

## **Werk**

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TRAVELS  
OF  
BARON MUNCHAUSEN.

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CHAPTER I

[THE BARON IS SUPPOSED TO RELATE THESE ADVENTURES TO HIS FRIENDS OVER A BOTTLE.]

*The Baron relates an account of his travels—  
The astonishing effects of a storm—Arrives at  
Ceylon: combats and conquers two extraor-  
dinary opponents—Returns to Holland.*

SOME years before my beard announced approaching manhood, or in other words, when I was neither man nor boy, but between both, I expressed in repeated conversations a strong desire of seeing the world, from which I was discouraged by my parents, though my father had been no inconsiderable traveller himself, as will appear before I have reached the end of my singular, and, I may add, interesting adventures. A cousin, by my mother's side, took a liking to me, often said I was a fine forward youth, and was much inclined to gratify my curiosity. His eloquence had more effect than mine,

for my father consented to my accompanying him in a voyage to the island of Ceylon, where his uncle had resided as governor many years.

We sailed from Amsterdam with dispatches from their High Mightinesses the States of Holland. The only circumstance which happened on our voyage worth relating, was the wonderful effects of a storm, which had torn up by the roots a great number of trees of enormous bulk and height, in an island where we lay at anchor to take in wood and water; some of these trees weighed many tons, yet they were carried by the wind so amazingly high, that they appeared like the feathers of small birds floating in the air, for they were at least five miles above the earth; however, as soon as the storm subsided, they all fell perpendicularly into their respective places, and took root again, except the largest, which happened, when it was blown into the air, to have a man and his wife, a very honest old couple, upon its branches, gathering cucumbers (in this part of the globe that useful vegetable grows upon trees): the weight of this couple, as the tree descended, overbalanced the trunk, and brought it down in an horizontal position: it fell upon the chief man of the island, and killed him

on the spot; he had quitted his house in the storm, under an apprehension of its falling upon him, and was returning through his own garden when this fortunate accident happened.—The word fortunate, here, requires some explanation.—This chief was a man of a very avaricious and oppressive disposition, and though he had no family, the natives of the island were half-starved by his oppressive and infamous impositions.

The very goods which he had thus taken from them were spoiling in his stores, while the poor wretches from whom they were plundered were pining in poverty. Though the destruction of this tyrant was accidental, the people chose the cucumber-gatherers for their governors, as a mark of their gratitude for destroying, though accidentally, their late tyrant.

After we had repaired the damages we sustained in this remarkable storm, and taken leave of the new governor and his lady, we sailed with a fair wind for the object of our voyage.

In about six weeks we arrived at Ceylon, where we were received with great marks of friendship and true politeness. The following singular adventure may not prove unentertaining.

After we had resided at Ceylon about a

fortnight, I accompanied one of the governor's brothers upon a shooting party. He was a strong athletic man, and being used to that climate (for he had resided there some years), he bore the violent heat of the sun much better than I could: in our excursion, he had made a considerable progress through a thick wood when I was only at the entrance.

Near the banks of a large piece of water, which had engaged my attention, I thought I heard a rustling noise behind; on turning about, I was almost petrified (as who would not?) at the sight of a lion, which was evidently approaching with an intention of satisfying his appetite with my poor carcass, and that without asking my consent.—What was to be done in this horrible dilemma? I had not even a moment for reflection; my piece was only charged with swan-shot, and I had no other about me: however, though I could have no idea of killing such an animal with that weak kind of ammunition, yet I had some hopes of frightening him by the report, and perhaps of wounding him also. I immediately let fly, without waiting till he was within reach; and the report did but enrage him, for he now quickened his pace, and seemed to approach me full speed: I attempted to escape, that only



added (if an addition could be made) to my distress; for the moment I turned about, I found a large crocodile, with his mouth extended almost ready to receive me: on my right hand was the piece of water before-mentioned, and on my left a deep precipice, said to have, as I have since learned, a receptacle at the bottom for venomous creatures; in short, I gave myself up as lost, for the lion was now upon his hind-legs, just in the act of seizing me: I fell involuntarily to the ground with fear, and, as it afterwards appeared, he sprang over me. I lay sometime in a situation which no language can describe, expecting to feel his teeth or talons in some part of me every moment: after waiting in this prostrate situation a few seconds, I heard a violent but unusual noise, different from any sound that had ever before assailed my ears; nor is it all to be wondered at, when I inform you from whence it proceeded: after listening for some time, I ventured to raise my head and look round, when to my unspeakable joy, I perceived the lion had, by the eagerness with which he sprung at me, jumped forward as I fell, into the crocodile's mouth! which, as before observed, was wide open; the head of the one stuck in the throat of the other; and they were

struggling to extricate themselves; I fortunately recollected my *couteau de chasse* which was by my side; with this instrument I severed the lion's head at one blow, and the body fell at my feet! I then, with the butt-end of my fowling piece, rammed the head farther into the throat of the crocodile, and destroyed him by suffocation, for he could neither gorge nor eject it.

Soon after I had gained a complete victory over my two powerful adversaries, my companion arrived in search of me; for finding I did not follow him into the wood, he returned, apprehending I had lost my way, or met with some accident.

After mutual congratulations, we measured the crocodile, which was just forty feet in length.

As soon as we had related this extraordinary adventure to the governor, he sent a waggon and servants, who brought home the two carcasses. The lion's skin was properly preserved, with its hair on; after which it was made into tobacco-pouches, and presented by me on our return to Holland to the burgomasters, who in return requested my acceptance of a thousand ducats.

The skin of the crocodile was stuffed in the usual manner, and makes a capital article in their public museum at Amster-

dam, where the exhibitor relates the whole story to each spectator, with such additions as he thinks proper; some of his variations are rather extravagant: one of them is, that the lion jumped quite through the crocodile, and was making his escape at the back door, when as soon as his head appeared, Monsieur the Great Baron (as he is pleased to call me) cut it off, and three feet of the crocodile's tail along with it; nay, so little attention has this fellow to the truth, that he sometimes adds, as soon as the crocodile missed his tale, he turned about, snatched the couteau de chasse out of Monsieur's hand, and swallowed it with such eagerness, that it pierced his heart, and killed him immediately.

The little regard which this impudent knave has to veracity, makes me sometimes apprehensive that my *real facts* may fall under suspicion, by being found in company with his confounded inventions.

## CHAPTER II.

*In which the Baron proves himself a good shot—  
He loses his horse, and finds a wolf—Makes  
him draw his sledge—Promises to entertain his  
company with a relation of such facts as are  
well deserving their notice.*

I SET off from Rome on a journey to Russia,