seed which are covered with a substance which is very acid, and by cutting a hole in the pod and filling it up with water one has a fine drink. We were told by some Kafirs that this forest extends to the Busi river, some 30 or more miles beyond, and that this herd of elephants that we saw the spoor of come out to drink at a vlei near the edge of the timber. In a few days we will make a few days' excursion into it. We have had splendid sport since we came here. We shoot only what we need for comfort purposes, but as meat becomes bad in two days that means considerable to feed ourselves and our boys. The boys are drying a lot of meat to trade for rice. It is wonderful the amount that these boys can eat. They gorge themselves and yet want the same allowance of rice as they get where there is no meat allowance. When we cut them down one-half on their rice they all went on a strike, but we did most of the striking and they are now quite satisfied.

We have one Shangan who is called the cook and is the general handy man about camp while we are away. The other boys are Blantyre boys from Central Africa. They are very good boys, though it is hard to make them understand, for I can't speak their language, and they know very little of the coast language. A peculiar thing is that they still cling to some portions of the Mohammedan religion, and the only accounting for it is that it was introduced many years ago by the Arab slave traders. Their influence must have extended as far as that, for the boys can give no account of how they received it.

As I write there is a troop of monkeys busily engaged feeding on the berries of a creeper that covers a mimosa tree. What splendid acrobats they are. Some vultures and adjutant birds, large offal eating storks, sit on another tree waiting for scraps of

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meat that are thrown out.

At night the hyenas, jackalls and servills, a large spotted cat, prowls about our camp.

There are not many lions here, but we hear them roaring now and then. The boys are very much afraid of them and keep a fire going all night.

Just a word about mosquitoes. I think every kind is represented here and they are second to none for voracity. Then there are big wasps who take possession of any place that suits them and ward off all intruders. Hippopotamus flies, who have a suction pump on their jaw, and leave a painful wound when they bite. Ants of many kinds, including the white ant, who builds mud tunnels over the ground and up the trees that they wish to attack. They are quick workers and when properly at work it does not take them long to destroy an article of wood or leather. They make huge nests 10 or 12 feet high. We expected to send some game to Beira, but as we are so far away from Toutsavilla we are not able to do so. We are moving up above Toutsavilla before long, and after a stop there a while we are going right up the river, but instead of going into Gogogozas country we have decided to go up the Dinge Dinge, the branch to the right, where we expect to find a better country than Gogoganzas. Well, I will now draw this to a close.

WALTER.