

THE PARTNERSHIP OF RABBIT AND ELEPHANT AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

BY HENRY M. STANLEY.

[Author of "In Darkest Africa," "How I Found Livingstone," Etc., Etc.]

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In Wilimessi, Uganda, a rabbit and an elephant, coming from different directions, met on a road one day, and being old friends, stopped to greet one another and to chat about the weather and the crops and to exchange opinions on the state of trade. Finally the rabbit proposed that the elephant should join him in a partnership to make a little trading expedition to the Watusi shepherds, because, said he, "I hear there are some good chances to make profit among them. Cloth, I am told, is very scarce there, and I think that we might find a good bargain waiting us." The elephant was nothing loth, and closed with the offer of his little friend, and a couple of boxes of assorted goods were prepared for the journey.

They set out on particularly good terms with each other, and Rabbit, who had a good store of experiences, amused the elephant greatly. By-and-by the pair of friends arrived at a river, and the elephant, to whom the water was agreeable, stepped in to cross it, but halted on hearing Rabbit exclaim:

"Why, Elephant, you surely are not going to cross without me? Are we not partners?"

"Of course we are partners, but I did not agree to carry you on my back. Why don't you step right in? The water is not deep; it scarcely covers my feet."

"But, you stupid fellow, can you not see that what will scarcely cover your feet

that he had come to buy cattle with cloth. The Watusi shepherds, not liking his appearance or his manner, said they had no cattle to sell, but if he cared to have it, he might have a year old heifer for his bale. Though Elephant's bale was a most weighty one, and many times more valuable than Rabbit's, yet as he was so gruff and ugly he was at last obliged to be satisfied with the little heifer.

When they began the return journey, just after they had left the Watusi, Elephant said to Rabbit, "Now mind, should we meet any one on the road, and we are asked whose cattle these are, I wish you to oblige me by saying that they are mine, because I am not as good a trader as yourself. They will also be afraid to touch them if they know they are mine; whereas, if they hear that they belong to you, every fellow will think he has as good a right to them as yourself, and you dare not defend your property."

"Very well," replied Rabbit. "I quite understand."

In a little while, as Rabbit and Elephant drove their cattle along, they met

and was sure that he would play him some unkind trick; and, as night was falling and his home was far, and he knew that there were many vagabonds lying in wait to rob poor travelers, he knew that if his wit failed to save him he would be in great danger. True enough it was not long before a big, blustering lion rose from the side of the road, and cried out, "Hello, you there. Where are you going with that cow? Come speak out, Lion? I am taking it to Mugassa (the deity), who is about to give a feast to all his friends, and he told me particularly to invite you to share it if I should meet you."

"Eh? What? To Mugassa? Oh, well, I am proud to have met you, Rabbit. As I am not engaged I will accompany you, because every one considers it an honor to wait upon Mugassa."

They proceeded a little further on, and a bounding buffalo came up and bellowed fiercely. "You, Rabbit, stop. Where are you taking that cow to?"

"I am taking it to Mugassa, don't you know. How would a little fellow like me have the courage to go so far from home if it were not that I am on service for Mugassa. I am charged also to tell you, Buffalo, that if you like to join in the feast Mugassa is about to give, he will be glad to have you as a guest."

"Oh, well, that is good news indeed. I will come along now, Rabbit, and am very glad to have met you. How do you do, Lion?"

A short distance off the party met a huge rosette elephant, who stood in the middle of the road, and demanded to know where the cow was being taken, in some which required a quick answer.

"Now, Elephant, get out of the way. This cow is being taken to Mugassa, who will be angry with you if I am delayed. Have you not heard of the feast he is about to give? By the by as you are one of the guests, you might as well help me to drive this cow, and let me get on your back, for I am dreadfully tired."

"Why, that's grand," said the elephant. "I shall be delighted to do so."

smooth bark that burns well and bring it to Elephant."

"Leopard, you go to the banana plantations and watch for the falling leaf and catch it with one eye, in order that we may have proper plates."

"Lion, my friend, do you go and fill this pot from the spring and bring water that Mugassa may wash his hands."

Having issued his instructions, Rabbit went strutting into the village; but after he had gone a little way he darted aside and through a side door, went out and came creeping up towards an ant hill.

On the top was a tuft of grass, and from this hiding place he commanded a view of the gate and all who might come near it. Now Buffalo could only find one log with smooth bark, and Dogs shouted out to Buffalo that one log was not enough to roast or to boil the meat, and he returned to hunt for some more.

Elephant struck the log with his brass hatchet, and it was broken at one blow,

and there was nothing else with which to cut the wood.

Leopard watched and watched for falling leaves but failed to see any. Lion's pot had a hole in the bottom, and he could never keep it full, though he tried ever so many times.

Meantime Hyena killed the cow and dressed the meat beautifully, and then said to Dogs:

"Now, my friends, the meat is ready. What shall we do?"

"You can help us. Carry it in, and lay it on the mats, if you like, for Mugassa must see it before anybody can touch it."

"Ah, but I feel extremely hungry and my mouth waters so that I am sick with longing. May we not go shares and eat a little bit? It looks very nice and fat."

"Ah, no, we should not dare do such a thing. We have long ago left the woods and its habits, and are unfit for anything but human society; but if you were allowed to eat any you could fly into the woods and we should have all the blame. No, no, come help us carry it inside. You will not have to wait long."

The Hyena was obliged to obey, but contrived to hide in the grass some of the tripe. Rabbit, from behind his tuft of grass, saw it all, and winked in quiet satisfaction. "It is all right now. Just wait outside till the other fellows arrive."

Hyena retired, and when he was outside of the gate searched for his tripe, and lay down quietly to enjoy it, but as he was about to bite it, Rabbit screamed. "Ah, you thief, Hyena. You thief, I see you. Stop thief, Mugassa is coming!"

These cries so alarmed Hyena that he dropped his tripe, and fled away as fast as legs could carry him, and the others, Buffalo, Elephant, Lion and Leopard, tired out with waiting and hearing these alarming cries, also ran away, leaving Rabbit and his dog friends in quiet possession. They carried the tripe into the village and closed the gate and barred it, after which they laughed loud and long, Rabbit rolling on the ground over and over with the fun of the day.

My friends, Rabbit was the smallest of all, but by his wisdom he was more than a match for the two Elephants, Buffalo, Leopard, Lion, Hyena and all. And even his friends, the Dogs, had to confess that Rabbit's wit could not be matched. That is my tale.

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"MUGASSA IS COMING!"

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"By and by they met another party going home with fowls and palm wine, who, when they came up, said, 'Ah, that is a fine beast, and in prime order. Whose is it?'"

"It is mine," quickly replied Rabbit, "and the little scabby heifer belongs to Elephant."

"This answer enraged Elephant, who said, 'What an obstinate little fool you are. Did you not hear me ask you to say it was mine? Now, remember, you are to say so next time, or I leave you to find your own way home, because I know you are a horrible little coward.'"

"Very well, I'll do it next time," replied Rabbit, in a meek voice.

"It is mine. I bought it from the Watusi," replied the Rabbit.

"The Elephant was so angry this time that he broke away from Rabbit, and drove his little heifer by another road, and to Lion, and Hyena, and Buffalo, and Leopard, whom he met, he said what a fine fat cow was being driven by cowardly little Rabbit along the other road. He did this out of mere spite, hoping that some one of them would be tempted to take it by force from Rabbit."

But Rabbit was wise, and had seen the spite in Elephant's face as he went off,

many people coming from market, who stopped and admired them, and said, "Ah, what a fine cow is that! To whom does it belong?"

"It belongs to me," answered the thin voice of Rabbit. "The little one belongs to Elephant."

"Very fine, indeed. A good cow that," replied the people, and passed on.

Vexed and annoyed, Elephant cried furiously to Rabbit, "Why did you not answer as I told you? Now, mind, do as I tell you at the next meeting with strangers."

"Very well," answered Rabbit, "I will try and remember."

By and by they met another party going home with fowls and palm wine, who, when they came up, said, "Ah, that is a fine beast, and in prime order. Whose is it?"

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"Very well, I'll do it next time," replied Rabbit, in a meek voice.

In a short time they met another crowd, which stopped them when opposite to them, and the people said, "Really, that is an exceedingly fine cow. To which of you does it belong?"

"It is mine. I bought it from the Watusi," replied the Rabbit.

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