

# Leopard Hunting Alone in Bechuanaland

By Percy Selous



SOME years ago, I found myself stranded in Bechuanaland, where I had followed a force of irregular cavalry, raised by Col. Methuen, for operating against the Transvaal Boers, whose filibustering raids across the border were getting worse and worse.

To cut my story short, however, and get down to a fast series of single-handed leopard kills, after following the Drakensberg up as far as Mafeking to no purpose, I returned to Kimberley and the Orange river. I conceived the idea of constructing a raft and thus transporting my few necessary effects, camping on the banks as inclination led me, or, as I fancied the locality favored sport. I had had too much experience among floating logs whilst lumbering in America not to feel at home at this kind of work, and all in all, though I did not travel far, I spent one of the most exciting trips I ever had. All along either side of this fine river is a wide belt of "waba-bit" thorns and bush timber, on which lovely green beetles played in great profusion. I caught numbers, every one of which brought me in 3d in Cape Town, for jewelry purposes. I had seen beetles set up in a similar fashion in Rio de Janeiro and so had an eye to possible business; an also, we used to get alligators teeth down in Alabama and Florida, but these creatures have got so scarce now that it hardly pays to hunt them.

Having got everything fixed on my raft, and as the river heretofore was familiar to me, I had no difficulty in making a landing, as I had proposed some 20 miles further down, passing the ford to Hope Town on my way. Among other things I had with me a hammock and a poncho which I had used out in the Banda Orientale, both of which, besides being of the greatest use, went into very small compass. After taking a cup of coffee without milk and a snack or two of spring-bok, I literally turned in, with my carbine beside me and my dog curled up at my feet, to be lulled to sleep by sounds as familiar as those heard on a summer day at home.

## Blinded by a Sand Storm.

As the sun rose it speedily dissipated the river mist, and a little way out on the veldt and beyond the timber, it was as sultry as ever. I could spy some small specks away to the southward, and as a fresh bit of venison would be an agreeable change, I started after what I know would furnish me therewith, if I could manage to circumvent them. This was not particularly difficult, for I could keep myself covered by one ant-hill or another, and I got my buck all right, sending the rest bounding away with tremendous jumps. The ominous darkening of the horizon had not escaped my notice, but almost before I was aware of it the hot sand came stinging like so much small shot against my face. In such cases, the only thing to be done is to throw yourself flat on your chest and hold your breath till the hot blast has blown over. The sand storm did not last many minutes, but the thunder-storm immediately burst in such a way as it only does in South Africa, and I speak from experience both of this, as well as other parts of the world. It was over almost as soon as it came, and for a short space the sandy veldt looked like a sheet of water, which, however, was sucked up in no time, the sun bursting forth in all its splendor and drying me, drenched as I was, before I could get my buck back to camp.

After skinning my buck and making the hind portions into ham, and getting a meal of fresh meat, I set out along the bank of the river to see if I could hit upon any leopard spoor. I had not gone far before I came to the remains of a porcupine. Leopards appear to have a great partiality for the flesh of these animals, and as they are common enough along the Orange river, it doubtless accounts for the presence of their persecutors. I hunted for the rest of the day without finding any more signs, although I felt satisfied that there were some leopards in the neighborhood, so I could only postpone my search until the morrow. In the morning I got aloft once more, and dropped about four miles down to the place I had turned back from the day before. This did not occupy long, and I was soon fast again in a kind of back-water, with my traps once more on dry land. I was eager to follow up the leopard, which I was confident had gone down, not up, the river; indeed, I had hardly proceeded a quarter of a mile before I found pug-marks, and quite fresh ones, too, where he had gone down to drink. This time the heavy rains had not

washed all trace of spoor and scent away, and my dog was able to pick it up easily. Seeing that my carbine was all right and everything in its place to my hand, I followed "Snap" with some difficulty, for I did not want him to come to an untimely end, which might not be improbable if I was unable to keep him back somewhere within bounds.

## Following the Leopard's Spoor.

The spoor led along the bank for some distance close to the river, at which the leopard had occasionally halted, either to drink, or to watch for a stray fish; for these latter they will scoop out with the dexterity of a raccoon, as I myself once saw. In fact, they will eat almost anything that moves—young birds, and for the matter of that old ones, too, when they can surprise them. A cat which has run wild at home is a fair example of what the leopard is on a very much larger scale.

The dog now came to a point at the foot of a tree, and after some search, for the foliage was very luxuriant, I could distinguish the leopard lying full length along a branch, his head between his paws, his eyes being just discernible, and that was all. I could not get a good shot at him, the angle was too acute to fire with safety at his head, and unless I got directly under him I could not see him at all, whilst the limb he was stretched out upon practically protected him at all vital points. Now and again he would just crane over a little and then draw back before I could get a proper sight, making all the time a snarling, purring noise. Under the circumstances it would have been risky to have attempted a shot, so I was compelled to wait until he gave me some sort of a chance. To have had him come tumbling down wounded was not a bit to my fancy. In the meantime I looked about to see if there were another tree near by which I could climb, and I actually did ascend one,

there was another leopard not far from where I shot the last; so I turned about, after a couple of miles, and worked back along the margin of the bush, near the veldt, carefully beating any likely-looking spots. Half way or so back was a dense mass of thorns with a lot of rock and boulders, looking a very likely place to hold such game. I went to the veldt side to reconnoitre, and there immediately found fresh pug-marks, not only of one, but of three, leopards; evidently those of an old one and her cubs. This at once accounted for the demeanor of the one I had got, and as a leopard with young, or for the matter of that any animal almost in such circumstances, requires extra care in tracking, I called the dog to heel, whilst I cogitated a bit what course to pursue. Examining the tracks, I put the cubs down as half grown. I also made a detour of the clump of bush and satisfied myself that the game was at home. Returning to the spot where I had first marked them, I followed them in slowly, "Snap" being taken up with a piece of string. He soon commenced to get very excited, and I could myself smell the faint which always hangs around the lair of the carivora, be they birds or beasts. The spoor was easy enough to keep, as the path had been used many times, and the leopard, dragging her prey along, had beaten it down. I had my carbine ready for a rapid shot, for I felt sure we were coming close to, and had hard work to keep the dog from breaking away. Luckily the wind was in my favor, and all at once I came right in sight of the leopards, the old one and two cubs, almost as large as she was, basking in the sun in an open space in the glade. I don't think she saw me, as from where I stood I was completely hidden in dense foliage, but she stared hard in my direction, half rising to her feet, the tip of her tail twitching from side to side, or more correctly speaking, beating the ground. It was as pretty

to inconvenience him much. He was vigorously barking and jumping around a lot of loose boulders, among which the leopard had evidently taken refuge. I could not, however, induce him to go in, and although I have had several good terriers for this kind of shooting none of them cared to go to ground after such game. I began to fear I should have to give him up, but got together a lot of the driest herbage I could find, and making a couple of squibs by extracting the powder from two cartridges, I went to work to try and make him bolt, as his cover was not very large. Cutting as long a stick as I could find, I took a page out of my pocket diary and rolled the squibs in it, bleeding them to the thin end of the stick, which I bandaged thickly round with dry grass and leaves for a yard or more, and then pushed it in where the leopard had entered and ignited it well all around, also heaping more dry stuff about the opening so as to make as much smother as possible. The smoke soon began to escape from the crevices, though the leopard did not appear to take any notice of it; but as soon as the fuses began to fizz and sputter, it was more than he could stand, and he dashed, almost upsetting me in his rush. I had, however, picked up my carbine and fired at him, just as he was disappearing into the cover. I distinctly heard the pat of the bullet and was about to follow, when I saw that the poor dog demanded my attention, so I picked him up. The scratches were ugly ones, tend to them at once I might lose him; I therefore carried him back to camp and washed, stitched, and dressed his wounds. I returned afterwards, to try and follow the leopard, but could not find any further trace of him, except blood marks. I therefore went and skinned the other two, and made up my mind to leave the cub I had wounded until the morrow. I tracked him up next day and found him dead, about a quarter of a mile



AND OVER WE BOTH WENT IN A HEAP.

but had to give up the idea, for I could not get a sight of him at all, so I returned to the ground.

## First Shot Brings Him Down.

Once or twice I raised my weapon, only to lower it, feeling it was safer to wait. On a sudden he raised his head, as if some sound at a distance had arrested his attention, for he gazed right away into space. This was my opportunity—not a very fine one certainly, for there was quite a network of small branches intervening—but I got a pretty fair sight and let him have it. Down he came almost before I could jump to one side, with a thump that would have stunned him, one would imagine, even if the bullet had not smashed his jaw and gone out through the top of his head, bursting an eye in its course. He was as dead as a door nail, and a beautifully marked full-grown young male, his teeth being perfect. As I was only about a mile from camp, I got his skin off at once, and taking the skull went back and dressed the skin there and then, before it should get covered with byblows.

I lost no time, however, in getting back to the spot where I had killed him, for it struck me there might be something more than I knew about in his having had his attention diverted from myself and the dog. So I cast about once more, still going along the river, letting "Snap," who was well up to the work, do the hunting, whilst now and again I added a brilliant beetle to my collecting box. Passing two or three gullies without making anything further out, I began to think that it must have been the whistle of an antelope that had attracted the leopard's notice. He showed, however, the same intensity of gaze as I remembered in a jaguar I once killed under somewhat similar circumstances, and whose dying roar brought a second one on my track in less than no time, giving me a stiffish scuffle. It is in cases such as these that the science of woodcraft comes in handy, careful notice of surrounding signs and actions usually enabling one to come to a correct conclusion. I had been keeping fairly close to the river-bank, for I held to my theory that

a sight as I had ever seen, these beautiful cats, but I had not time for such thoughts. One of the cubs attempted to play with the bobbing tail, and this seemed to irritate her, for she turned and gave the offending youngster a tap with her paw that sent him sprawling. In doing so she gave me a fine broadside and I fired, dropping her at once, though she scrambled to her fore feet in an instant. I could see that her hind parts were paralyzed; she was shot through the spine; and as she turned to gnaw the wound I quickly got another cartridge in and hit her through the neck.

## Getting the Cubs.

But this time the two cubs had recovered from their surprise, and as the old leopard appeared to be done for I gave one of them a bullet in the chest, the other turning tail and scampering off into the bush with "Snap" (who had got loose) at his heels, whilst I stepped into the open and let the one I had wounded have another ball, catching him in the office of the ear and killing him instantly. As I approached them the old one rolled over, and I was about to fire at her again, when I noticed that her eye was already glazed, and it would only be wasting ammunition. After a hasty glance of admiration I left them as they lay and hurried after the yelping terrier, who from the sound appeared to have come to a halt, though I could hear no snarling. Before, however, I could catch up, the leopard must have made another start. The scrub was thick just here, and the everlasting "wait-a-bit" thorns retarded my progress considerably, besides punishing me not a little. Still I pushed on into the open veldt just in time to see the two making across for the timber on the other side of the bend in the river. I was beginning to feel a bit winded, and was not sorry when further angry yelps and growling showed that the cub had again been brought to bay. Getting up as quickly as possible, I found that the dog had been having a rough time of it. He was scored badly down the side, and instead of being a white terrier was a ghastly red one, though for the time being it did not appear

from where I had fired at him, my lucky shot having gone through his heart.

This reminds me of an escapade I had with one of these creatures some time previously, further south. As is so frequently the case, I had been much disturbed during the night by prowling animals, which I found out were leopards. I was exasperated by the loss of my best dog, and made up my mind, if possible, to get a fine skin and avenge his death at once and the same time; so making a hurried breakfast, and leaving my two Kaffir boys in charge of the skern, I set out with the only dog I now had left. The spoor, which was plain enough in the sand, led right away towards the river, which on either side is bordered for a quarter of a mile or so with "wait-a-bit" thorns and underbrush. After going a mile or more my dog showed special eagerness, and pulled up at a tree, the bark of which was all scored by the claws of leopards and was evidently used by them continually for stretching their talons. A lot of porcupine quills also lay around, showing that the leopard had recently made a meal, of which I was glad, for I thought I should be more likely to find him lazy and lying up, and hence easier to manage. A little further on I came to a kloof or ravine, which I had to descend and ascend.

## Attacked by the Savage Beast.

Before I reached the top, the dog began barking and I hurried on, as well as I could, over the loose stones, for I did not want to lose my only remaining dog. He, however, came yelping back, just as I gained the top of the bank, and at the same time I caught sight of the leopard, which was making across the open for a patch of thorns a couple of hundred yards distant. I was somewhat out of breath from scrambling over the uneven ground, but, taking as careful aim as I could, I fired. I knew I had hit him all right, even if he had not stopped and bitten at the wound, but the shot was too far back as well as too low. At the same instant he caught sight of me, whilst I, not relishing his looks, hastily pushed in another cartridge. I had not my trusty

"Winchester" then, or the leopard would not have served me as he did. The weapon I was using was a converted Enfield carbine, which, though a splendid shooter, only took one shell and required capping. I could not get the cap on before he was upon me, and over we both went in a heap—I understood. He got my left arm between his teeth, and I could feel his fangs crunching, but I seized my long hunting knife, and managed to get it under his chin and gave a frantic gash which almost cut his head off.

In the meantime my dog had regained his composure; since he had seen two of his comrades flattened out by leopards he had often turned tail, but he was very useful in tracking them. I had rolled the skin up and was just about starting back for camp, when the dog again attracted my attention, acting as though he had picked up a fresh scent; and although I felt pretty sick, still I could not resist the temptation and followed him, first of all hanging up the skin on a thorn bush. The dog held on and I followed as well as I could for perhaps another mile, fortunately along the wooded ground the best part of the time, so that I was shaded to some extent from the burning sunbeams which under ordinary circumstances would have caused me no inconvenience, but now almost prostrated me. I doubtless had lost considerably more blood than I imagined, but the sudden renewed barking of the dog put new life into me and I hurried on. The leopard had hurried on to some rocky ground, where he had evidently located himself, as he would not probably leave his stronghold for any dog, I sat down and rested a while. I also examined the breach of my carbine and arranged things as well as I could, so that no repetition of the last "con-temptum" should occur. The dog was working at a crevice in the rocks in which I had calculated the leopard was ensconced, and I cautiously approached to investigate. I could, however, neither hear nor see anything at first, but after a while, as my eye sight got accustomed to the gloom, I made out two balls of fire. They might have been one yard, they might have been 50 yards away, I could not tell—that did not signify—and taking steady aim between them, I let go. The report was so deafening that I could not have heard any other sound had there been one, but the "eyes" had gone out when the smoke cleared away and all was still. After waiting a while, I cut a limb or two as straight as I could find, and splicing them into one long one, pushed the pole up into the recesses of the aperture, and with drawing it, after twisting it around against some soft substance, found sure enough, leopard's fur on the end. I now felt no hesitation about going in, though this was more easily said than done. I could with difficulty squeeze myself through the narrow opening, and to do so caused me excruciating pain. Once through, however, I had more room, and soon reached my quarry, which I got at last into the daylight, not a little glad to be out of the business so well. I then had to skin her—a female, and doubtless mate to the one I had killed in the morning. Then returning to where I had left the other skin I made tracks for the wagon.

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## SOME OF THE MANY CURIOUS

Some of the Many Curious Adventures That Befell Travelers in Dark Continent.

Curious adventures befell explorers in southern Liberia, as one of them writes: "When we entered this country in 1906 we fired a 'star' shell to try to communicate with the column marching from Oka. This was seen by the natives for miles around, and its effect was extraordinary. The Ahiaras, Onichas and their warlike friends, who had spent years building the most marvelous trenches and stockades to guard every possible approach to their country, told us afterward that they had meant to give us a very warm time, but that the star shell was too much for them. Any one who could do this must be super-natural, and they fled into the bush and kept up a guerrilla warfare for months, never daring to show their selves.

"In January, 1906, when a small column was operating in the Ohonhon country, northwest of Bunde, it had a lot of trouble with a town called Ome Oga Ngori, the reason given being that when the Long Juju of Arochuku was destroyed in 1902, it was brought to this place as being out of reach of the government, and the Aro priests tried to re-establish it here and carry on their former customs. At any rate, it was reported to be a most powerful Juju, and meant certain death to any one who entered its hiding place. We made a visit to it.

"All round were sticks stuck in the ground supporting skulls, eggs and bones, while blood was splashed over the walls; on the right of the entrance was a large basin of water about 18 inches deep, hewn out of the rock, in which water trickled through from the roof, and in which a few fish glided about.

"While examining this, one of the officers made some remark, setting up a series of echoes, which resounded from the walls of the cave. He certainly was most queer, and was altogether too much for the few soldiers and others who out of curiosity had followed us in, for they dropped their carbine and fled out."

## Russia Strong Financially.

Russia's finance minister states that the stability of the Russian finances is as great as before the war. The gold reserve is given as about \$600,000,000.

## PROVED BY TIME.

No Fear of Any Further Trouble.

David Price, Corydon, Ind., says: "I was in the last stage of kidney trouble—lame, weak, run down to a mere skeleton. My back was so bad I could hardly walk and the kidney secretions much disordered. A week after I began using Doan's Kidney Pills I could walk without a cane, and as I continued my health gradually returned. I was so grateful I made a public statement of my case, and now seven years have passed, I am still perfectly well."

Sold by all dealers. 50c a box. Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y.

## WIFELY SOLICITUDE.



Burglar—Hands up!  
Wife—Oh, John, be careful of those globes; you'll break them!

## PAINT BEAUTY.

Assured of durability, the next thought in painting is beauty—the complete aim being durable beauty, or beautiful durability.

National Lead Company here again offer you the co-operation of their paint experts—this time in the line of color schemes, artistic, harmonious and appropriate. You have only to write National Lead Company, 1902 Trinity Building, New York City, for "Homeowners' Painting Outfit No. 49," and you will promptly receive what is really a complete guide to painting, including a book of color schemes for either exterior or interior painting (as you may request), a book of specifications, and also an instrument for detecting adulteration in paint materials. This outfit is sent free, and, to say the least, is well worth writing for.

## People Becoming Interested.

Evidence of the popular interest in the anti-consumption crusade is given in a statement made by the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis, to the effect that during the year ending August 31, nearly 3,000,000 people have attended tuberculosis exhibitions in various parts of the country. Besides the three traveling tuberculosis exhibitions of the national association, there are 28 exhibits of this kind throughout the United States. Four years ago there were only three such displays in the entire country.

## In the Future.

First Ward Politician—We'll carry our ticket.  
Second Ditto—But you forget our opponent is the reform candidate, and he will get all the women's votes.  
First W. P.—Won't be any women's votes to count.  
Second Ditto—How do you know they won't vote?  
First W. P.—Because we have arranged with the stores to have big bargain sales on election day.—Baltimore American.

## Tapering Off.

Whereas, I, Kitty Cameron, have far too many beaux. (They say that I encourage them. It really is not so!)  
Whereas, To make life simple is what I most desire, for which just concentration is all that I require;  
Resolved, That I, instanter, before it is too late, agree hereby without reserve strictly to concentrate—to give up splitting walnuts and such alluring tricks, cut down my field of labor and concentrate on six.—New York Sun.

## THREE REASONS

Each with Two Legs and Ten Fingers.

A Boston woman who is a fond mother writes an amusing article about her experience feeding her boys.

Among other things she says: "Three chubby, rosy-cheeked boys, Rob, Jack and Dick, aged 6, 4 and 2 years respectively, are three of our reasons for using and recommending the food, Grape-Nuts, for these youngsters have been fed on Grape-Nuts since infancy, and often between meals when other children would have been given candy.

"I gave a package of Grape-Nuts to a neighbor whose 3 year old child was a weakened little thing, ill half the time. The little tot ate the Grape-Nuts and cream greedily and the mother continued the good work, and it was not long before a truly wonderful change manifested itself in the child's face and body. The results were remarkable, even for Grape-Nuts.

"Both husband and I use Grape-Nuts every day and keep strong and well and have three of the finest, healthiest boys you can find in a day's march."

Many mothers instead of destroying the children's stomachs with candy and cake give the youngsters a handful of Grape-Nuts when they are begging for something in the way of sweets. The result is soon shown in greatly increased health, strength and mental activity.

"There's a Reason."  
Look in pkgs. for the famous little book, "The Road to Wellville."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.