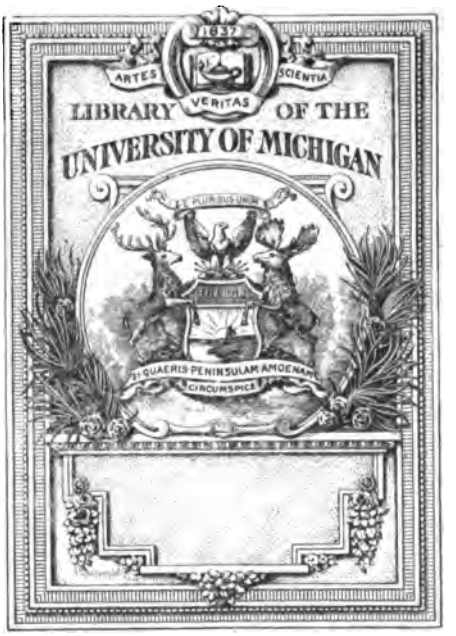
A TRIP TO BOËR-LAND


ARTES
VERITAS
SCIENTIA
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
SI QUAERIS PENINSULAM AMOENAM
CIRCUMSPICE

A TRIP TO BOËRLAND.

A TRIP TO BOËRLAND,

OR

A YEAR'S TRAVEL, SPORT, AND GOLD-DIGGING IN THE TRANSVAAL AND COLONY OF NATAL.

BY

ROWLAND J. ATCHERLEY, Ph.D.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.
1879.

PRINTED AT THE CAXTON PRESS, BECCLES.

PREFACE.

It is not without considerable trepidation that I venture to submit this little volume to the critical judgment of the reading public. No one is more alive to its imperfections than I am, and it is only from a belief that at the present juncture of Transvaal affairs an account, however scant, of matters in that country will be acceptable, that I have been persuaded to "go to press" at all. Had I the imagination of a Marco Polo and the graphic power of a Forbes, the narrative might perhaps have been more entertaining, and certainly would have shone as a more brilliant specimen of literary composition. But, alas! I lack those faculties, and merely offer this little *brochure* as a simple account of my actual experiences and impressions during my twelve months' sojourn in South Africa. I have therefore no choice but to crave the courteous reader's kind indulgence, and to beg him, in the slightly altered words of an old saw, to

"Be to my virtues ever kind,
And to my faults a little blind."

London, *October*, 1879.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAPTER XV.

A TRIP TO BOËRLAND.

CHAPTER I.

Two of a projected company make a proposal—Description of companions—The *Edinburgh Castle*—Dartmouth—A hundred rivals—The disagreeable Jew—A weak moment—A neglected cemetery—"Wolf!"—The blazing foam—A sea of blood—Capetown—Lost dignity—An exciting moment—A dangerous shore—Landing at Natal.

For some months in the early part of the year 1877, I had been endeavouring to promote, in London, a scheme for the formation of a trading and colonizing company, on a portion of the eastern coast of the African continent. My hopes were, however, doomed to disappointment; and, after a vast deal of trouble and expense, I had the mortification of witnessing the miscarriage of my attempts, and the plan had reluctantly to be abandoned. My African ardour, however, was not damped by failure, and when two friends made another proposal to me, bearing upon a similar subject, it was without much hesitation that I agreed to their amendment. It was

arranged, without much preamble, that we three, the sole remnant of my originally projected company, should proceed forthwith on a journey of experience in South-Eastern Africa, remaining there about twelve months. My friends, whom I shall mention by their Christian names, Cecil and Sydney, were both men well adapted for a rough-and-tumble life. Cecil had already gone through considerable backwoods experience in North America, and had also taken part in an abortive expedition which, under the superintendence of Mr. McKenzie, was to cut a channel through the *Bocca di Leone*, on the Morocco coast, and flood the desert of Sahara. He was a most amusing fellow, and particularly well skilled with his pencil. My other friend, Sydney, was a stout, well-built young Irishman, also lately returned from America, where he had been surveying, and although not so experienced a traveller as Cecil, was nevertheless a most desirable travelling companion. Both were as eager as myself to leave England, and breathe, for a time at least, an atmosphere free from the restraints of a farcical conventionality. So it happened that when the good ship *Edinburgh Castle* steamed out of the West India Docks on Tuesday, the 15th of May, 1877, she bore, as part of her living freight, my two companions and myself, bound with our baggage for Port Natal. That

very baggage afterwards proved my *bête noir*, and I would strongly recommend other travellers who do not intend making more than a temporary stay, to confine their *impedimenta* within as small a compass as possible, especially in Africa.

Our run down Channel was hardly pleasant. We had rather rough weather, and matters on board being anything but ship-shape, I was not sorry, on waking up in my berth on the following Thursday, and craning my neck to the dead-light, to note the fact that we had entered the beautiful harbour of Dartmouth.

I was quickly on deck, and admiring the beauties of the scenery, which, even on a dull, rainy morning like the present, were enchanting. As the ship would remain until the following day, I decided to go ashore and make myself acquainted with the lions of the old town, which I had never previously visited; and, after a hurried breakfast and a little letter-writing, I carried out my intention. Dartmouth proved in every respect well worthy of the visit, and we were occupied the whole morning in examining various buildings of antiquarian and historical interest. After dining at the Castle hotel, I seized the opportunity of running up by train to Newton Abbot, some ten miles off—a little town, near which my boyhood was spent, and where I had relations

living. To them I bade adieu, and returned again at night to the ship.

The next morning, we had a strong influx of passengers, and every berth in the ship was rapidly filled. A goodly number of these were Germans, many of whom could not speak a word of the English language, while most of the remainder were either well-to-do colonists, returning from their European holiday, or adventurers, travelling in search of what so many are disappointed in—a fortune. Of ladies, I think there were only some ten or twelve on board; and as the total number of passengers amounted to something like 120, the spirit of gallant rivalry which pervaded the male sex on board, during the whole journey out, was, to say the least of it, highly amusing.

We had a fair sprinkling of Jews, bound, I believe, for the diamond-fields; and though I certainly do not share Mr. Trollope's predilection for Jews in the concrete, I must grant that, with one exception, they were very decently pleasant. This one exception was simply a horror, and if any one had offered to drown him on the passage out, I for one should have made no very stubborn objection. It is remarkable the power possessed by some individuals of spoiling the pleasure of the many. This wretch not only spoilt many a pleasant

conversation by his ill-judged and coarse observations, but also at table often completely disgusted his neighbours by his unclean and vulgar behaviour. But I anticipate.

It was twelve at noon, and a gun having been fired, the anchor was weighed, and the *Edinburgh Castle* steamed majestically out of the harbour, with her head set away from the English shore. It was not the first time by many that I had seen my native shore recede from view when "bound away" to distant lands; so that I ought by this time to have passed the Rubicon of sentimentality, but I must yet plead guilty to a weakness upon this occasion. I was leaving behind me everything I held near and dear in the world; and even were it not for this, my actual pride as an Englishman in his native land would be sufficient to cause an instant's feeling of regret. Whatever mental sensations I had on the subject were soon, however, put in the shade by certain bodily qualms which gradually overtook me, and to which I remained a martyr for the next twenty-four hours, until the wind lulled, or the sea subsided, or something or other became more comfortable, and I was enabled to shake the cobwebs off.

The passengers by this time had settled down, and all got on pretty well together, while speculation became rife as to when we should reach

Madeira. Flirtations had evidently already commenced, and some bosom friendships initiated, to degenerate before the end of the voyage into deadly hatred, and finally, after arrival, to culminate in most supreme indifference. On the Tuesday, we passed close to the island of Puerto Santo; and on the next day, in the early morning, dropped anchor off Funchal, Madeira. From the roads we commanded a really splendid view of the island, the beauty of which can hardly be overrated. From the white surf-line along the beach, passing upwards over the little fantastically built town, the vineyards and *quintas* on the terraces, to the violet heather of the mountain—the whole, framed by the azure sky above and by the pellucid water below, formed a most striking and deliciously harmonious picture.

Of course we landed, and, having chosen a guide from among the squalid, noisy troop of creatures of that ilk who swarm about a stranger on landing like flies around a treacle-pot, we prepared to make the most of the six hours the captain had informed us were at our disposal.

Visiting the fish-market, we saw a most peculiar assortment of fish exposed for sale: beautiful silver eels, five feet in length; huge sea bream, as red as a soldier's coat; and an enormous fish known as albicore, which was sold in steaks. Among other

places, we went to the Protestant cemetery on the hill. It is here that the greater part of the English who die in the island are buried. Some of the inscriptions are very touching, and consumption appears to be generally stated as the cause of death. The cemetery is, however, in very bad order. Many of the tombs were broken, and the place has altogether a very neglected appearance.

Cecil, who appeared to have friends in every quarter of the globe, here fell in with an acquaintance, the proprietor of Reid's hotel, who took us to his establishment for breakfast—a meal which was hardly finished ere we were summoned by the report of a gun to rejoin the ship, which meanwhile had been taking in coal. Reluctantly, therefore, we were compelled to leave this beautiful island, and repair on board the packet, which shortly afterwards, under full steam, again rapidly left land astern.

For the next few days I found much satisfaction in conversation with a gentleman named Hudson, formerly a gold-miner in Venezuela, and who now was on board this ship with a roving commission. It was from these conversations that I conceived the idea of trying my luck at the Transvaal gold-fields. The time, however, hung somewhat heavily on our hands; there was rather a paucity of literature on board, and the subjects of general conversation became at length exhausted.

On Sunday, the 27th of May, we sighted Cape de Verde, and went so near the land that I thought we should almost go aground on the reef which there stretches out into the yellow pestilent shore water. The equator was passed on the following Thursday, in honour of which event some fireworks were let off from the bridge in the evening—a proceeding which I cannot help condemning as mischievous, inasmuch as passing vessels are apt to mistake such displays for signals of distress, with consequences suggestive of the cry of "Wolf!"

The heat now became intense; in the cabins we were nearly baked—many of the passengers, myself among the number, preferring to sleep on the poop-deck. By doing this we certainly had the advantage of those who slept below, as, at the time of deck-washing, we came in for a *douche* bath of the most refreshing description from the salt-water hose.

On the 7th of June, something gave way in the machinery, and we had to lie to and repair for about ten hours. As a sort of make-weight against this little vexation, an evening dramatic entertainment was given in the saloon by some of the passengers, who acquitted themselves remarkably well—so well, indeed, that I suspected one or two of having something beyond a mere amateur knowledge of the stage.

At night-time the sea was frequently very beautiful. I would stand for hours leaning on the rail, smoking my pipe and watching those great waves of inky black as they broke on the ship's side, bursting into huge patches of blazing foam ; but my favourite haunt was right aft over the propeller, where I could see great lumps of solid fire being churned up in the seething caldron below.

On the last day before arriving at the Cape, there was a great commotion on board. Somebody had overheard somebody else say that so-and-so had informed him, in confidence, that he had strong suspicions of some one else's moral character. And this rumour coming to Z.'s ears, Z. immediately tackled A. on the subject, calling the statements of B., C., D., etc., up as evidence ; and the greater part of that day was employed by the passengers in vilifying one another. The little Jew, too, was put out ; some person to whom he had become no longer bearable had threatened to kick him, and would have put his threat into execution but for the timely interference of the captain. The Jew was perfectly livid with rage, and appealed to the captain for further support ; but that gentleman, who had had quite enough of him, politely declined acceding to his request.

On the same day, in the afternoon, the ship passed through about two miles of sea of a com-

pletely blood-red colour—a phenomenon which I apprehend is due to the presence, in enormous quantities, of some microscopic infusorial body akin to that which sometimes colours snow in a similar manner. As darkness set in that night, the welcome flash of the Cape Light became visible on our port bow, and within a few more hours we dropped anchor in Table Bay, after a run of twenty-four days from Dartmouth.

A magnificent sight met my eye on going on deck in the morning. I had been led to expect a dense fog, but was agreeably disappointed, for the sun, which had just risen, illumined a most picturesque landscape free from mist or fog of any kind. On our right lay Capetown, nestling like a little toy village at the foot of the mighty Table Mountain, through the gorges on whose summit the morning mists were creeping down like huge masses of cotton wool; while further seawards stretched the extraordinarily shaped mountain known as "The Lion," on the green slopes of which miniature sheep and cattle could be seen grazing. On the other side of the land-locked bay, towards the towns of the Paarl and Stellenbosch, my eye was attracted by a chain of rocky mountains, whose fantastic shapes stood out in bold and striking relief against the morning sky. The sea itself was covered with every description of

craft, and the air around was filled with boobies, mullihawks, Cape pigeons, and scores of other noisy varieties of the feathered tribe. Altogether, my first impressions of Table Bay were very pleasant. The ship got alongside of the quay at about the middle of the day, and I at once proceeded to make the most of the time at my disposal. Walking through the town, I was not much impressed with either streets or buildings. The former were steep and abominably dusty, and the latter, with few exceptions, ill built and very dirty. I certainly expected that a city with 30,000 inhabitants would have managed to cut a little better figure. I visited the museum, with its library of 35,000 volumes, which I thought pretty good for a colonial town. We also ran through the International Exhibition, but to me, just arrived from Europe, that sort of thing was decidedly tame. There were some fine specimens of polished native woods, and of minerals from Namaqualand, but this was all that interested me here. I should have wished to have spent some time in exploring the surrounding country, but as the Natal steamer was to depart at an early hour on the next morning, I had to defer my explorations. We dined at an hotel in one of the principal streets, and I was disgusted at not being able to obtain there a natural Cape wine, which I was desirous of tasting. "We

don't sell that sort of thing in this establishment, sir," superciliously replied the waiter, in answer to my question; "but possibly you may obtain it at one of the low canteens." Thanking him for his information—he was a half-bred St. Helena boy—I paid my score, and, being intent upon getting the native wine, repaired to one of these canteens, which I happened to find to be anything but "low," and where I obtained a wine immeasurably superior in flavour and pleasanter to the palate than the heavily brandied, inferior Spanish wines sold at outrageously high prices in the hotels. I also tasted the Cape beer—a light, frothy beverage, sold at threepence per bottle, and something similar in character to the so-called *weissbier* of Germany. So that on the whole, I lost nothing by going to the "low" canteen, excepting, of course, my dignity in the eyes of the St. Helena waiter.

On the following day, our baggage having been transferred to the coasting steamship *Florence*, we bade farewell to the friendly officers of the *Edinburgh Castle*, and embarked in the smaller ship *en route* for Natal. The change was anything but pleasant, the ship's accommodation being very inferior to that of the *Edinburgh*. The decks were blocked up with cargo and waggons for the troops; the catering was very second-rate, and a horrible

smell pervaded every part of the ship during the whole voyage. Of our old passengers, only a dozen remained; but we had a tolerably good addition from Capetown itself—every berth was crowded, and auxiliary beds had to be made up at night upon the saloon tables. All the way to Natal we kept the coast well in sight—a fine, bold outline, but bleak and inhospitable in appearance.

Our first stopping-place was Port Elizabeth, which I saw nothing of, being asleep. In the afternoon of the following day, we had, however, a little sensation to break the monotony of the voyage. This was the transferring of thirty-five tons of cargo into lighters, in the open sea off Port Alfred, or "The Kowie." The cargo had to be lowered by the steam-winch from the deck into the lighter alongside, and as the sea was pretty rough, it may be imagined that this was no easy matter. At one moment the lighter would be almost on a level with the ship's deck, at another down in the trough of the sea, some fifteen feet lower. The bumps that lighter gave the ship's side were numerous and hard. I do not think that one single package went through the ordeal of transhipment without damage. Many were visibly smashed to pieces, others dived into the sea between the lighter and the ship's side and were crushed to splinters. A case said to con-

tain a tombstone, and labelled "with great care," was smashed in two, one-half falling into the hold of the lighter and the other plunging into the sea. At one upward surge, the mast of the lighter caught our derrick, and was snapped off like matchwood, bringing down all the rigging, and seriously injuring a man. How they stuck to the decks of that lighter was to me a marvel, as she was actually being whisked about like a cockle-shell. But the most exciting part had yet to come. The cargo having been transhipped, a small hatch was opened on the lighter by two of the hands, and a woman, in a perfectly unconscious state, was dragged forth, brought to the edge, and held out like a wet sack to be caught up. Three times the lighter rose up to the level of the deck, and as many times was the woman missed being caught; but a fourth and mightier wave, however, brought her up again, and then, seizing their opportunity, the men stationed in the gangway clutched the poor, insensible creature, and, after a moment's dangling in mid-air, safely landed her on board, amid the cheers of the lookers-on. If that is the usual method of landing or embarking at the Kowie, I trust none of my female relatives will ever go there.

We arrived at East London on a Sunday, and as the sabbatarian principle is strongly developed at

that port (?), no notice was taken of our arrival, until the following morning, when a steam-tug, which on the previous day had been lying in the roads some three hundred yards off, came alongside and took off mails and passengers. I subsequently heard that these unlucky individuals remained for no less than three weeks in that tug at anchor, the weather being such as not to admit of their crossing the bar of the Buffalo river.

I believe this part of the African coast to be one of the most dangerous places in the world. There is at all times a heavy surf breaking along the shore, and as the anchorage is bad, many vessels come to grief in a south-east gale. As we steamed along, we saw the skeletons of many ships lining the shore, and a passenger informed me that in the preceding year as many as forty vessels broke from their moorings and went to pieces in one single night at Port Elizabeth. I myself, when in Natal on my return, some twelve months later, witnessed the wrecking on the back beach of two brigs within three hours of each other, and I have frequently heard the statement made that when ship-owners of easy virtue were desirous of realizing, they sent their old ships to the south-east coast. Whether this statement was a true one or not I cannot say, but it is a very significant one.

On the 19th of June, we sighted the Bluff, a bold headland protecting the little harbour of Natal, and some few hours afterwards we dropped anchor for the last time at what is known as the outer anchorage. The draught of water on the bar of the harbour being insufficient for the *Florence* to cross, passengers and luggage were transferred to a small steam-tug, the *Scout*, and after having been half-drowned with spray, and bumped once or twice in going over the bar, we finally brought up alongside the landing-stage at the Point, Port Natal. By this time it was nearly dark, and a friendly fellow-passenger, who was acquainted with the locality, having introduced us to a Mr. Pugh on the landing-stage, that gentleman undertook to see our heavy baggage safely housed for the night, and to conduct us to his boarding establishment in Durban, some three miles off, where in the course of an hour or so, we were safely ensconced at the rate of seven shillings per head per diem.

CHAPTER II.

Durban—The coloured population—Sham benevolence—A patch-work bridge—*Experientia docet*—A fruit farm—Masonic meeting—Cecil overboard—Thomas Baines—Drinking propensities—Red-tapeism—A coal hoax—A dusty ride.

THIRTY-FIVE years ago, the spot where now stands the town of Durban was marked by a sandy plain, elevated scarcely six feet above high-water mark, studded here and there with dense clumps of bush, and situate on the edge of a little land-locked bay, about three miles from the Point and open sea. At that time the locality was doubtless very unhealthy, mangroves being plentiful along the shore of the bay. These have now, however, been almost wholly eradicated, and the locality has much improved in a sanitary point of view, although a description of low fever, known as the "dengue," is sometimes prevalent in the summer season. At the present day, Durban is a flourishing little town, having about 3000 white inhabitants, and as the greater part of the Transvaal and Free State derive their foreign imports through the Natal colony, its trade is not inconsiderable.

The Point, where the shipping business is carried on, is connected with the town by a short line of railway, which is under Government control and supervision, and the same line of metals extends about eight miles to the mouth of the river Umgeni, where there is a depôt for the neighbouring sugar and coffee plantations. To the north-east of the town lies the Berea, an elevated tract of country surrounded by dense bush, where, some thirty years since, elephants held undisputed sway, but which now is in great part dotted with suburban residences of the merchants and notables of Durban, who find the hill more healthy and agreeable than the low-lying plain beneath.

The town consists mainly of three principal streets, parallel with one another, two of which are partially macadamized, while the remainder, with the cross-streets, are but mere sandy tracks, over which traffic is carried on with difficulty. The houses and stores are in general only one-storey buildings, and in great part constructed of corrugated iron, a material which, in South Africa, is much employed for the erection of dwellings. In West Street, which is the principal street, however, there are a few buildings of a more substantial description, among which are two banks and some general stores of extensive dimensions. The most considerable building in the

town, the Court-House, in which are united all the offices over which the Legislature has direct control, is a fine stone erection, situate at the entrance of a square park, which is prettily laid out as a botanic garden, and planted with many beautiful specimens of exotic trees. As a rule, all the private houses in the town lie back from the road, and are all more or less surrounded with a grove of tropical, fruit, and aromatic trees, such as oranges, bananas, and amatangula.

The coloured population are numerous and mixed. There is the native Kafir or Zulu refugee, of which race there are over 300,000 in the colony. These are governed according to Kafir law, and are allowed, with certain restrictions, to live according to the customs of their tribe, which include that of polygamy. No white man is, however, permitted, under pain of punishment, to sell or supply them with arms, ammunition, or intoxicating liquor, and unless they have a special pass from their employer, they are not allowed to be at large after 9 p.m., at which hour a bell rings, and every Kafir has to go to his quarters. They are chiefly employed as porters, and in different branches of public or domestic menial service, usually obtaining wages amounting to £1 a month, in addition to their food, which consists of Indian or mealie meal made into porridge, and is known locally as "scoff."

There are also a number of Government coolies imported from India, a great many of whom are employed in the construction of the new railway or on the sugar estates, while others are either engaged in trade pursuits or follow the avocations of cooks and waiters, at which they have attained considerable repute in the colony. These coolies have more privileges than the Kafirs. They may consume as much liquor as they choose to pay for, and are not tied to any particular time of turning in. A little bamboo village has been constructed by them in the bush near the sea, and here they revel on rice and betel nut, free from the intrusion of either Kafir or *Feringhee.*

The remainder of the coloured population is small in number, and consists of Arab traders from Zanzibar, with their followers and a few score of so-called liberated slaves. These latter form portions of the cargoes of slave-dhows that have been captured by British cruisers and brought to Natal to be got rid of. The term "liberated" is somewhat of a misnomer, inasmuch as, on his arrival in the colony, the slave is placed under the immediate charge of the governor of the gaol, and kept in safe custody as if he were a criminal, until some person can be found who will take him as his servant. This being done, the hirer pays a small regulation sum to

the Government, and the "liberated" slave is bound for seven long years as hewer of wood and drawer of water to his new master, and is moreover liable to heavy punishment in the event of his attempting to escape! There are some funny things done in this world under the cloak of righteousness.

One of the greatest drawbacks to Durban is its want of fresh water. There are, I believe, only two wells in the town, and even in these the water is brackish. Durban depends entirely upon the rainfall for its supply, and when the season is a dry one, water reaches a fabulous price. The rain water is collected, as it runs from the roofs of the buildings, in large iron ship's tanks, which stand in rows along the backs of the houses. Even when fresh it is unpleasant to the taste, while, after it has been standing some time, so much infusorial life is generated in it as to render it absolutely undrinkable except after boiling and filtration. When I stayed a few days in the town on my return journey, I heard of a scheme for bringing the water from the river Umhlatuzan, some ten miles distant, but as yet I believe no very decisive steps have been taken. In fact, Durban is rather worn-out by repeated attacks on the purses of the inhabitants. The two macadamized roads, together not *one* mile in length, cost the corporation £30,000—an enormous figure,

considering that both stone and labour are cheap. A scheme for a pier or jetty was started a few years ago, but it came to grief, and the Durbanites point with rueful countenance at thousands of pounds' worth of engineering plant now lying useless in the sand and decaying. I myself saw railway plant, consisting of springs, axles, and wheels, stacked up in enormous heaps in the open air, rusted to the very core and fit for nothing. There has been an incredible sum spent ostensibly for the deepening of the bar at the harbour-mouth, but without any visible signs of effect, excepting that of making it, if anything, worse than it was before; and at the present moment Natal is being tolerably well bled by the construction of a railroad from Durban to the capital, Pietermaritzburg, in a style quite unnecessary in such a colony. As is usual with most Government undertakings, a great deal of money is being spent in a wrong direction, and an ornamental railway is being constructed, in which the very culverts *under* the embankments are faced with *dressed* stone, and many other similar extravagances are visible, even to the unprofessional eye, instead of plain substantial work which shall not look so pretty or cost so much, but which, nevertheless, shall be quite as useful.

During my visit, I went out with the corporation

of the town, *en fête*, to witness the erection of a lattice girder at a bridge over the Umbilo river, five miles from Durban, and I was amazed to see that the buttresses of the bridge had actually been built in one solid piece from the brink of the river at its dry season level to the embankment, without allowing any more space for the river when in flood than at its dry season. Mentioning to one of the engineers my apprehensions as to the consequences of a flood, he laughingly replied, "Good for trade, my dear sir, good for trade"! Some ten months subsequently, I saw this bridge again; it had not fallen as I had expected, but a water-way had had to be *cut* on the inner side of each buttress, thus entailing a much greater outlay than would have been necessary had a little common foresight and caution been used. The girders had now been raised, as in fact the railway was finished as far as Pinetown, but the appearance of the bridge was, to say the least, rather striking. On each side the iron cross-beams projected about two feet six inches beyond the girder—an appearance calculated to give a spectator the impression that the whole had been constructed with materials from a second-hand dealer's establishment. Upon inquiry, I elicited the fact that the girders and beams had been constructed in England from *one* plan, and the buttresses

in Natal from *another*, which differed from the English one in several salient points; hence the patchwork. Many other similar instances of bad management came under my notice—trivial in themselves, it is true, but, as the Scotch proverb says, "Every mickle mak's a muckle."

We remained in Durban about a month, waiting for a waggon to take us to the Transvaal gold-fields —a rather mistaken proceeding, as I afterwards discovered; for it would have paid us infinitely better to have purchased our own waggon, instead of having to depend upon the movements and arrangements of others. Not but what the purchase of a waggon was at one time seriously contemplated; but the objections raised against the plan by individuals with whom in time we became acquainted deterred us from the intention. "The coast oxen will be sure to die directly you get one hundred miles up country," said one; "You will be swindled and done right and left," said another; and altogether the advice seemed so much in favour of taking passage in another person's waggon, that we finally gave up the idea of purchase. Now, however, I can see how we could have acted otherwise and cleared a good profit on our trip, had we been but better informed. *Experientia docet.*

Beyond this I had no cause to regret my length-

ened stay in this town. My brother-in-law, Mr. Alfred Bellville, F.R.G.S., an experienced African traveller, had a residence some few miles from Durban, in a very beautiful part of the country; and what with visiting him and the large circle of friends to whom he introduced us, we had our time pretty fully taken up. Several excursions were made into the surrounding districts. Three or four times we rode out to the mouth of the river Umgeni (Crocodile), where there are large sugar and coffee plantations, and very pretty country. The sugar made in Natal supplies the whole of South Africa. It is not refined, but simply boiled down in the vacuum pans after defecation with lime, and then packed for sale. It is a very rare thing to see white sugar in the colony. Fruit of every description grows well in the lowlands, that is to say, within twenty miles of the sea-board. At Mr. Bellville's plantation I completely revelled in it. There were acres upon acres of pine-apples ripening in the open air; bananas, loquots, guavas, amatangula, limes, oranges, lemons, papaws, and other fruits too numerous to mention, almost growing wild. I cannot say, however, whether my taste was out of order or otherwise, but it seemed to me as though the pines, albeit they were very delicious, yet lacked that delicacy of flavour and aroma so

marked in an English hot-house grown specimen. Perhaps, after all, the most luscious and delicate fruit I became acquainted with during my stay in Natal was the grenadilla, or fruit of the passion-flower, which, from the fact of the foliage of the plant producing it being a favourite haunt for venomous snakes, is somewhat suggestive of

> "the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world."

At any rate, it is very tempting.

There is little shooting to be obtained near Durban, except in the shape of birds and small buck, all the larger game having been shot off in the immediate neighbourhood. In the Estella Bush, I shot a few small buck known as *impiti*, very pretty little animals, not much larger than a hare, and of a mouse-grey colour, with short, spiked horns; but nothing larger. Once, at a grass fire in the locality, I was astonished at the extraordinary variety of birds, attracted by the swarms of insects arising from the burning grass, which allowed the approach of man so near as to almost be within reach of the hand. Buck meat, however, is very plentiful in the market, though where it comes from I am unable to say; probably it is brought in by the Kafirs.

Among the pleasant evenings I spent in company

with my new acquaintances, was one at a festival of Freemasons, whose proverbial hospitality I, as a brother, had been invited to partake of. The craft is everywhere pretty well represented in South Africa. At Durban there are two lodges—one under the English and the other under the Scottish constitution; and it was to the latter, the "Caledonian," that I was a visitor. For those who, like myself, are interested in the welfare of the craft, I may state that in no other assemblage of Masons have I met with a more cordial reception, nor was I ever more impressed with the accuracy and reverence with which the ritual was conducted, than in that little Scotch Lodge nearly seven thousand miles away from the centre of its organization.

In the same boarding-house where we were staying, there was a very jovial gathering, in the shape of a company of the "sock and buskin," under the management of Captain Disney Roebuck, a well-known caterer of public amusement in the colonies. Actors are, generally speaking, very pleasant fellows, excepting, perhaps, in matters where money is concerned, and these formed no exception to the general rule. When not engaged in the requirements of their profession, these sons of Momus were ever to the fore, planning some excursion, concert, picnic, or other diversion to kill

time and make life more enjoyable. Many were the pleasant rides across country and sails in the bay we had in their company; and when the time came for them to leave us, it was with considerable regret on both sides that we parted.

Cecil, who had rather a knack of getting into a little hobble every now and then, had a laughable adventure on the occasion of their leaving, though, but for a lucky chance, it might have had anything but a laughable ending. Among a number of others we accompanied these gentlemen on board the mail-steamer *Roman*, which was to convey them to Port Elizabeth, and, having lunched on board, prepared to return. The tug which brought us out was just clearing the ship's side, and we had to take a flying jump on board. Sydney and myself reached the deck in safety, but Cecil, making a tremendous bound, overshot his mark, and fell into the sea on the further side. It was some little time before we could get him in again, there being a heavy sea running; and he afterwards declared he had actually felt the swoop of a shark's body against his at the moment of his being hauled in. We did not, however, see any shark, although there are always plenty about; but he persisted in his statement, and so I calculated that he had escaped, as sailors put it, "by the skin of his teeth."

Sundays in Natal are rather puritanically observed, from the fact, I suspect, of the Scotch element in the population preponderating. Were it not for the dust, the burning sun, and the Kafirs, one might even fancy one's self vegetating in some Scotch Highland village, excepting that in Durban on this day even the whiskey bottle is tabooed. On one of these Sundays—four of which I spent in Durban—I walked up to the Protestant cemetery. It is rather a deserted place, and badly kept. Though enclosed, horses and bullocks were grazing amid the graves, and many of the tombstones were broken. I saw, among others, the grave of Mr. James, of the London Mission, who died on board the steamer on his way to England from Lindi, and was buried here by Mr. Bellville, who had accompanied him. Close by this mournful monument is a group of tombs which tell a very sad tale; they are those of five children, a whole family, who perished within the space of five days, victims to diphtheria. Thomas Baines, the intrepid African explorer, and companion of Livingstone in his earlier journeys, is, I believe, also buried here, but I was not successful in finding his grave. But poor Baines requires no sculptor's chisel to keep his memory green. His own pencil, the first to delineate on canvas the majestic falls of the Zambesi, has left too many

tokens of his genius for his name to sink into oblivion.

Burials are performed here with a haste and rapidity which would almost appear indecent were it not that the health of the community demands it. If an individual dies in the morning, his funeral takes place in the afternoon. I once saw the burial of a lady who was very much respected in the town. She had died at 9 a.m., and at 4 p.m. on the same day, I witnessed her interment. There were none of the fantastical mummeries common to funerals in Europe; everything was very plain, and the whole was quite a business-like proceeding.

Of amusements, other than domestic, there are necessarily few. A theatrical company visits the colony at long intervals, and then there are "high jinks," but at other times things are rather slow, especially for the stranger. The greater part of the business to be transacted in the town is usually finished at an early hour; this arises partly on account of there being not over-much business to transact, and partly from the fact that the South African, either indigenous or imported, is essentially a lazy animal. In order, then, to while away the remainder of the day, he resorts to the canteen. Never in my life have I witnessed such an amount of drinking as I have in South Africa. The

average Natal colonist passes three parts of his time at it, and must consume a fabulous quantity of alcohol in the course of the year. In up-country towns this habit is still more marked. Every little stroke of business demands a drink; it is next to impossible to meet an acquaintance in the street without gravitating to the canteen, and as at this place one is certain to meet a number of others, it becomes rather a difficult matter to get out of it again with one's brain as clear as is desirable.

I believe this habit to be one of the chief causes of ill success among the many who emigrate to live in colonial towns. A young man, naturally temperate, will here soon learn to drink far more than is good for him; and as in many places only spirits are consumed, and those of an atrocious quality, ill health and failure are but natural consequences. In the country it is different; no man, unless a confirmed drunkard, will lay in a sufficient stock of liquor to tipple over by himself, and as visits to the towns are, in most up-country cases, somewhat few and far between, the farmer is more apt to succeed than the town emigrant.

One would almost imagine that the high prices at which liquors are retailed would be prohibitive, viz., English spirits 6*d.* a glass, and beer 2*s.* 6*d.* per bottle, but it is not so; indeed, the reverse would

appear to be the case, inasmuch as in the up-country towns of the Transvaal, where common brandy is retailed at 1*s.*, and "Three Star" at 1*s.* 6*d.* per glass, the proportionate amount consumed is even greater. When Mr. Anthony Trollope visited Pretoria, he had a very keen eye for the old sardine boxes lying about; but had he seen the immense *Monte Testaccio* of empty and broken brandy bottles at the rear of the Edinburgh hotel, then his indignation might perhaps have been expressed with more reason.

Perhaps, when railways are constructed and the facilities for transport are increased, light ales and wines may be partially substituted for the fiery brandy and gin which now are so much consumed, to the detriment of both health and power of the colonist; but as long as things remain as they are at present, I fear South Africa will still continue one of the best customers of the many exporters of brandy and gin.

On the 11th of July, we received information from the forwarding agent, Schenk, that a waggon was now loading up at Pietermaritzburg for the gold-fields, and, having arranged with him to secure in it room for the conveyance of ourselves and baggage, we commenced our preparations for departure. Our passage fee was fixed at £10 per head; this was to include 100 lbs. personal luggage and conveyance

of ourselves from Durban to Pietermaritzburg by post-cart, while our baggage was to go on by one of the local waggons which ply on the route to the capital, or, as Natalians love to call it, the "City." We laid in a considerable stock of preserved provisions, soap, candles, and other necessaries, which we understood to be purchasable with difficulty at the fields, all which we might as well have saved ourselves the trouble and expense of, inasmuch as when we arrived and the total expenses came to be added up, we found we could have purchased them there for less money, and should certainly have been spared much worry and bother.

In the matter of the purchase of gunpowder we had considerable difficulty. The Natal law only permits the sale of one pound at a time, and a maximum of ten pounds per annum; even for this it is necessary to get a special order, signed and countersigned by half a dozen officials, ere a single pound is issued; so that when I applied for ten pounds, I was informed that the sale was impossible and that I could have no more than one. Determined not to be baulked, I made, by the advice of a friend, an application by post to the head authorities at the capital, stating the fact that I was going to a part of the country where it would be impossible for me to obtain powder, and request-

ing a special permit for a full year's allowance of ten pounds. This was soon afterwards granted, and, armed with the permit, I repaired to the Government stores. Imagine my disgust, after having purchased my powder, to be told I could have no percussion caps, as they were not specified in the document I held. This piece of red-tapeism irritated me excessively, and when a few hours afterwards a store-keeper, who shall be nameless, offered me a few boxes of the contraband article, I allowed my irritation to override my virtue, and fell a victim to the tempter.

My arms consisted of a rifle of the Westley-Richards falling-block pattern—a most excellent weapon, which, at the cost of £10, performs the work of a £50 express, and has as much driving power as any rifle I ever held in my hand; a revolver; and a double-barrelled muzzle-loading fowling-piece, which I chose in preference to a breech-loader, on account of the difficulty in obtaining cartridges. I might, however, have dispensed with this latter arm, as I had but little occasion for its use during my trip.

An amusing incident occurred on the day previous to my leaving Durban. I had happened to call in at the office of the Natal ——, an influential Durban newspaper, the editor of which was at the

time engaged in writing a "leader." My interruption appeared to be somewhat opportune, for I was at once greeted with "Just the very man I want to see." He then informed me that one of the engineers under whom the railway was being constructed, had that morning reported to him the existence of a seam of coal, cropping out some few miles from Durban, and close to the railway. Would I "go down and inspect it, and obtain some reliable information on the subject?" saying which he handed me a sample of the coal obtained, which the engineer had given him. Replying that I was at his service, provided that I should not have to walk down, he at once accompanied me to the engineer's office, where, that gentleman joining us, we soon obtained a trolly from the depôt, and four coolies to push us down, a distance of about five miles to the spot. Our friend the engineer was very sanguine on the subject, as of course the importance of the close proximity of a coal-bed to Durban could hardly be overrated. Arriving at the place and jumping off the trolly, he showed us the spot, a slight depression by the side of the track, and triumphantly held up a piece of coal, which he picked out of it before our eyes. I then went into the hole myself, and picked up and, with considerable malice, showed him a piece of clinker. Nothing daunted, however, he

declared this to be the product of volcanic action, and all in favour of the existence of the coal-bed. So I set the coolies to work with pick and shovel, but it was not until we had picked out, *seriatim*, two pieces of clinker, a lump of patent fuel, and an old boot, that he gave up the idea of his supposed coal-mine, which proved to be nothing more than a quantity of refuse shovelled out from one of the contractor's engines. The editor was furious, as he had half written his leader on the subject of the find, and for a long time his anger would not be appeased.

His ruffled feathers were, however, later on, considerably smoothed down under the genial influence of a few bottles of Roederer, which were cracked on our return to Durban, at the expense of the disappointed prospector. It is almost needless to add that no report was given of the expedition in next day's issue of the Natal ——.

There was only one seat vacant in the post-cart on the following morning (Tuesday, the 17th of July), and so it was arranged that Cecil and Sydney should go by another conveyance, which also runs daily, but travels more slowly, viz., the omnibus; while I took the vacant post-cart seat. Accordingly they left early in the morning, and I started after them at about 11 a.m. The vehicle, a strongly built two-wheel spring-cart, was drawn by

six horses, driven by a half-breed, and dashed away from the post-office at break-neck speed. Having a back seat, it was with considerable difficulty that I managed to keep in, and as I had something like six hours of this sort of work, it became at last the reverse of amusing. By the time that we had arrived at the first changing-place, Pinetown, I was tolerably well bruised, while the dust on my face formed a solid cake about the sixteenth of an inch in thickness. Mr. Bellville had ridden out to meet me here, and kindly gave me a sack full of pines, which he thought I might find acceptable at Pietermaritzburg, where fruit is scarce. We were allowed about ten minutes' respite here, and then off we went again, jolting and jumping in helter-skelter style across country for seventy miles, during which we changed horses no less than six times. The rise from Durban to the capital is no less than 2000 feet, and the road—a mere wheel-track—lies along very beautiful country. One hill, the Inchanga, where we had a slight respite from the suffocating dust, attracted my especial attention by its very peculiar table-like formation, although in this respect it is not singular. For more than half the distance the country consists of a series of alternate plateaux, each more elevated than the last, very marked and striking in appearance. From the Inchanga the road slightly inclines to Pieter-

maritzburg, which we reached at 7 p.m., battered, bruised, begrimed, and half choking. A bath, however, and a change of clothes, for both of which luxuries I was indebted to Cecil's foresight, soon revived my spirits, and at eight o'clock I was quite ready to play a good knife and fork at the dinner our worthy host at the Plough had provided.

CHAPTER III.

Pietermaritzburg—A grass fire—Legislative Assembly—Sick oxen—Human vultures—A gory bed—The bullock-waggon—Umgeni Falls—A gentle remedy—*Kartoo*—"Beautiful" river—Scotch morality—An overdose—A scrape—A thorny path—The voluble captain—Cecil in trouble—"Wart-een-bitche"—The boundary.

THE town in which we had just arrived, the capital of the Natal colony, derives its unwieldly complex appellation from those of two Dutch Boër heroes, Peter Retief and Gert Maritz, who were its founders. It is an abominable name to write, and still more uncouth to pronounce; and Natal people, evidently being of this opinion, have gradually for the last few years curtailed it to "Maritzburg," while goods and letters destined hither are commonly distinguished by the initial letters, "P. M. B." It is altogether a more interesting and attractive town than Durban. Being something like 2000 feet more elevated, the heat is not nearly so oppressive, and it is much to be preferred, both on that account and on that of its sanitary advantages. The water is good and

plentiful, and runs, as is the fashion in all Dutch-African towns, in an open culvert along each street. The plan of Maritzburg is the same as that upon which all the Dutch-African towns are laid out. There is a large, open space called the "Market Square," surrounded by houses, or plots on which houses are at some future time to be built, and from which the surrounding streets lead out at right angles. In Maritzburg, the plots, or as they are locally styled, "erven," are pretty well built upon; but I have seen towns in the Transvaal, the plan of which, on paper, is calculated to make a tremendous impression, but which in the concrete only contained four or five houses. There are about 4000 white inhabitants here, many of Dutch descent. The coolies are not so numerous as they are at Durban, but the Kafirs are more so. On the whole, I was more favourably impressed with the inhabitants here than I was at Durban, but as I only remained about a week I had not the same opportunity of judging.

The scenery around is very attractive. Sydney and I rode out one day to the Lower Falls of the river Umgeni, about eight miles distant, which are very beautiful, and remind one of Niagara in miniature. Sydney sketched them, and while doing so unconsciously threw his lighted cigar stump into the dry grass. A moment afterwards this was in a blaze.

In vain we tried to extinguish it—the wind made our efforts all unavailing, and we had nothing but to make the best of our way back to the little inn where we had left our horses, and inform our host of the occurrence. He advised a speedy retreat, as a heavy penalty would most likely be the consequence if we were caught; so, thinking discretion the better part of valour—especially as we descried in the distance the owner of the farm, apparently on the search for us—we saddled up, and taking a circuitous route, soon got out of harm's reach, and heard nothing more of the matter.

Through the kindness of Mr. Boshoff, one of the members of the Legislature, I was admitted to an evening's debate in the council-house; and, although the subject had no particular interest for me, I was pleased to notice the complete absence of any form of rowdyism or puerility such as one might have been led to expect and perhaps to excuse in a colonial Assembly—especially when we reflect that even our own house of representatives in London is anything but free from either of these shortcomings. I have often noticed that neither high civilization nor social status are always the pegs upon which an individual may rightly hang the name of gentleman.

All that Maritzburg has to show in the way of interest, a traveller may comfortably get through in

three or four days, so that I was not at all sorry when our baggage had arrived from Durban, and had been safely transferred to the waggon which was to convey us up country to the Transvaal.

This, in company with four other waggons belonging to two Transvaal transport-riders, named Phillips and Cockroft, was outspanned about a mile out of town, at the foot of the Town Hill, a considerable mountain to the north of Maritzburg. All of them were loaded up with goods, and it was intended that we should travel in company as far as Estcourt, on the Bushman's river; and that there our waggon, under the care of Cockroft, should keep straight on northwards to Lijdenburg, while the others turned off on the left to Pretoria. In addition to ourselves and a young fellow named Jack Williams, the cost of whose passage Cecil had somewhat foolishly engaged to defray, in return for personal service during the journey, there were two other passengers for the gold-fields, W—— and G——, as well as a man and his wife for Pretoria, who were going there with the idea of establishing an hotel.

Our immediate departure was, however, delayed by one of those misfortunes so common to waggon-travelling in South Africa. Everything was ready, except the bullocks, and they were nearly all sick.

From Cockroft I learned this to be due to the change of grass—the herbage here being rank and sour in comparison with that to which the oxen had previously been accustomed. When we went out to inspect, and as we thought (poor simple creatures!) to make a start, some six or eight were lying dead on the veldt, and the whole of the remainder of the five spans, eighty in all, were showing unmistakable signs of queerness. So nothing remained but to return to town, and there to pass the days as best we could until the dead oxen had been replaced by live ones, and the health of the spans sufficiently recovered to make a start. It was weary work waiting, and our patience was sorely tried. Daily we went to the camp, only to hear the same tale of sickness and witness fresh deaths. It seemed as though we should never get away. Some amusing scenes were enacted over the deceased bullocks. As soon as convenient after their death, the carcases were skinned, and the hide laid out in the sun to dry. No sooner would this process have been accomplished, than, like their compatriots the vultures, the Kafirs of the surrounding neighbourhood would swoop down in a body upon the carcase, and, amid an infinity of yelling, shrieking, and fighting, would cut and tear it in pieces, and bolt off with what they could carry. Over the paunch they

would positively go frantic, and the sight of some dozen half-naked maniacal black imps fighting teeth and nails over an armful of diseased offal was somewhat remarkable, though not quite savoury, at least according to European ideas. I was informed that the Kafirs were very fond of meat, and, judging by what I saw, I concluded that my informant was tolerably correct in his statement.

On Sunday, the 22nd of July, while sitting at dinner in the Plough, a message arrived from the camp, informing us that the cattle now being tolerably right again, an early start on the following morning was contemplated. On the receipt of this good news, all impatience to be off, we betook ourselves to the camp that very evening. The sun had set, and the night, which in these latitudes is not ushered in by twilight, was rather dark ; but we had a lantern, and were enabled to pick our way with tolerable safety. Arrived at the little river about half a mile from the town, we stumbled over what turned out to be our Pretorian passenger in a hopeless state of inebriation. So far gone was he that he could not even stand, and we had to charter four passing Kafirs to carry him to the waggon, and pitch him into a compartment which had been partitioned off for the use of himself and his wife, who was already there. This lady, however, probably full of her

Pretorian hotel ideas, resented the intrusion somewhat forcibly; our friend came flying out with considerably more alacrity than he went in, and for that night had to content himself with a bed on the grass. Not long afterwards, I curled myself up in my rug, and in spite of little knobby bits of gravel drilling holes into my hip-bone, and hungry mosquitoes sucking my blood, I soon slept the sleep of the innocent. Waking up in the course of the night, I heard sundry grumblings and groans from the direction where our bacchanalian friend was lying, which eventually culminated in an agonized "My God!" so expressive of horror and general all-round ghastliness, that I called out to ask him what was the matter. His reply, preceded by a sepulchral groan, was to the effect that he was weltering in his life's blood! Rising hastily, I went over to him, and actually found him curled up in a green ox-hide with the fleshy side towards him, the blood on which he, in his drunken state, had mistaken for his own. The joke was too good; I could rest no longer, and had to rouse the others to enjoy it with me. So, raking up the fire and lighting our pipes, we sat chatting and smoking until the rising of the morning star, when the oxen were inspanned, and, amidst an immense cracking of whips and some volumes of Kafir, Dutch, and

English blasphemy, the lumbering vehicles commenced the long ascent of the Town Hill, and we were fairly off.

The ox-waggon is an institution in South Africa. From north to south, from the Tropic of Capricorn to Cape Agulhas, and from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, if we except a short line of railroad from Capetown, there exists no other means of transport. Nothing else in the shape of a vehicle could stand the knocking about on the rough roads. To be sure there are the post-carts, which run with mails and passengers, but these are confined to localities where the track is tolerably passable, and do not carry goods or baggage of any description. A waggon, on the contrary, will carry a load of from five to seven thousand pounds in weight, and will go over any ground where the bullocks can possibly climb. It is obvious that to undergo such an amount of strain and rough usage, good workmanship and toughness of material are essentially necessary in its construction. The wood employed is chosen with great care, stink or assegai wood being used for the "dissel-boom" or pole, and every portion is put together in such a manner as shall ensure the greatest strength combined with the maximum amount of play, or elasticity. A rigidly built waggon, no matter how strong, would soon go to

pieces with the jolting it gets on these fearful roads. Generally those intended for the conveyance of passengers in addition to goods, are provided with a tent fixed at the rear part and covering about a third of the waggon. Ours, however, was tented from end to end.

The body of the full-sized vehicle will often reach twenty-one feet in length, and is a very cumbersome, awkward-looking machine. A full span of oxen consists of about sixteen or eighteen, yoked together in pairs along a chain called the *trektouw*, while the attendant staff is usually made up of the transport-rider himself, a Kafir or Hottentot driver, and a *voorlooper*, whose business it is to guide the leading oxen with a long loop, and keep them under his eye while they are outspanned and feeding on the veldt. Every bullock has his name, given him either on account of some peculiarity or according to the fancy of the raiser. *Weinberg*, *Gentleman*, *Blessman*, are common appellations, and in Dutch spans, if one unfortunate bullock has the name of *Englessmann*, he will be pretty sure to taste the lash considerably more often than the others. A well-trained ox is remarkable for its sagacity; he will answer to his name like a child, and often knows his place in the span as well as the driver himself. In fact, it is only by

the whip and voice that they are guided. When in fair condition and inoculated for lung sickness, a trek-ox will cost about £8, and a good waggon may be purchased for £100.

A day's journey by means of waggon is equivalent to a distance of about twenty miles, and that only along a level road and with good, strong oxen. Frequently in winter, when the grass on the veldt is scarce or has been burnt off, much shorter treks are made in the twenty-four hours, as then the oxen are weak and sickly and often die on the road; while in summer, when the heavy rains fall, the track in many localities becomes converted into an almost impassable swamp, necessarily causing great delay. But transport-riders are never particular to a week or two in their journeys. Time in South Africa appears to be taken but little account of, and to make anything *Africander* hurry itself would be out of the question. A journey by waggon is something like a long-continued picnic—pleasant enough when the weather is fine, the companions agreeable, and you are not in a hurry, but fearfully tedious under other conditions. The travelling is usually performed in the night, in order to avoid the heat of the sun. You have probably been running after game all day, and just as you are in need of a good rest, you have to undergo two treks, of four

hours' duration each, of such jolting as never is experienced out of South Africa. In the day-time the waggon is hove to, and the traveller occupies himself as best he can, either by sleeping, reading, or, if in a country where game is abundant, by shooting. This latter is *the* great relaxation, and is about the only good thing in connection with bullock-waggon travelling. To the Boër, however, the waggon is everything. It is part of his very existence. It is like the shell to a snail—without it he would be lost. Even the very device which the Transvaal Republican Government employed in their official capacity was a shield, upon which the anchor of Holland was quartered with a waggon proper.

During the following three or four days we made but little progress. The hills were very steep, and the bullocks, being weak and ill, were unable to travel for more than four miles at a trek. Things were anything but pleasant—the dust was stifling, we were broiled by the hot sun in the day, and at night-time we were nearly frozen. Howick, a pretty little village about twelve miles from Maritzburg, was reached on the 26th, and we outspanned for a whole day.

The Upper Umgeni Falls, the pride of every Natalian, are close to the village, and we of course

visited them. The body of water at that time was not as large as it is in the summer season, but the *coup d'œil* was, nevertheless, very striking. The river, about thirty yards in width, after coursing some distance with great speed along the face of the smooth rock, is suddenly precipitated from a height of 350 feet over the cliff, and falls in one unbroken stream into the gulf below. The surrounding foliage, as I saw it all wet with the rising spray and glistening in the sunshine, constituted, with the fall itself, a very lovely and attractive picture. Climbing down to the bottom of the ridge, we had a bath in the pool below, and I narrowly escaped being bitten by a large black imamba. This brute, which is very venomous, was lying curled up on the edge of the pool amid some small tufts of grass, and made a strike at my boot as I was in the very act of taking it off. It is needless to say how quickly I jumped up and "cleared." By the time, however, that I had fortified myself with a stick, the snake had disappeared. The serpent tribe generally are a great plague in Natal. In the summer season, soon after a thunderstorm, one may come across a great many of them scuttling about the grass. They even come into the houses, and it is not at all an uncommon thing to shake a snake out of one's bedclothes in the evening before turning in. Many of them are

very poisonous, and their bite in some cases is fatal. Ammonia is supposed to be the best antidote; it is both dropped on the scarified wound and taken internally until the symptoms of danger have disappeared. Up country, where ammonia is not always at hand, a somewhat strange remedy is resorted to. A charge of powder is placed upon the deeply scarified wound and fired. This is repeated three times, and acts as an effectual cautery. Next, in order to neutralize any poison which may have been absorbed into the blood, the sufferer is dosed with brandy until he is perfectly drunk. When this pitch is arrived at, he is considered safe, as it is supposed to be impossible to intoxicate an individual in whose system the snake poison has once obtained the mastery.

By the 26th of June, we had only travelled twenty-five miles from Maritzburg, and, judging by the rate we covered the ground, I almost began to despair of ever reaching the Transvaal, and was exceedingly disgusted at what appeared to me an unnecessary delay. Hearing, however, that at about four miles further on, at a place named Karkloof, there was a little inn, we marched on, leaving the waggon to follow at its leisure. At the inn we made ourselves as comfortable as circumstances and a rampageous hostess would permit, and Jack, Cecil's

protégé, enlivened the time with rather a droll entertainment. This fellow had, as I afterwards discovered, something more than a strong dash of the rogue about him; he had seen the dirty side of life in all four quarters of the globe, was something of a singer, actor, dancer, sailor, cook, and Jack-of-all-trades, but altogether a most amusing villain. Among the Kafirs he went by the name of *Kartoo*, "the funny dwarf," and although he could not speak a word of their language, he would, at the outspan, keep them in a perpetual roar of laughter.

At the back of the gorge whence Karkloof takes its name (*kloof* signifies gorge) there was a dense clump of bush, which our host informed us contained bush-buck.

As Cockroft intended staying here until he could hear of fresh oxen, we arranged to beat this bush the next day, and slept that night at the inn. Accordingly in the morning we started off in the rain and wind, which I understand is the usual thing at Karkloof, and made for the bush. There were five of us with rifles, and about that bush we beat all day, but not even the ghost of a bush-buck did we see. The only animal I came across was a steem-buck, which I shot on the way back to the waggon. It was a pretty little delicately formed antelope, with about enough meat on it to satisfy the cravings of one

hungry man. We inspanned again this evening, the driver having heard of some cattle further on at Mooi river, which we reached early the next morning. The weather was abominable; there was a horribly cold wind and thick mist scudding by, which every now and again condensed to rain. I was informed that in this district the weather is generally wet and cold, though I can assign no reason for its being so, as on either side of this belt the climate is usually dry and warm. *Mooi* is the Dutch for beautiful, but why this river should be called *Mooi* is a conundrum which I beg to give up: a sluggish, muddy stream, about twenty yards in diameter, dragging its slow length through as bleak and barren a country as ever fell to my lot to behold. For miles around the grass on the veldt had apparently been burnt off. Stones white and sharp appeared to be the sole production of the adjacent soil, and I could not detect a single redeeming feature in the landscape. This being the case, I availed myself of the comforts of the little hotel, and once having ensconced myself there, moved no more until the following Monday. Our conductor had by this time secured a fresh span of oxen, strong, healthy, and active brutes, whose appearance promised a considerable increase in our travelling speed.

Before starting, we witnessed a parade in front of the hotel of the Natal Yeomanry Cavalry—a fine body of men—who, under the command of Major-General Scott, were now performing their annual week's service. In the evening we trekked on, and reached Estcourt after two inspans. Here we parted with the other four waggons and our married-couple passengers, who took the road for Harrismith in the Orange Free State, while we still kept our heads toward the north. Some months subsequently, I once more came across that couple. The poor woman was bed-ridden, and the man a raving lunatic.

Estcourt, a village of some dimensions, is very prettily situate at the fork made by the junction of the Great and Little Bushman's rivers. It was not far from here that a skirmish took place with Langalibalele's Kafirs a few years ago. At the village inn, or posting-house, we met with very excellent accommodation, and Cecil, who usually had a very fair appetite, demolished no less than fourteen eggs, besides cold beef enough for two men.

Prices of provisions begin to rise here. A one-pound loaf of bread cost 1*s.*, and a bottle of beer 2*s.* 6*d.*; but the native products are very reasonable —fowls 6*d.* each, beef 5*d.* per lb., and so on in proportion. North of Maritzburg no coin of less

value than a threepenny piece passes current. Coppers are unknown, and indeed unnecessary, nothing being priced at under threepence. One often hears dollars mentioned. This is a remnant of the Dutch rixdollar, and is intended to signify 1*s.* 6*d.* In dealing with the Kafirs, I frequently heard the term "Scotchman" applied to a two-shilling piece; and upon inquiry was informed that an enterprising gentleman of that nationality having once passed a large number of florins to the Kafirs as half-crown pieces, the latter had ever since christened the florin "Scotchman" in memory of Sandy's morality. Our next stoppage was at Blauw-krantz, where I shot a very fine bustard, known here as a "pauw," which Jack made into a very savoury stew—so savoury indeed, that while his back was turned for an instant, the greater part of it was gobbled up by two wretched curs belonging to a neighbouring Kafir kraal. On Thursday we arrived at Colenso, a village by the Tugela, the largest river in the Natal colony. The season being dry, the river was low, and as we crossed it at the drift, or ford, the water barely came up to the bed-plank of the waggon. In the summer season the river is not so easily fordable, and in order to get across recourse has to be had to the pont, unless the traveller prefers waiting on the banks for the water to go down. A fine bridge is in

course of construction, but it will probably be some years before it is completed. Just below the drift there is a deep hole in the river known as Sea-cow Hole, where hippopotami are said to be still occasionally seen. None of our party, however, had that piece of luck, but there are no doubt plenty within a few miles. Jack came to grief here in a somewhat ludicrous manner. He had been suffering from indigestion, for which he had heard that Friar's balsam was a remedy. In my absence, he ferretted out a bottle of it belonging to me, and not knowing the right quantity to take, imbibed what he called "half a dose," viz., half an eight-ounce bottleful! It is almost needless to say upon this that his indigestion was considerably augmented, and when I returned I discovered him writhing about as if he had a snake in his stomach.

For the next few days nothing stirring occurred. We passed several small shanties by the road, and a little village named Lady-Smith after the wife of Sir Harry Smith, a former governor of Natal. Some miles from this place I managed to get into a scrape. Sydney and I were ahead of the waggon, on the look-out for game, when I spied a large bird flapping its wings in the long grass some distance off, and having got within close range, I fired at and killed it without knowing what it actually was.

Getting up to it, however, I discovered it to be a secretary bird, the life of which is, on account of its utility in destroying snakes, protected by a penalty. I was "making tracks," but was soon caught up by the farmer on horseback, who had heard my shot and seen its object. The language he addressed me in was a very fair specimen of Saxon, and it was not until I had pleaded entire ignorance of the bird's value, and had offered to pay any reasonable damages, that he became at all tranquillized. He then went altogether on the other tack, apologized for his rough language, and insisted upon Sydney and myself going down to his house and having a drink with him. This proposal being accepted, we went home with him, and, out-stopping our time over his brandy, we were later on let in for an evening walk of ten miles after the waggon.

On the 5th of August we crossed a chain of hills known as the Biggarsberg. Here there is pretty scenery, but the roads are very heavy. The jolting was fearful, causing the loose things to knock about in all directions. G—— lost a carpet bag, and had to hire a horse and ride back to get it. Sydney also lost several articles. It occupied all the driver's attention to avoid the rocks and boulders with which the path was strewn, and the amount of shrieking, whip-smacking, and swearing it re-

quired to urge those bullocks on was wonderful. The whip is an institution by itself—a lash of giraffe-hide, twelve to fourteen feet in length, at the end of a ten-feet bamboo. When it is cracked the sound is like the report of a pistol, and as Young Africa prides itself upon the use of this whip, the pistol-firing is carried on in the form of a continuous volley during the whole trek.

The wild aloe grows here in profusion, and forms dense clumps of bush, which at this time were just in full blossom. I made the best of my way through one of them in search of game, but shall never do so again if I can help it. When I came out, my hands, legs, and face were stuck full of long thorns and spines, my coat and trousers were in ribbons, and my stomach was most thoroughly upset by the diabolical odour exhaled by the blossoms. One wretched little ichneumon which I caught asleep on a rock was the only trophy I obtained. On returning to the waggon, I found it stuck fast on a steep, rocky hill, defying all the efforts of oxen, niggers, and screw-jack to move it, so that we had to outspan there for the night, and avail ourselves of the assistance of another team which we knew to be in our rear.

As this had not come up by sunrise the next morning, we walked on to the Ingagani river, a

distance of ten miles, where we found a little canteen kept by an individual formerly a captain in Her Majesty's army. The country we passed through, and for some distance beyond, was studded with deserted Kafir kraals, once inhabited by a tribe of Maccatees, but who had been driven out by the Zulus. The veldt is dotted with enormous ant-heaps, each from three to four yards in circumference, and as hard as a brick. I am told that the material of which they are constructed forms a very good substitute for mortar, and as such is frequently used by the colonists for building purposes. At first, on arrival at the little store, the proprietor, evidently taking us for foot-tramps, would have nothing to do with us, but upon informing him that our waggon was coming up and showing him the colour of our money, he changed his tone and thawed considerably, bringing out his "Three Star" and eatables like a Briton. Hearing that we were bound for the gold-fields, he became very anxious to supply us with stores of various descriptions, informing us that we should be quite unable to obtain them at anything like a reasonable price after leaving him, and wasted a vast deal of eloquence on the praise of his goods and the necessity for immediate purchase. His volubility on the question of trade was remarkable, and it was only on Cecil's

proposal that we should go and try our luck with the fish in the river, that he dropped the subject. The suggestion of fishing meeting with our approbation, the ex-captain at once looked out his rods and lines, and being an enthusiast in matters of sport as well as in business, came with us to the river, and showed us the likely places, the result of which was that we had a very fair haul of eels and yellow fish, making an acceptable change in our commissariat. In the evening the waggon, having obtained the expected assistance, came up with us, and we crossed the river.

Early on the 8th of August we reached the little town of Newcastle, at the foot of the Drakensberg Mountains, named after its prototype in Northumberland on account of the beds of coal which crop out in the neighbourhood. It is rather a widely scattered hamlet, but prettily situate in a valley, entirely surrounded by mountains, and dotted here and there with clumps of blue gum trees (*Eucalyptus globosus*), which, though not indigenous, thrive remarkably well in every part of South Africa.

Of course Cecil got into a scrape. Entering the post-office, which also did duty as court-house, to inquire for letters, he was suddenly and severely taken to task by a bumptious official for not raising his hat—an idea which, in his ignorance of the dignity

of the building, had never even crossed his mind. The consequences were that Cecil "went for" the representative of the law's majesty in such a manner as to cost him £1 of sterling English money, and to delay our journey for twenty-four hours.

Crossing the Drakensberg was rather a tough business, the roads being very steep and rough. The elevation is considerable, something like 8000 feet at the pass we took, and the nights were very cold. The country was black and bare, the grass having all been burnt off by the farmers, who in the winter take their flocks and herds to the warmer bush veldt; and there was little vegetation excepting in the sheltered gorges and kloofs with which the slopes of the mountain are scored. These are inhabited by vast numbers of baboons and wild cats, but I found it difficult to shoot any. A baboon would actually dodge a rifle-ball, and the cats do not show in the day-time. At about the middle of the pass we came to a shanty kept by a Londoner, once a well-known City man, who had come to grief over Stock Exchange speculations, and was now a voluntary exile in the wilderness, subsisting on a miserable pittance he derived from the sale of rum to over-berg travellers. Near by is a remarkable mountain known to the Kafirs as Inquela, and to the Dutch as Paardekop, from the peculiar resem-

blance it has to a horse's head. At its summit there were three lakes of brackish water, which bore the marks of being much frequented by game. In making the ascent we got our feet and legs considerably damaged in walking through large patches of a low prickly shrub armed with curved thorns, from which peculiarity the Dutch have not inaptly christened it, "Wart-een-bitche," which, rendered into English, signifies "Wait-a-bit."

That evening at the outspan I had something of a treat. The waggon being rather too crowded for comfort, I preferred sleeping underneath it, and had, as was my custom, comfortably ensconced myself in my usual place. Awaking at about six in the morning, I found to my utter astonishment that I was alone, and that the waggon, together with everything else connected with it, had disappeared. It was evident that I had been sound asleep at the time of inspanning, and that the Kafirs, not having noticed me, had actually trekked on, and would probably now be eight or ten miles ahead. So I had nothing for it but to take up my bed and walk, and console myself with a vow to make it lively for those Kafirs when I came up to them. After a five-mile trudge with my heavy rugs and rifle, I fell in with Cecil and Sydney, who had returned to meet me, and now assisted me with my traps on to camp, another three

miles further. I kept my vow, and the Kafirs never omitted to wake me after that.

Our next trek took us past a huge beacon erected by the roadside, which marked the limits of the Natal colony, and shortly afterwards we outspanned in that newly, though ingloriously, acquired British territory—the Transvaal.

CHAPTER IV.

Political condition of the Transvaal—Importunate beggars—Vaal river—The High Veldt—A Golgotha—A grass fire—Primitive surveying—The lost tribes—Crocodile river valley—The City of Sorrows—A guerilla captain—A smash—The Devil's Knuckles—A mountain of iron—Spitzkop.

MATTERS in the Transvaal just at present were in rather an unsettled state, as indeed they have remained ever since the annexation. A few months previously, upon the plea that the Republic had contravened one of the chief conditions upon which its independence was allowed them by the British Government, and also upon the representation that the people themselves desired the change, a Commissioner from Natal, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, had been despatched, armed with the Queen's authority, to the principal town, Pretoria; and in spite of the protestations of the helpless authorities of the Republic, had hoisted the British flag, and formally annexed the country. The *Volksraad*, or representative Assembly, was dissolved, and although the Administrator promised its recall, such was never

performed—Sir Theophilus retaining the reins of government in his own hands, to the general consternation of the Boërs, who now saw themselves again under the control of a power which they had over and over again suffered the pangs of war, famine, and pestilence in the wilderness to avoid.

Without committing myself to the expression of a direct opinion, I shrewdly suspect that the real reason which prompted the annexation lay in the jealous character of the neighbouring colony of Natal. The Transvaal was becoming an important State; English capitalists began to see in it a good field for speculation; its mineral resources were great, and gold in paying quantities was being found in it, so much so indeed, that in the year 1873 £1000 in sovereigns were actually struck by the Transvaal Government from gold found within the confines of the Republic. A question of a railway from Delagoa Bay to Pretoria was raised, and the *matériel* for the same actually landed at Lourenço Marquez, when the Natal traders and *Boër verneukers* (literally swindlers of Boërs) began to perceive that if they did not take a decisive step, their trade with the Transvaal would soon be lost, and their paltry harbour at Durban, where no ship over 300 tons can enter, would be unemployed excepting for their own colony—all the up-country trade being concen-

trated at the natural harbour for the Transvaal, that of Delagoa Bay, a large and commodious one. So they put their heads together, and hatched a *casus belli* with the unfortunate Boërs, and finally, under pretence of acting for the country's good, sent up a man armed with the Queen's authority to soft sawder and threaten and wheedle the simple peasants out of allegiance to their own flag. Petitions were got up, purporting to come from the Boërs, the names appended to which were in many instances obtained upon incorrect representations; and promises of the most specious description were held out to those who looked upon the emissaries with suspicion. The British flag was hoisted in May, 1877, and the Administrator made a triumphal progress through the country. The projected railway scheme was knocked on the head, the Administrator declaring that the railway was not desirable! None of the promises made were performed, the *Volksraad* was not recalled, and very few of the old officials received their back pay. Taxes were being raised meanwhile with alarming rapidity; a licence for sale, which before the annexation cost £20, was now raised to £80; the military occupation had to be paid for, as well as the sinecure posts which had been given to the Administrator's hangers-on; so that the Boër who never had any cash, and whose only wealth

consisted of his cattle and his farm, was very hardly pressed. The very English, who upon the annexation went up to Pretoria, were disgusted with the action or rather inaction of the Government, and expressed themselves in very strong terms upon the subject; while over one hundred men, late volunteers under the Republic, left the country in despair of ever obtaining the sum of money which the Administrator, prior to the annexation, had pledged himself to pay them. Such was the condition of affairs at the time we crossed the border.

Our advent upon Transvaal soil was heralded by the evolution of a terrific hurricane, or rather circular storm, of such extraordinary fury that I expected every moment the waggon to be blown clean away. It split the tent sail in half, leaving us poor mortals exposed to a storm of hailstones that fell among us like grape-shot, and we were only too glad to cower in the mud underneath the waggon for protection. The bullocks had a very bad time of it, and from our coign of vantage could be seen madly rushing about in the valley, in search of some sheltering tree or rock. The night was spent in rather a miserable pickle. The rain, although not long in duration, had been amply sufficient to wet through every available stitch of clothing we had, and not a particle

of dry wood or cow-dung was forthcoming for a fire. There was, however, plenty of brandy and tobacco in the locker, and with this we managed to get along until next morning's sunrise and inspan.

While sitting at our noontide meal that day, a troop of Kafirs in warlike array bore down upon us, and commenced a grand lamentation in respect to the scarcity of *doka* (hemp) and *gwai* (tobacco). They were going to a "beer-drink," and were totally out of these commodities; we were rich, would we make them a present of some? They were a remarkably fine lot of men, tall, handsome, and well-developed, their dark chestnut skin showing to great advantage against the kilt or petticoat of cats' tails they wore depending from their loins. Tobacco being tolerably cheap, we gave them a few ounces, thinking thus to get rid of them, the scent of a Kafir not being such as to increase one's appetite for dinner. But we were mistaken. The tobacco having been received and divided amongst them, they suddenly discovered that they were very hungry, and hinted that some food would be acceptable. Weakly, we gave them the broken remains of our meal, which they devoured instanter, remarking, when they had finished, that a drink of brandy would not come amiss. This was rather too much of a good thing, and as they grew somewhat insolent in

their importunities, it became necessary to threaten an application of the whip unless they took their immediate departure. This they did, saluting us with a howl of derision the instant they got out of reach.

Arrived at the foot of the Berg, we came to a store, and with savoury visions of fresh meat, etc., hurried forward. Judge of our disgust at finding the place totally deserted by every human being. Not even a Kafir was to be found. Windows and doors were barred, and it became painfully evident that the residents had trekked off, probably to attend some *nachtmaal* or other ceremony at the nearest church town, and left the place to take care of itself.

Determined not to be done, we foraged about, and presently discovered a fowl-house. "Necessity has no law;" the padlock soon came off, and half a dozen plump fowls were quickly tied by the legs and transferred to the waggon, while a couple more suffered immediate death, and were cooked on the spot, the market value of the plunder, wrapped in a polite note, having been nailed against the fowl-house door to save further trouble.

On the 13th of August, we crossed the Vaal river, which, at this place in dry weather, is but an insignificant stream, though in its long course to the Atlantic it widens into one of the mightiest rivers of the African continent. It became now necessary to

shoe the oxen, their feet having been rendered very sore and tender by the stony roads over the mountain, and in some cases were actually bleeding. The process was accomplished by throwing the bullock, making his leg fast to the dissel-boom of the waggon, and nailing half a horse-shoe to the outer clove of his hoof. It was not by any means an easy matter, and as more than half the span required the operation, we were again considerably delayed.

About twenty miles further on we reached the High Veldt, a very extensive plateau, stretching some 200 miles in each direction, and elevated at its lowest point no less than 5000 feet above the level of the sea. Although at first sight almost totally devoid of interest, this region has nevertheless many remarkable characteristics. Its most striking feature, when viewed in the winter season, is, perhaps, its apparent sterility —a dreary, vast expanse, with nothing to break the monotony of the landscape. As on the pampas of South America, a traveller may ride for days over it without encountering shrub, bush, or tree. Nothing but grass meets the eye, and where the grass leaves off the sky begins. The district is, however, anything but sterile. As grazing land, it commands the highest price in the Transvaal, and lucky is the Boër to whom has been awarded a farm, or *plaats*, on the High Veldt. It is well watered by a great number

of small rivers; the climate is bracing and healthy; its mineral wealth is undoubtedly great, though as yet undeveloped; and it is, moreover, a great resort of game. In the summer, bless-buck, spring-buck, and *wildebeest* (gnu) literally scud about in thousands; the country swarms with them. I have stood upon a little elevation, and seen the veldt around me absolutely moving with them. It was a sight which few who had not been actual eye-witnesses would credit. At present, however, the game, though comparatively plentiful, did not show in such vast numbers, the weather still being chilly, and the water-courses dry. They were, moreover, rather difficult to get within range of, and as travellers have not much time for stalking, we had to be content with a stray chance shot now and then.

After leaving the Vaal, our water-supply began to run short; for two days the oxen had no water whatever, and showed a very strong inclination to run away when outspanned, so that we had to hurry on as fast as we were able. At Klipstapel, a small elevation of the ridge, upon which a rough beacon or cairn was erected, we came upon a good spring, and remained twenty-four hours to recruit. It was rather a ghastly place. All around the veldt was blackened with fire, and scattered over it in great profusion lay the bleaching skulls of gnu and ante-

lope, which had either died here or had been shot by the Boërs. It was a very Golgotha, and crowds of over-gorged vultures sat about in a very significant fashion. The skulls, however, came in somewhat opportunely—they served as material for a good fire, wherewith the haunches of a spring-buck were roasted for our dinner. This little antelope of which, among others, I shot several before we reached Lijdenburg, is a very beautiful creature, of surpassing grace, and fleet as the wind. In colour it is very pleasing, the ground tinting being a cinnamon brown on the upper part of the body, and pure white on the abdomen, while a broad band of reddish brown separates the two colours; the head being armed with a pair of handsome lyre-shaped horns. A full-grown ram spring-buck will stand four feet high at the rump, and weigh from ninety to one hundred pounds. It derives its name from the extraordinary leaps which it is in the habit of making whenever alarmed. As soon as it is frightened by any real or fancied danger, it will leap high into the air with a very curious movement, rising to a height of seven or eight feet or even more, without any apparent difficulty. It is a marvellously timid animal, and will never cross a waggon-track if it can possibly help it. When obliged to do so, it compromises the difficulty by leaping over the spot contaminated by the foot

of man. These spring-bucks congregate at certain seasons of the year in immense droves, consisting of many hundred thousands, and thus migrate from one spot to another, ravaging the country in their passage far worse than would a cloud of locusts. The continual advance of civilization is reducing them very much in numbers, as, indeed, it is reducing all South African game; and I fear that before many years are past, spring-buck or any other antelope will be a *rara avis* in the High Veldt. The bless-buck, a larger antelope than the latter, and far more plentiful, is so named on account of the white mark or "blaze" upon the face, and offers very fair shooting. They are tolerably easy of approach, but are best shot from horseback, as they are very tenacious of life, and unless struck in an immediately fatal spot, will run a long way before giving in. Gnu are also plentiful in the summer, but at this time of the year we did not meet with any. Some months afterwards I had a very fair turn with them, which I shall speak of further on.

Klipstapel being rather an important landmark, as well as one of the highest spots on the High Veldt, Cecil determined the latitude and elevation with instruments he had by him, inscribing his results on the rock in large type, together with Sydney's, his own, and my initials, in the orthodox tourist

fashion. The figures of the latitude I have mislaid or lost, and can only now give the elevation, viz., 6350 feet.

Another tremendous hailstorm overtook us while resting here. Our conductor, who happened to be at some distance from the waggon, received a severe peppering, and, had not one of the attendant Kafirs run down to him with an empty brandy case for the protection of his head, the consequences might have been serious. As it was, the cattle were severely cut and bruised.

On the day following, we had a fair share of sport, killing one spring-buck and two bless-buck, the flesh of which was at once cut up for *biltong*, or dried meat—a very agreeable and handy form of animal food largely used up country, both by whites and Kafirs.

Through the carelessness of our Kafir boys on the same day, an accident occurred of a somewhat alarming character. The grass, which just here was of a very long and reedy variety, known as *tambooki*, caught fire, and, defying all our efforts to extinguish it, speedily grew into a conflagration of enormous proportions. In a few hours the whole country in one direction appeared to be on fire, and the crackling of the flames, although now distant, was still distinctly audible. In considerable trepidation as to

the results, we inspanned and trekked on, but were soon caught up by the Boër proprietor of the land. What passed between him and our conductor I was unable to understand, the conversation being carried on in Dutch; but from what Cockroft subsequently said, I gathered that unless reparation was made by him within two months, a prosecution would follow. Being a Transvaal transport-rider, our conductor was personally known to many Boërs in this district, so that any false representations on his part would probably have entailed his arrest at the very next town through which we should pass. One circumstance, however, in his favour was that, at this time of the year, the grass itself is of no particular value, and is as frequently as not burnt off by the Boërs themselves. I never heard how the matter was settled, but in all probability the compensation, if any, was only a trivial one.

It is not to be imagined that these farms of the Boërs are in any way comparable to what we understand in the ordinary application of the term. They are simply huge tracts of country, containing 6000 acres or more, with nothing but a small beacon of piled-up stones at certain points to mark the line of boundary. In proportion to the amount of land held by each proprietor, there is a very small piece under cultivation—at the most ten or twenty acres,

and, in the majority of cases, two or three or none at all. The original method of measuring off these "runs" was somewhat primitive. Starting from the last-made beacon, a Boër would ride in a straight line for half an hour as fast as his horse could carry him, then halt, erect a beacon, and again ride away for half an hour in a direction at right angles to his first ride, and erect another. The rectangle made by these two lines of ride would contain his farm, so that by this method the Boër who had the fleetest horse obtained the largest tract of land. Within the last few years' science, however, has been brought to bear on the subject, and farms are now measured by the theodolite. The introduction of this instrument has caused a great many disputes: farms, the boundaries of which were believed to be perfectly defined, were discovered to overlap one another to a serious extent, and as this is the case all through the country, the land surveyors are having a pretty good time of it.

At the Comati river, where there is a store belonging to Percy Hope and Co., I met with a Boër who gave me an account of the antecedents and present *status* of his race that I should never have dreamt of, and, but for the fact that I have heard the same tale from others, I should have attributed it to the elastic capacity of his own

imagination. According to him, the Boërs were the remnant of the lost tribes of Israel sojourning in the wilderness, and the English a scourge sent them by the Almighty to smite them for their iniquities. The Land of Promise they believe to lie beyond the Limpopo, and in confirmation of this belief they have actually given the name of *Nile* to a small river rising in the Upper Transvaal and flowing northwards.

During the 1877 war with Sekukuni, the Kafirs attacked the store-house here, which was defended only by the manager and his assistant. Of these two the latter, Mr. Jennings, was shot, and was subsequently buried by his friend. I saw his grave, about a hundred yards distant from the store.

Leaving the Comati, the country again became broken and difficult, and the game was confined to the thickets in the mountain kloofs. On the 22nd of August we entered a beautiful valley, named after the Crocodile river, which runs through it. The bottom of this valley, some four or five miles in width, has the appearance of a sunken plain; with one remarkable exception it is perfectly flat. This is a small hill, some 300 feet in height, rising out of the centre of the plain in the form of a sugar-loaf, and known from its peculiarity as the *Kopje Alleen*, or Lonely Hill. Owing to the

sheltered position of this valley and the constant supply of water at hand, it is in the winter season a very favourite resort for the High Veldt Boërs, who bring hither their herds and flocks to graze and feed until the new grass shall have sprung up in their own district, and the cold winds have passed away.

We fell in with a great number of these gentry, perfectly at home in their waggons, with their wives, children, and household gods. From all of them we experienced the usual hospitality—a cup of coffee and a series of flabby handshakings; for when you meet a Boër with his family you are not supposed to shake hands with him alone, but to extend the same form of salute to his *vrouw* and to every one of the *kinderkins* present, often some ten or twelve in number; so that as pocket-handkerchiefs are the exception, and *leckers* (a kind of sticky sweetmeat) the rule, your hand, at the finish of a family "How do you do?" has something of the adhesiveness and consistency of a glutinous fish.

Plenty of rocky roads after leaving Crocodile Valley. I thought every wheel in the waggon must break with the jolting and jarring; but we came through tolerably well, and in the early morning of the 24th of August, outspanned by the little town of Lijdenburg.

Translated into English, Lijdenburg signifies the City of Sorrows, and its aspect does not belie its name. Situate in the middle of a stony desert flat, its houses hidden from view by the thickly planted weeping willows with which they are surrounded, the town presents the appearance of a cemetery. Even when you walk through it, an unaccountable mournfulness steals over your thoughts; every sound is hushed, and you feel as if you were walking in a city of the dead. Grass grows in the streets; on the market square one might lose a span of oxen. The *plan* of Lijdenburg is large; its streets are many, but its houses are very, very few. So with its people. Were it not for the proximity of the gold-fields, Lijdenburg would hardly be alive. At the time of my visit, there were about 200 inhabitants scattered over an area of about two square miles. Five stores, branches of well-known South African houses, a bank, two canteens, an old Dutch church, a dilapidated hospital, a ditto prison, locally styled the "tronk," a court-house, and about twenty-five private houses, completed the number of buildings in the town. One hundred yards outside of it, the country is as much of a wilderness as it is a hundred miles away.

To-day, however, I am libelling Lijdenburg.

Had not the City of Sorrows laid aside her widow's weeds, and assumed the garb of festivity? Was there not a triumphal arch of cypress and willow branches built over the main road, and a subscription list for a ball (Heaven save the mark!) hung out at the hospital for signature? Was not his mightiness and super-excellency the Administrator, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, K.C.M.G., coming to inspect her beauty, to tell her loving tales, and make her pretty promises? Yes, all this was true; the Administrator was due to-morrow, and Lijdenburg, stifling her sobs, was trying to look her best.

Having made ourselves presentable, we walked into the town, and were met, much to my surprise, by two gentlemen, one of whom politely inquired which of us was Dr. Atcherley. Replying that I was the humble individual in question, he introduced himself as Captain Aylward, late of the Lijdenburg volunteers, and his friend as Mr. Ex-President Stafford Parker, of diamond-field celebrity, both for the present residing at Lijdenburg, and at my service. In the course of conversation, I discovered that a mutual friend had written Captain Aylward respecting my movements; hence the civility.

Captain Aylward was in every way a remarkable man, and gifted with singular powers of conversa-

tion. His actual profession in life was, I believe, that of a surgeon; but on account of his having commanded, and in fact raised the corps of Lijdenburg volunteers in the Republic's campaign against Sekukuni, after Schlieckmann had been shot, he had assumed, or was rather addressed by, the more martial prefix of "Captain." It was my fortune to meet with a great many of these now disbanded volunteers during my stay in this part of the country; and many and curious were the tales I heard of their doings and anticipations. At the present moment, the captain was in a very unsettled frame of mind. Her Britannic Majesty's representative was to appear on the scene to-morrow, and the captain, being in principles a Republican, and moreover an Irish one, was in considerable doubt as to what part he should take in the reception.

The other gentleman, Mr. Stafford Parker, had no scruples at all on the subject; he was a Republican heart and soul, and, when I asked him as to what he intended doing with his children in such an out-of-the-way place, unhesitatingly replied, "I shall bring them up to hate the British Government."

Captain Aylward kindly invited us to dinner at the hospital, where we made the further acquaintance of Dr. Ashton, a very pleasant and intelligent young man, who had distinguished himself both as

surgeon and in the field and during service with the volunteers. I had subsequently the pleasure of seeing this gentleman upon several occasions; but although in my various trips I was frequently almost treading on Captain Aylward's heels, I never enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing or speaking with him again —a fact which I regret.

The waggon was unloaded at a store in the town, and in the evening we trekked on with our personal belongings, after having further encumbered ourselves with a tent, together with some articles of gold-digging and domestic utility, purchased at Lijdenburg. Our next destination was the camp of Spitzkop, and although the distance was but twenty-five miles, it was not until the morning of the 27th that we reached it, having been no less than sixty hours on the road.

A spur of the Drakensberg runs out here, and the country is very broken and rough. Leaving Lijdenburg, we had a very hard tug to get up the hill at all, even with a comparatively empty waggon. This alone took us fifteen hours. The aspect of the country now began to alter; vegetation grew more abundant, and the scenery more attractive—a great change from the flat and monotonous country we had left behind us. At one very deep precipice, the edge of which we passed, we loosened some

rocks, and sent them plunging into the abyss with fine effect and a wonderful echo, terrifying the cats and monkeys out of their wits. But they had their revenge; for as the waggon was travelling on a narrow track scarped on the mountain-side, it went too near the edge; the soft gravel yielded, and the dissel-boom breaking, away went the waggon careering down the slope, to the tremendous detriment of itself, our goods, and lastly, though not least, of Cecil (the unlucky), who happened at the time to be in it asleep.

It was only after many hours' hard work, and the exercise of a considerable amount of judgment and patience, that we got the waggon back again on to the road, and had leisure to sum up our losses. Almost everything that was breakable was broken. A case of medicines of mine was ground to powder; Sydney's rifle was bent double; of seven cases of brandy only three remained whole; while pots and pans were knocked into cocked hats. The damage done to the waggon was serious: all the framework of its tent was smashed, the "buck," or overlapping grating, was broken off, and the dissel-boom was split in two. This latter had, of course, to be repaired ere we could move on. A small tree had to be cut, and its manipulation into a dissel-boom occupied some two or three hours. Strange to say,

Cecil escaped unhurt; to be sure his nose was skinned, and his shins ditto, but the loss of the brandy was to him the worst upset. It was fortunate that the accident happened where it did, for as we advanced the scarped road became still narrower, and the adjacent precipice deeper and more dangerous. Had a slip occurred here, nothing could have saved the waggon and its contents from an entire smash-up.

The difficulties of this particular spot have obtained for it the name among transport-riders of "The Devil's Knuckles," an appellation of which it is in every way worthy. The mountain itself is known as Mauch's Peak, named after the traveller Dr. Mauch, and stands 8000 feet in elevation.

But the descent was worse than anything we had yet come to. Huge boulders and blocks of stone lay right across the track; wide chasms and gulfs yawned and gaped in it and alongside of it; every wheel had to be made immovable with cow-hide *reims;* and the down-hill journey was literally a series of falls from rock to rock. How ever it was accomplished in safety was to me a marvel. In a mile I should say we descended no less than 1500 feet, both men and bullocks being tolerably well done up by the time we reached the valley below, and too tired for aught but a quick supper and a good sleep.

The next morning saw us again on the trek, but unable to get over more than about four miles of ground on account of the extreme caution with which we had to proceed. The scenery was magnificent; the whole panorama of the Sabie valley lay open before us, stretching some fifteen miles towards the east, through which the river wound like a silver serpent, glistening in the sun. Apparently close to us, the Spitzkop Mountain reared its head, although in reality the base alone, where the camp is situate, was still some ten miles further on. A large black eagle perched upon a rock at a distance of 300 yards, lazily beating its wings and tearing something with its beak, formed an appropriate adjunct to the scene. He did not, however, remain there long, for I shot him clean through the breast and dislodged him from his perch, with a half-eaten partridge in his talons.

Later on, we came to a hill, composed, as far as I could make out, entirely of pure magnetic iron-stone, particles of which clung to the iron tires of the wheels as we travelled along. A small pocket compass of mine was strongly affected, and for guidance would here have been worse than useless. Some specimens which I picked up were beautifully crystallized in the forms of octohedra and pentagonal dodecahedra, and remarkably regular in

their shape. In the little valley adjacent, I met with considerable masses of spongy brown hæmatite, similar to bog ore, the product, I presume, of the action of the weather on the magnetic ore above.

Here a thunderstorm again compelled us to outspan, and we passed a miserable night huddled up in the waggon. The effect of a thunderstorm in these regions is truly appalling. The thunder peals with one incessant roar, the echo of which is thrown back with tenfold fury from the rocks around, and shakes the very earth. Broad bands of liquid fire literally pour out of the pitchy black clouds, and split into a thousand streaks of flashing light, with an explosion like that of a dynamite-mine. Accidents are by no means uncommon, and the natives are in very great awe of these electrical manifestations.

Rising with the sun on the following morning, we walked on, determined to waste no more time with the waggon, but to let it come on as best it could. From a saddle where the track led between two rocky hills, we sighted the camp—a dozen or so canvas buildings, looking like large birds stretching their pinions, far down in the valley below. The *tout ensemble*, as seen from this point, was the grandest thing in the way of a view it had ever been my lot to behold, in so far as Nature in her loneliness and beauty is to be seen. The eye moves

from range to range of mountains, each one seeming more lofty than the other, receding like waves into the far horizon. On all sides it is the same grand sight: now a large, sloping hill, then a sharp, precipitous one; then a deep gorge, and now a long valley with a hardly perceptible stream of water running down, which makes one wonder how it worked its course through those huge monsters and whither it winds. Deep down to the left of where we stood meanders the Sabie (Sabi-lala) in its course to the falls; the two or three patches of mealies on its banks appearing very small specks indeed. To the right is a beautiful fern-grown meadow, with a purling brook bounding down its centre, along the edge of which cattle are cropping the sweet herbage. It is no wonder the mountain of Spitzkop was singled out by the Boër *voor-trekkers* as worthy of a distinctive name. As seen from the vantage height on which we stood, it looked like a sentinel watching over the welfare of its less pretentious, but not less grand, fellow mountains.

Descending into the valley, cut "water-races" became numerous, and after some four hours' toilsome walking, we crossed the dry creek, and, much to our satisfaction, entered the Spitzkop township. An hour or so afterwards the waggon itself came up, and all of us having adjourned to a canvas canteen,

significantly known as the "Square Face," kept by a German of the name of Bossmann, we applied ourselves diligently to the discussion, first of a square meal, and then of our prospects for the immediate future. The remainder of the day was spent in unpacking the waggon, and generally arranging matters—Cecil and Sydney settling to take up their quarters for the time being at Bossmann's canteen, while I, preferring rather more solitude and less noise, pitched my tent at some little distance, and, having transferred my effects thither, set up housekeeping on my own account, with Jack Williams as a temporary visitor and help.

CHAPTER V.

The land of Ophir—An illiberal Government—New policy—Marabastad reef—Lijdenburg fields—Statistics—Scarcity of water—Population—Initiation—"Hind-leg"—Lynch law—An ingrate—Disappointing news—Sir Theophilus Shepstone—"Yankee Dan"—A carouse—"All gon'd afay."

SOUTH AFRICA has long been known as a gold-producing country. In the Portuguese historical records we continually meet with accounts of the purchase of gold-dust from the natives, at the various settlements of that nation upon the east coast. Baines, in his work entitled "The Gold Regions of South Africa," states his belief that the gold said to have been employed in the decoration of Solomon's temple all came from this region, and that in South Africa is to be found the veritable land of Ophir. At the time, however, that he wrote, the Lijdenburg gold-fields were as yet not known, and he refers more especially to the gold-producing districts north of the Limpopo, in the country of the Matabile, known as the Victoria diggings, or the

Tatin. On this subject his work is remarkably interesting.

That gold actually existed in the Transvaal was only known to a very few in the two or three years next preceding that in which the fields were "rushed." Under the presidentship of Mr. Pretorius, the influx of British immigrants was regarded with very great suspicion, and, with a view of limiting their intrusion on Transvaal soil, the announcement of the discovery of precious stones or metals, excepting to the State authorities, was made penal. The unlucky Boër who, having found a nugget of gold upon his plaats, permitted the fact to escape him, was liable to a fine of £500, and this penalty, meaning little short of ruination, was effectual as a means of preserving the secret.

Upon the election, however, of the Honourable Thomas Burghers to the presidential chair, a different and more liberal policy was initiated. The former tyrannical measure was repealed, and the mineral resources of the country were thrown open to the world for development. In so doing, however, the President sounded the death-knell of the Republic's independence; for where once the English speculator sets his foot, he carries with him his aggressive customs, and British annexation becomes only a matter of time.

Prospectors of every description soon overran the country, and it was not long before payable gold was discovered. In 1869 and 1870, Messrs. Button and Sutherland had already found indications in the districts of Zoutpansberg and in the Murchison ranges, and in 1871, Mr. Button, following up his previous discoveries, hit upon a reef near the village of Marabastad. A limited company was thereupon formed, with a capital of £50,000, having several well-known colonists upon its directorial board, among whom was Lieut.-Colonel Weatherly, a retired British officer, who has since fallen at the Zlobani Mountain while fighting against the Zulus.

After some two years' working, and the expenditure of an enormous sum of money for the erection of mills, stampers, and other plant, the yield was found to be such as not to justify further outlay, and the undertaking was, I believe, practically abandoned, at least so I was given to understand by Colonel Weatherly himself.

In April, 1873, payable gold was discovered at Spitzkop, and the Government award for successful prospecting was claimed by Messrs. Thomas McLachlan, George Valentine, and G. R. Parsons. Mac-Mac, about ten miles further north, was "rushed" in June of the same year, and Pilgrim's Rest in the month of September.

The gold found in all these three places is mainly alluvial, resting around and at the base of quartz boulders of considerable size, on an argillaceous bottom, at a depth varying from two to forty feet from the surface. At Mac-Mac a reef is said to exist, but its proportions are very small, and in fact it is hardly worthy of a better name than a "blow."

A Mr. Armfield has erected a stamper here, but I do not think he gets much gold. At Pilgrim's Rest there is also supposed to be a reef, and a company has been formed to work it; but from what I saw and heard, I gather that the company make their money more by the sale of water and digging rights than by the gold they find.

It is difficult to obtain any reliable returns as to the amount of gold really found. Miners are rather reticent upon the subject of their finds, and it is only upon the amount passing through the hands of large purchasers and bankers that any returns are obtainable. I find it noted that in the year 1875, £72,000 worth was sent home in the mail steamers (freight paid on), and Mr. Simpson, the Secretary of the Pilgrim's Rest Gold-fields Company, Limited, told me that he estimated this quantity as not being the third of what was found in the year. He also stated that in the same year one man left with £8000, and another in 1877 with £16,000, but personally I am

doubtful about the latter figure. The following is a letter from Mr. Turton, the manager of the branch of the Cape Commercial Bank at Pilgrim's Rest:—

[Copy.]

"Cape Commercial Bank,
"Pilgrim's Rest,
"December 1, 1877.

"Dr. Atcherley, Pilgrim's Rest.

"DEAR SIR,

"I beg to inform you, in reply to your question of this morning, that I estimate the amount of gold produced by these fields, since their opening, at £300,000 (say three hundred thousand pounds).

"It is impossible for any one to give you anything more than an approximate amount, as so many diggers never tell their finds, but take the gold away when they have worked out their ground, only selling what they need for current expenses. I have arrived at my estimate by taking:

"1st. The amount purchased by this bank;

"2nd. Estimating what the Natal Bank bought;

"3rd. What I consider private purchasers bought;

"4th. What I have known to have been taken away;

"5th. What I have reason to believe has been taken away by those I did not know; and

"6th. A margin for small sums.

"You will see that there is only one of six items about which there is any certainty, but I am pretty confident that I have not over-estimated the yield of the fields.

"Yours faithfully,

(Signed) "JNO. TURTON."

The workings at Pilgrim's Rest have as yet produced the heaviest gold. A nugget weighing 120 ounces was found by Messrs. Lilley and Russell in the Upper Creek; and as much as 17 ounces in small pieces, of which the largest weighed 2¾ ounces, was found in one bucketful of wash-dirt by Mackay and Grosser; while, as an instance of "patchiness," 17 square feet of an apparently good wash in the adjoining claim yielded only 1 dwt. of fine gold. A lady digger, Miss Russell, held here a very paying claim and exhibited some 80 lbs. weight of beautiful and valuable specimens at the late International Exhibition at Philadelphia, U.S.A. A Mr. Cameron found a nugget weighing 194 ounces, or over 16 lbs. It was named the "Perseverance," and was for some time on show at Capetown. But the best-known finds have been those of Messrs. May and Hosking. These diggers "jumped" a claim which had already been

worked unsuccessfully by several other parties. They hit upon a lead, and, following it up, made a tremendous haul. Hosking took several trips to England with his proceeds, and at one time exhibited at Pretoria 60 lbs. weight of "curiosity" nuggets, ranging from 40 to 60 ounces apiece. In the latter end of 1877, a man named Mason purchased in my presence a claim which had only been paying bread and cheese for the previous occupant, and turned out for twenty weeks successively from 60 to 120 ounces per week; and another man, whose name I forget, washed over a heap of old tailings, with a yield of 85 ounces of fine gold, the previous washings having been very roughly performed.

But these fortunate individuals were only the few among the many. The greater part of the diggers are very badly off, and, as the gold only lies in patches, no indications can be considered safe. Old Australian diggers can make nothing of the place; their experience is here entirely at fault, and the most unsophisticated tyro in gold-mining stands quite as good a chance as they do. Every now and then a good find is made, but the usual thing one hears is "only tucker." "Colour" may be found almost anywhere, but it takes a great deal of colour to keep a man alive, especially at the

high prices provisions command. In 1877–78, bread at the fields cost 2*s.* per lb., coffee 2*s.*, tea 4*s.*, and all pint tins of preserved foods 2*s.* per tin. Beef was cheap—6*d.* per lb.—and nasty; but one cannot live on beef alone.

The great drawback to the profitable working of the fields, at the time of my visit, appeared to be the scarcity of water. Without water, gold cannot be got out of the earth. One might be standing upon countless treasure, yet without that one thing needful it is as safe from the hand of man as if it were ten miles below the surface. Now, in the neighbourhood of either of the three chief diggings of the Lijdenburg fields, there is no large stream sufficiently near or elevated to divert, dam, or lead water from without very considerable outlay, and as there are no large capitalists at the fields, the water is scarce. For the last three years there has been a great drought. The main creeks of Spitzkop and Pilgrim's Rest are now little streams, hardly worthy of the name of creek, and even these are fast drying up. Those claims most easily accessible to water are worked out, and the diggers have to go higher and higher on the terraces. This necessitates the construction of "flumes," long artificial water-races, and other workings, which entail great expense. At Spitzkop there is a race, known as White's, over

which an enormous sum has been spent. This race is eight miles in length, and was intended to bring water from a dammed creek running north from the mountain. When, however, the race was complete and the water let in, it was found that, although twenty "heads" ran in, not a drop came even half-way. A great portion of it was then lined with puddled clay, which was found to hold the water better; but then a landslip occurred, which could only be remedied by "fluming" some thousand yards in length. Now, as yellow-wood planks cost 30*s.* apiece, this fluming would have amounted to a sum which Spitzkop capitalists had not at their disposal. And, be it noted, that very few of the traders were interested in digging, or supported the diggers to any extent. The store-keepers stuck to their business of supply and did not interfere at all in digging matters, being, like all Africanders, terribly afraid of any kind of speculation. Indeed, I doubt very much whether these gentry did not know better than to lay out their money in works of this kind. It is a painful fact, as many a poor fellow has learnt in the loss of his time and money, that too frequently the "rushes" have been promoted by unscrupulous traders and canteen-runners, who, having their own views in end, have falsely circulated the rumour of a good prospect. I met with several miscreants of this description, and

am only deterred from naming them by the belief that they would consider such attention as an honour.

The population at the gold-fields was at its maximum in the early months of the year 1874. At that time there were about 500 miners, 200 men engaged in other pursuits, employing together 680 Kafir labourers. Since then it has much decreased, and at the time of my visit it was estimated that not more than 200 were actually engaged in mining, 90 in trading, besides 190 women and children. Of the women there were at Spitzkop only two. Many of the men were ex-volunteers, hanging on in the district in the hopes of obtaining the compensation that had been promised them by the Government. The gold-fields authorities consisted of a Gold Commissioner and Diggers' Committee; criminal cases being tried by the district magistrate from Lijdenburg, who sat at Pilgrim's Rest once every month. At the present day (1879), the population has still more diminished. Dear provisions, expensive transport, and war, have been too many for the digger; poverty has set in, and the place has the dry-rot. But I firmly believe that when the railway is constructed from Delagoa Bay (and that time cannot be far off), capital—mind, I say *capital*—will here find a very lucrative sphere for its employment.

* * * * * *

The first few days after my arrival I spent in looking about me, and fell in with a very pleasant fellow, a Mauritius man, who had been, as many of the others here, a filibuster in the Lijdenburg volunteers, and also suffered from the prevalent disease, impecuniosity. Together we strolled round the diggings, and I became gradually initiated into the mysteries of "flumes," "sluices," "leads," "bottom," "drift," "dirt," "wash," etc.; and after some little practice under his direction, was enabled to handle a dish scientifically and pan out.

In the various workings which I inspected, I had ample evidence of the scarcity of water. As a matter of fact, there was only what is called one *head* of water in the main camp creek, and this, from the fact of his having been the first in the field to make the application, was the property of one Heffernan, a wily Australian, who had dammed it, and led it away in a small race to command his claim on the terraces or upper levels. The only water, therefore, that other diggers could use was such as might be diverted from his race by pecuniary arrangement with him, or else the tail-water, thick and discoloured with mud, from his workings. And, indeed, things were so bad, that this tail-water would be used over and over again down creek, until it became as thick as batter and hardly capable of

flowing, much less of *washing* gold. In the neighbouring creeks matters were much the same—one man had all the water, and the remainder the mud. He who had the water made a good living; those who had the mud barely earned a subsistence. The greater number were all deeply in debt with the store-keepers and canteen-runners, and thus tied to the place. They appeared, however, on the whole to be a tolerably happy community, troubling themselves but little on the score of to-morrow's cares. *Sans six sous et sans souci.*

Many of the diggers I met were men of family and education. Two or three were "lords," and there was a fair sprinkling of honourables, captains, etc.; but here their titles went for nothing. The gold-fields formed a little republic, and a man who plumed himself on the prefixes to his name would have been dubbed an idiot by the others. Jack was as good as his master; all white men stood on the same level. A man who had even raised his hat to the Gold Commissioner would have been hissed. So far, indeed, was this feeling carried that, some months previously, when that august personage had committed for contempt of court a digger who had not been quite parliamentary in his language whilst giving evidence, they fairly kicked the Commissioner out of the camp, and the Government had to interfere.

Of course, I soon perceived that, with what small capital I had with me, it would be next to impossible to make anything like a fair start as a gold-digger; but yet, when I looked around and saw so many who had not a cent, still hanging on in the hopes of better things, and being, moreover, slightly bitten by the gold-fever myself, I determined to have at least a short trial, and accordingly pegged out a partly worked but abandoned claim close down to the creek, where, by carrying out the pay-dirt to a sluice-box, I might two or three times a week have a chance of washing.

Having done this, I engaged a Kafir, a strapping great refugee Zulu from near Delagoa Bay, of whom plenty came offering to work at the fields, and started him on in the claim, stripping the top soil off the gold-bearing strata. This the beggar did at his leisure, and in about a week had done what an English navvy would have considered about two fair days' work. But his labour was cheap at that even, a week's work costing me only six shillings.

Kafirs are engaged by the month of twenty-eight days, which they reckon by cutting a little notch for each day in their favourite stick or assegai shaft, and get wages varying from 15*s.* to £1, besides their food, or "scoff." This latter is nothing more than Indian or mealie flour, of which they consume

about two pounds a day in the form of a porridge. Occasionally they may get a piece of inferior meat, a bullock's head or paunch, and then there is a big feed. They sleep in little grass huts, which they erect for themselves within calling distance of their employer's tent, and there, when not working, they are almost always to be found cowering over a little fire, smoking doka and relating exploits to one another, usually the offspring of their own imagination. They are the happiest fellows imaginable, always laughing and singing, and never looking or feeling miserable, excepting when they are *cold*. Honesty is one of their chief characteristics; a little Kafir boy, or *umfana*, may prig sugar, and a larger one may surreptitiously abstract rum if he can, but this he does not look upon as stealing. Everything else you may trust him with, and as a rule he will prove thoroughly worthy of your confidence. In my goldfield experience of four months, I never but once heard of a Kafir stealing gold, and he paid the penalty with his life, for his master, an Englishman, shot him dead on the spot.

On the score of honesty, my Kafir, "Hind-leg," compared very favourably with Jack Williams, the man I had staying with me. This ingenious gentleman, a day or two after arrival at Spitzkop, returned my kindness to him by robbing me of

various articles and bolting with them. Among other things he had helped himself to were five bottles of "Three Star" brandy, which he had abstracted from the *bottom* of a case, leaving as many empty pickle bottles in the straw envelopes to fill the void. This trick I might have pardoned, but as I found he had also relieved me of five sovereigns, I sent my Kafir at once to the magistrate at Lijdenburg with an order to arrest him. Three days afterwards, I had news back that the scoundrel had actually stolen a horse at Lijdenburg, under pretence of hiring it for me, and had made his way south; so for the time he escaped. I had, however, subsequently the satisfaction of hearing that he had been taken at the Comati river, and was now enjoying the delights of compulsory road-making in irons at Pretoria.

On Saturday, the 1st of September, the weekly post came in, brought by a Kafir runner from Pilgrim's Rest, and we all received more or less important news. There was a rumour that England had declared war against Russia; another that Cetywayo, the Zulu king, was about to overrun the country with 40,000 warriors, and positive information (not a rumour) that the Lieutenant-Governor, having been fêted and feasted at Lijdenburg and Pilgrim's Rest, would pass through the Spitzkop camp in a day or so,

and claim the allegiance of the diggers to the Queen. The same post also brought a letter for Sydney, requiring his immediate presence in England upon matters of family importance, and another for Cecil, offering him a lucrative Government appointment in the colony of Natal.

I thus found, to my great disappointment, that I was to lose the company of both my friends, and was considerably disheartened at the turn affairs had taken. Notwithstanding their desire to remain, they thought it best to leave, and, considering the urgency of affairs in both cases, I refrained from importuning them to stay.

It was arranged, therefore, for them to leave for Delagoa Bay as soon as a sufficient number of Kafirs could be obtained as porters for their baggage. The distance to this port from Spitzkop is about 120 miles, and as the present was the healthy season, the walk might easily be performed in a week without any great danger.

Meanwhile, the camp was, of course, full of excitement with regard to the expected arrival of Sir Theophilus Shepstone. Some were for hoisting the Transvaal flag, and others, more warlike, spoke of entrenching the camp, and warning the Governor to advance at his peril, but their courage cooled down wonderfully as the time drew near, and on the day

before his arrival the malcontents were actually signing an address of welcome.

Monday, the 3rd of September, was the all-important day. At about 10 a.m. a mounted orderly rode into camp, inquiring as to the spot most suitable for an outspan, and in a very few minutes had some twelve or fourteen inches of French brandy pumped into his not unwilling stomach by patriotic diggers. Half an hour or so afterwards, the cavalcade arrived. At the head of the procession was the Lieutenant-Governor himself on horseback, accompanied by Captain Clarke, R.A., the Special Commissioner for the North, and Captain Browne, in command of the escort. Immediately following came the escort of mounted infantry (the Carington Horse), consisting of volunteers from the line regiments, mounted on horseback, and dressed in scarlet tunics and corduroy breeches. The rear was brought up by a train of waggons, carrying baggage and supplies, together with the Governor's own travelling vehicle, drawn by fourteen mules. Arrived at the camp, the cavalcade halted, and the diggers, having formed in two lines, saluted the Governor as he dismounted with a cheer. The address was then read by an old digger, and handed to the Governor, who returned thanks in a little cut-and-dried speech, and shook hands with those nearest to him, and having

drunk, or pretended to drink, a draught of sugarless and milkless tea out of a tin cup, offered him by one of the store-keepers, he passed on to the camping-ground, where his waggons had outspanned and a meal was being prepared.

Not in peace, though, for a digger, with the whisky glare strong in his eye, having watched his opportunity, now dived at him, and with a sounding thump on the back, which made the Governor shake again, declared that "by the snakes" he'd "shout drinks for the crowd," then and there. His Excellency declined, however, this honour, upon the plea of indisposition, and was then permitted to depart, the disappointed digger emphatically remarking that, all things considered, he reckoned a "black nigger was better than a white one."

Among the officers with the Governor's escort, I recognized an old acquaintance, who with two others came to my tent, and there spent a good portion of the afternoon, chatting over old times and possible future contingencies. Sir Theophilus, it appeared, did not intend returning direct to Pretoria on leaving here, but to make straight for the Zulu border, there to confer with Cetywayo, the Zulu king, and his Indunas, on the subject of the disputed boundary between the Transvaal and Zululand. My readers will remember that this matter

was settled twelve months subsequently in favour of the Zulu claim.

During the afternoon, a deputation of diggers proceeded to the camp, and had an audience with his Excellency, laying before him a statement of their wants and grievances, and finally asking for Government assistance in prospecting the country and developing the fields.

The Governor, of course, promised that everything should be looked into, and that his best should be done, and when he left, doubtless, gave not another thought to the matter.

Late in the afternoon, I had myself an interview with him, being introduced by my friend. I was not much prepossessed in his favour, either by his appearance or his manners. He was to me as Dr. Fell. Asking him whether the railway scheme would be carried out, he replied that *no man having common sense would think of scaling the steeps between the low country and the plateau in such a manner*, and that, moreover, the railway in itself was not desirable. He was sitting alone in his travelling spring-waggon, doing nothing, and had an unhappy look—perhaps, as he had already said, he was ill. Returning from my interview, I found a grass fire burning furiously in camp, and two tents already in flames. The alarm was at once sounded, and

all hands turned out—diggers, soldiers, and Kafirs, to extinguish the fire; but several erections had been burnt to the ground ere their attempts proved successful.

A great deal of noise and excitement followed. Drunken rows grew numerous, and the Governor, who had intended to stay the night, prudently resolved to make an immediate move. But the soldiers were drunk, the oxen lost, many of the horses had stampeded at the time of the fire, and there was general confusion. By dint of coaxing and threatening, however, matters became a trifle more orderly, and having obtained sufficient escort, Sir Theophilus betook himself to the mountain, and was seen again by no white man, except those who were with him, until eight months after.

Among the diggers collected in camp that day from the neighbouring gullies were two men, one of whom, Mr. England, I had some knowledge of years ago at Alexandria. Since then he had been made a football of by fortune, and was now endeavouring to scratch a subsistence out of the earth at the fields. His chum was a most remarkable man, who, if all that was said of him be true, certainly took the "shine" out of a great many modern travellers. This man, who is known to nearly every African traveller, was one of those who seek not celebrity

or social honours, and would doubtless as soon have thought of taming a hyæna as becoming a Saville Row lap-dog, or even chronicling a journey.

He had footed it over a vast portion of Africa. The Zambesi he knew by heart from the Kongoni mouth to its rise in the Kabompo. He had harpooned the hippopotamus on the great inland African seas. Swahéli was to him as his mother-tongue, and he was conversant with the language of half the native races of the continent. Long before Stanley and Cameron, and while Livingstone was, comparatively speaking, only pottering about on the outside, he had penetrated deep into the dark interior, and on one occasion had actually crossed single-handed from the Calabar country on the west, nearly 2500 miles, to Quilimāné, on the east coast. No army of attendants had he to help him during long days of sickness and fatigue; no elaborate outfit did he possess, paid for by enthusiastic admirers, who would *fête* and lionize him on his return home; nothing did he depend on but his own strong will, sturdy determination, and iron constitution, to bring him through the many dangers of that journey. My readers who are African travellers will know this man by my description; they will recognize an old friend—a cheery, hearty, jovial, honest old fellow, one who always had a good thing to say *to* everybody and *of* everybody; they will remember Yankee Dan!

On the day following the visit of the Governor, Cecil and Sydney obtained the services of a squad of Kafirs returning to Delagoa Bay, and made arrangements for their final departure. We had a farewell evening at a canvas canteen, dignified by the name of Byerley's Hotel. There was a goodly troop in attendance, a fairish supper on the board, and Byerley's Kafir cook had triumphed in his art. The "feast of reason" being over, the table was cleared for the "flow of soul;" a banjo, tambourine, and bones were dug out of some obscure old chest, and a case of French brandy having been opened, songs were sung, healths were drunk, and speeches made. I had been elected to the chair, and as I had to fairly bellow every time I wanted to be heard, the scene may be better imagined than described. Midnight came on, but no cessation—more speeches, now a little disjointed, more songs, and more hygienic wishes.

At length, my head nearly splitting with the row, I quietly sneaked off, reached the open air, and made tracks to my tent. The night was beautiful; overhead, nearly up in the zenith, the Southern Cross shone out in glorious splendour, and all around the stars appeared to glow with unusual refulgence. An exceptionally brilliant star stood to the westward, just over the edge of Mauch's Peak, and, like the

flicker of an expiring lamp, seemed to scintillate with increased luminosity as it dipped behind the mountain outline and disappeared. Almost unconsciously, as I turned in, I repeated to myself those quaintly pathetic lines of Charles G. Leland's—

"Vhere is de himmelstrahlende stern,
De shtar of de shpirits' light?
All gon'd afay mit de Lager-peer,
Afay in de Ewigkeit."

CHAPTER VI.

A speculation—Gold-digging—Prospecting—Spitzkop Mountain—Old workings—A Highland piper—The Transvaal flag—Insect life—Kafir rows—A seidlitz powder—Magneto-electric machine—Effects of a hurricane—A sad death—Rumours of war.

SHORTLY after the events narrated in the last chapter, Bossmann, the German proprietor of the "Square Face" canteen, which I had visited on the first day of my arrival, came to me and offered to sell his property at what appeared to be a very low figure. His life, he averred, was a misery to him. Being a German, the diggers did not "cotton" to him, and heaped indignities upon him one after the other. As recently as the preceding evening, some of them had cleared his shelves of all loose bottles, and answered his remonstrances by pitching him neck and crop through the side of his own building. Altogether, they had made it pretty lively for him, and he was desirous of throwing up the sponge. As I had not, however, the slightest intention of starting business in the canteen line myself, I

recommended him to try some one else, but offered, with a view to speculation, that in the event of his not being successful, to give him a nominal sum for the building, together with the trade value of the remaining case liquors. This proposal he eventually agreed to; the money was handed over, and the "Square Face" became my property at an exceedingly low figure.

At the first, my purchase proved rather a nuisance than otherwise. In spite of a notice in large letters stuck up outside, the Spitzkop public refused to believe that I had no intention of retailing liquors, and pestered me day and night, leaving me but little peace while in possession. After retaining it, however, about a week, the camp was visited by two Americans, one of whom I had met at Lijdenburg, and to these I parted with the whole concern at a very fair profit. But their benefit was not great; for on the day following the sale a hurricane left nothing standing but the bare poles.

By this time, the 22nd of September, my Kafir, "Hind-leg," had stripped a considerable piece of ground in my claim, and had got a few loads of dirt ready for washing. The two Americans, Van der Werken and Cooper, being desirous of joining me in a digging partnership—a common arrangement at the fields—we made an agreement that as they could only

provide one working member at a time, to divide gold and expenses into two equal shares, of which one would come to me and the other to them. This done, we washed up during the next few days some twenty loads of dirt in the sluice-box, and obtained nearly ten ounces troy of gold, worth £3 13*s.* per ounce.

The operation of gold-washing is very simple. A long square trough, termed a "sluice-box," about a foot in width and twenty feet long, is fixed in a convenient place at a slight inclination, and water is allowed to flow rapidly through it. Half-way down the box is a little ledge termed a "ripple," about two inches in height, and another similar one is fixed at the lower end, the space between the two being paved with heavy, flat stones. The dirt is shovelled in at the upper end, and the water, flowing rapidly by, washes away all the lighter portions of the dirt, leaving the heavier and the gold behind. Three men are required to work the box properly—one to shovel in; another to regulate the flow of water, and keep the upper division of the box free from heavy stones; and a third, whose business it is to keep the tail-race clear of mud and tailings, which would, if left to accumulate, back the water up and flood out the box. The dirt having been worked up, the stream of water is lessened, and the contents of the upper division

are gradually worked down with the hand to the ripple. Stones are picked out, and the remaining mass carefully scraped up with a piece of tin and transferred into a round iron dish, known to miners as a "pan."

The operation of "panning" is best performed in a still pool, and is, to my mind, the most interesting part of the whole business. The pan, held in both hands, is immersed in the water with the outer edge slightly depressed, and gently shaken from side to side, with a sort of circular motion, in such a way as to allow at every shake a portion of the dirt to pass over the edge. In this way the heavier particles go to the bottom, and, by continuing the process, the gold is eventually separated.

Few but those who have actually experienced it can imagine the thrill of pleasure and excitement with which the digger contemplates his first good "prospect" in the pan. There they are—some bright and yellow, others inky black, little rounded nuggets of every shape; but each one the curse of the earth, the cause of crime, dishonour, misery; and yet how dear, precious, and attractive!

Our prospect was considered pretty good, and, thus encouraged, we engaged the services of three more Kafirs, "Lips," "Bullock," and "Soda," and commenced a course of systematic work, washing up a

load of dirt about every other day. It was rather hard work, the Kafirs requiring constant supervision and "bossing up," as they had as little idea of using a pick or a shovel as a child. The dirt had to be carried a distance of about forty yards to the water, and as we only had empty brandy cases to carry it in, the transport was rather slow. With a view of improvement, we constructed, with considerable trouble, a wheelbarrow—rather primitive in shape, to be sure, and clumsy in appearance, but immeasurably better than a box—and, having trundled it down to the claim, directed it to be used for the purpose of wheeling out the dirt. An hour or so afterwards I was in my tent, trying to nap through the hottest part of the day, when one of the Kafirs appeared, asking for the return of the box, declaring that he could not use the barrow on *account of its weight.* Returning with him to the claim, I discovered, to my mingled astonishment and amusement, that, instead of *wheeling* the barrow out after filling it, they had been actually *carrying* it on their heads, precisely in the same manner as they had been in the habit of carrying the box; and it was a long time ere I could make them understand the true use and value of the barrow; in fact, I really think they never did understand it, for although they would use it in an awkward fashion whilst any of us were present, yet

directly our backs were turned, the barrow would be discarded, and the box would take its place.

Our claim, which for the first few weeks had given a pretty good show, now began to fall off, and the last few "washes up" had hardly paid expenses. We were, moreover, getting rather too near Hefferman's race; and he, fearing that perhaps the soil might give way, obtained an injunction from the Gold Commissioner against our further working. We had, therefore, to look out for a fresh claim. Many were the places we pitched on after that, but never again did we hit upon payable gold, although we burrowed and dug away like rabbits.

Meanwhile expenses were going on, and as the cost of living was very high, I became anxious to quit the spot. This, however, I was prevented from doing by the fact that, although I had sold the canteen, I only held a promissory note for the money, the redemption of which was not due until some six weeks hence. So I thought it better to remain, and, while the Kafirs were searching about, getting dirt ready for washing, to inspect the surrounding country and glean what information I could. In this way I spent ten days, going about from creek to creek, passing the night at some friendly digger's tent, and in the day prospecting about with a little portable dish, wherever I thought the place appeared suggestive of gold.

In the course of my ramblings, I came to the shanty of a digger, whom I discovered to be the brother of an old schoolfellow, and made a stay of two days with him. Together we ascended the Spitzkop Mountain, a conical hill of 7000 feet in height, the upper portion of which is inaccessible excepting through one little place where a cleft in the dolomite rock allows of passage. At the summit, about an acre in area, we found dense bush, in which grew some splendid specimens of ferns and orchids.

In almost every fissure there was a bees'-nest, and, had we but brought vessels with us, we might have returned laden with honey. Flowers grew in profusion, and the air was filled with a variety of sweet and delicious perfumes.

The view was grand and very extensive. To the north and west the mist rather obscured it; but towards the south and east we enjoyed an enormous range of vision, extending over thirty or forty miles, and in the great distance we could faintly trace the dim outlines of the Lobombo range, some seventy miles away. I should have wished to have stayed the night, in order to notice the effect of the morning's sunrise upon the scene; but as we had no water, and had moreover discovered the spoor of a leopard, we judged it advisable to return ere

dark—a matter we found of some difficulty, as for a long time we could not even hit upon the right place to descend. Half-way down the mountain my companion showed me some ancient workings, which he had come across in some of his explorations. They were without doubt very old, and in places the arch of the tunnel was built up with stone, which still bore the mark of a steel tool, showing it to be the handiwork of other than native craftsmen. I suspect they were of Portuguese origin, but my friend evidently believed them coeval with, and probably worked by the subjects of, the Queen of Sheba.

On my return to the camp, I found matters worse than when I had left. Nobody was finding, no one had any money; and, moreover, a fresh detachment of disbanded volunteers had come over, to swell the ranks of needy and half-starving men already there. One of these, a Scotchman named Grant, had coolly taken up his quarters in my tent, and showed himself quite affronted upon being requested to leave. There was plenty of room for two, said he, and he couldna imagine me to be so mean as to refuse him a shelter. I was content to be mean in his estimation so long as he took his departure.

An amusing tale was told of this fellow. After

the death of Von Schlieckmann, the first captain of the Lijdenburg volunteers, Aylward assumed the command at Lijdenburg and Burger's Fort; but another individual, consequentially styling himself "Gunn of Gunn," suddenly appeared on the scene, and claimed the honour of command as his by special authority of the President. This was disputed by Aylward, and, after some ridiculous *contretemps*, the "Gunn of Gunn" had to beat an ignominious retreat. On his march up from Pretoria, he had brought with him, in addition to a number of recruits, a piper—Grant—who, when he arrived at Lijdenburg, preceded him upon all state occasions, playing his Highland instrument, to the great edification and wonderment of Boërs and natives.

One day, the "Gunn" chose to honour the wife of Mr. Stafford Parker with a visit, and, in keeping with his custom, was as usual preceded by the valiant piper, who was directed to walk up and down the passage and play his pipes, while his chief "did the polite" to the ladies.

Now, it so happened that at the end of the passage there was rather a deep step, which our friend at first was rather mindful of; but being somewhat groggy that day, and a trifle more expressive than usual in his music, he in one unlucky

moment went too far, and came heavily to grief, falling forward upon the skins, and shooting the yells of a million demon Highlanders out of the pipes.

Great was the consternation. I won't say that the ladies fainted, for South African ladies don't faint; but I will not be sure that for the instant a Kafir surprise was not imagined to have taken place. But the "Gunn" knew better, and with many a malediction did he fetch the peccant piper out and march him home in disgrace.

A day or so after my return, England called on me, bringing with him the remains of a flag, which he presented me with as a curiosity. This piece of bunting was, when entire, the last that flew as the colours of the Republic, after the annexation of the Transvaal by the British. It then consisted of a broad green band, terminating in horizontal bars of red, white, and blue, and floated at Burger's Fort during the time of the first Sekukuni campaign. When the Special Commissioner, Captain Clarke, came into the district, he caused the green portion to be torn off, and, by reversing the position of the remainder, made it into a sort of bastard English flag. Some volunteers, however, with affection for the flag they had fought under, refused to allow it to hang thus mutilated. It was hauled down,

and Burger's Fort since that time has remained flagless.

The next few weeks passed without any incident occurring worthy of a special chronicle. One day was much like another. In the cooler hours I would be working in the claim; in the hotter I would sleep; while in the evening, a few of us would generally meet, and make a party at whist or some other game, to pass the time. Gambling there was very little of at Spitzkop—money was not sufficiently plentiful.

Many of the diggers in whose company I was thrown were very pleasant fellows, enjoying and maintaining a rational and intelligent conversation. Occasionally a few of us would take our guns and have a day's shooting in some one of the wooded kloofs or ravines on the mountain slopes, returning at night with a rhee-buck or so, and a good bag of partridges. These latter were of a peculiar kind, larger than the English bird and lighter in colour, but very excellent eating. We used to cook them in the hot embers, feathers and all, after which the skin came off easily, leaving the meat clean and juicy.

Other animals and birds, besides game, often fell to our guns; and I made quite a collection of the skins of various beautifully plumed birds which

we met with here in great diversity and profusion. Insects, beetles, and butterflies, I collected in great number, some of which were very curious specimens. Among them was the hedgehog worm, known to the natives as *ngati*, a curious little caterpillar, which dresses itself up in a coat of *cheveux de frise*, manufactured by itself from a great number of short equal lengths of dry grass, which it sticks to its body in such a manner as to resemble natural appendages. Many varieties of that extraordinary insect, the *Amantis*, I added to my collection, some of which, when at rest, had exactly the appearance of an almost transparent green leaf, with petiole and veins complete, while others were hardly distinguishable from a stalk of dead grass or a withered stick. Of the grasshopper tribe I found numerous specimens, large and showy and coloured in a remarkable manner; and upon the whole, I was always pretty well occupied, and had little time for moping.

Occasionally there was a little excitement among the Kafirs. There were both Makatees from the north and refugee Zulus from Delagoa Bay engaged at the fields, and several times there was a party fight. The whites, of course, would allow no assegais to be used, so that the combatants had to be contented with sticks; and certainly they used them

with telling effect and skill, striking with one held in the right hand, and guarding with another in the left. At one of these *émeutes* the fight was carried on with such fury that we had to turn out, rifle in hand, and threaten to fire before order could be restored. Very little serious damage was, however, done—a few cuts, bruises, and broken fingers being the only casualties. The morning following, two of my Kafirs came to me, complaining that in consequence of their having been knocked about on the previous evening, they were sick and unable to go to their work. One said he had the toothache, and the other was "sick all over." Satisfied that they were only shamming, I gave the "sick all over" one a dose, with such instant and complete effect, that I never heard the complaint of illness again from any one of them. It was a very simple one, consisting of a seidlitz powder, but its efficacy lay chiefly in the manner of its administration. Having dissolved the contents of the white paper in one glass, and that of the blue in another, I did not mix them, according to the customary manner, but gave them to him to drink separately, one immediately after the other.

The effect was most ludicrous. For an instant he appeared as if about to have a fit; then came such a foaming, frothing, spluttering, and coughing

at his mouth and nose as never before was seen; and he probably thought his last moment had arrived, until being able at length to catch his breath, he gave a wild yell of terror, and, with his face absolutely blue with fear, bounded away into the bush, and was seen no more that day. The other sick man meanwhile had also decamped, and when found working in the claim, affirmed that he was now quite well.

One day, a traveller arrived in camp, having among his luggage a small medical magneto-electric machine, which before long he brought into operation upon such of the diggers who, either from infirmity or amusement, were desirous of being galvanized; the Kafirs, of course, child-like, gathering round, and watching the performance with intense curiosity. An arrangement of the apparatus was then made by which a penny being at the bottom of a pail of water, a shock could be passed through any individual attempting to pick the penny out; and the Kafirs were invited to make the attempt.

Bravely they would set to work, the operator allowing them to immerse their hands; and often only making connection after the penny had been actually seized, when naturally they would drop it with a yell. There was one big Zulu, a so-called "station" or Christianized (?) Kafir—a huge, black-

guard, bullying fellow, who came down, boasting that no white man could show him more than he did not already know; and reckoned he would take any G—— d—— penny out. Being recommended to try, he dashed in his arm; but the operator having meanwhile slyly put on the full force of the machine, he quickly pulled it out again, with a roar of pain and astonishment, shouting, as he ran off, that his arm had been *boiled!* No one was particularly grieved at seeing the conceit of this gentleman taken down a peg; and from that day he fell many degrees in Kafir estimation.

The weather now was very much changed from what it had been when first I arrived at Spitzkop. The summer heats had commenced, and also the summer rains. The morning would be fine and the sky clear, the heat becoming towards mid-day exceedingly oppressive. In the beginning of November, the thermometer often registered 98° Fahr. in the shade. Vegetables were not to be obtained for love or money; beer there was none, and the only water obtainable was that out of the muddy creek. The continual meat diet was too stimulating, and I suffered a good deal from *prickly heat.* As the summer grew more advanced, thunderstorms became more and more frequent, until at length they came on periodically every afternoon. At such times the rain would

often come down in a perfect deluge, the thunder would be deafening in its roar, and the lightning would pour out of the heavens in one continuous stream of quivering fire. Cattle were often killed by it, and at one time an iron store, in close proximity to my tent, was struck, and the store-keeper knocked down senseless. I have frequently returned to my tent after a short absence, to find everything in it thoroughly drenched, and the ground simply a pond of liquid mud.

On the occasion of one of these storms, I happened to be at Byerley's "Spitzkop hotel," gradually eating out, in the shape of an occasional meal, a small debt he owed me for money lent. There were present but myself, Mrs. Byerley (a delicate young Englishwoman, little fitted for the rough life of the gold-diggings), and her three little children, Byerley himself being away at another creek, endeavouring to get in some outstanding accounts. We had just finished dinner when the storm came. A new fly had been stretched over the roof, and the wind, catching this, ripped it off with a report like that of a cannon, and left it to leeward, flapping and cracking like a gigantic whip-thong. The rain descended with terrible force, beating through the thin canvas, and wetting everything within. A large stock of mealie flour, which when once wetted becomes use-

less, was utterly ruined, and the poor woman began to grow very much alarmed at the course the unruly elements were taking. Her screaming children clinging to her added to her distraction; and what with the thunder, the children, and the destruction, I think she came very nigh being frightened out of her wits. But the culminating point had yet to come. The door opened, and Byerley himself was seen standing like a water-sprite, dripping in the opening. The next moment and the "Spitzkop hotel" was in the air, and crockery, pots, pans, men, woman, and children were floundering about in the mud together, entangled in the folds of the flapping and torn canvas. With some difficulty we got out, Mrs. Byerley and the children taking refuge in a neighbouring iron store; while Byerley, with the assistance of myself and a few others, collected his scattered household gods and put them in a place of safety. But the "Spitzkop hotel" never rose again: poor Byerley was played out; he could neither get debts nor customers, and a few days afterwards departed, with his wife and children, on the weary journey in search of better luck, but with the bitter sickness in their hearts of "hope deferred."

The week was a sad one, for another event occurred within a few days of Byerley's mishap which threw a deeper gloom over the already desponding camp.

A young Englishman, to all appearance well-bred and unaccustomed to a life of deprivation, had not long before arrived at the diggings—tempted thither probably by the glowing reports that occasionally crept into the newspapers, through the agency of interested parties—and had taken up his abode in a little prospecting tent at some short distance from the main camp.

No one knew his name; he never received any letters, but always had a pleasant smile and kindly word for anybody who addressed him. For a short time he had been working one of the abandoned claims in the creek, but evidently without much if any success, as he was not even able to pay his Kafir, who in consequence had left him. For a few days he was seen working in the claim by himself, and then he was entirely lost sight of until some curious person thought fit to look into his tent. A ghastly spectacle there met the eye. Stretched on a rug on the earth, with his throat cut from ear to ear, lay what was left of the missing man. Beside him, evidently where it had fallen from his hand, was a knife, encrusted with the dry blood, and in a corner lay a small heap of burnt letters and papers. A carpet-bag, with a few necessaries, was all else the tent contained; there was absolutely nothing giving any clue as to the name or belongings of the dead. He

had evidently systematically destroyed everything that might lead to his identification. In accordance with the law, his property and description were given to the nearest *veldtkornet*, and he was interred on the following afternoon, below the spot where he met his fate—the whole camp standing bareheaded by the grave, while an old, grey-haired digger spoke a rough prayer over the remains, in default of the Burial Service. And there his bones still lie, "uncoffined and unknown," while far away, perhaps in some green England home, a fond wife or mother is still wearily watching for her darling's return.

Meanwhile, from the outside world, news was becoming more and more exciting. How ever the rumours were fabricated I know not, but almost every mail brought in decisive information that war had been at length actually declared, and that in all probability, while we were reading the announcement, the Russians and English were hard at work, blowing one another into pieces. These reports were, of course, taken *cum grano salis;* but others, such as those of the native rebellion in Kaffraria, were topics of very exciting interest. The reported insolent treatment of Sir Theophilus Shepstone by the Zulu Indunas also attracted much attention, and his possible movements were matters of anxious speculation.

All these tales were, of course, greatly exaggerated in the accounts given by the only paper obtainable, *The Gold-fields Mercury*—a little sixpenny weekly print, emanating from Pilgrim's Rest; but there was often a considerable foundation of truth. Cetywayo, however, did not cause so much immediate alarm as did Sekukuni, a warlike Basuto chief, and old enemy of the Boërs, but who now had shifted his hatred to the English, when he perceived that their annexation of the Transvaal did not in any way ameliorate his condition, as Shepstone had given him to understand it would. This gentleman was a nearer neighbour than Cetywayo—his chief kraal being little more than fifty miles distant, and he had already commenced to threaten and talk big about his intentions. Daily his Kafirs, of which there were a considerable number at Spitzkop, would meet to talk over matters with his messengers, and many of them who had firearms of their own were known to have been called back, to be held in readiness for active service. The Delagoa Bay Zulus naturally sided with the whites; but as they did not understand the Basuto language, little could be gleaned of what they overheard, although what little we did arrive at was sufficient to decide upon the formation of a Defence Committee, and the despatch to Lijdenburg for the Government allowance of gunpowder and loan of arms; while

runners were sent to the outlying creeks, warning the diggers of the impending danger, and recommending concentration. Sekukuni did not, however, take any immediate steps. Like other African chiefs, he missed his golden opportunity, luckily for us, and waited some time before he commenced active hostilities. But three months later—in February, 1878—he broke out in full force, and then the inhabitants of Lijdenburg and the surrounding neighbourhood had rather a lively time of it.

Our gold-digging partnership at this time was fast becoming a losing concern; and Cooper having temporarily left for Middleburg, in order to complete the sale of a store he owned there, Van der Werken and I determined, in his absence, to throw it up as a useless speculation, and to see if we could not hit upon something better further down on the slope of the Berg. At all events, we agreed that, whether we found gold or not, we might at any rate get a shot or two at some of the large game, and should certainly occupy the time to better advantage than we possibly could by stagnating in this poverty-stricken, dried-up camp of Spitzkop.

CHAPTER VII.

Start on an expedition—A nocturnal visitor—Liberty—Prospecting a reef—Umgwenia river—Wild pigs—A Kafir supper—Buffalo—River shooting—Great heat—A night's watch—Koodoo—A spiteful monster—A good bag.

It was on the 3rd of November when Van der Werken, or, as his intimates more familiarly were in the habit of styling him, "Van," and I started on our expedition towards the low country. Our plans were chiefly to examine the country for indications of gold; to make short trials with the dish and shovel in the more likely places; also to descend the Berg and proceed as far as the lowlands themselves, where, if the weather were not too wet, we hoped to have a little bush shooting. With these views we had loaded up four of our Kafirs—fine, strong Zulus, two of whom spoke a little Dutch—with all the necessaries we were likely to require: one carried pick, shovel, and prospecting dish; another our rugs and a couple of spare guns, with extra ammunition; while the remaining two

were loaded with other camp equipage and a supply of provisions and stores sufficient for a fortnight.

For some miles we followed the course of the creek, due south-west, calling on our way for a few minutes' chat at the tents of such diggers as were working in this direction; but ere long the *dongas* which debouched into the creek became so deeply cut in the earth that, in order to avoid the repeated difficulties we encountered in crossing them, we had to shape our course higher up on the brow of the hill. This we continued until a distance of some ten miles brought us to a high cliff, overhanging a gorge, where the creek rushed through into another valley of considerable dimensions, at the bottom of which a stream of some size was purling along. To descend this cliff was impossible, and our steps had to be retraced for quite a mile, in order to climb down into the gorge and make our way through the pass by the side of the water. The path was very rocky and beset with aloe bush and all sorts of thorny scrub; so that by the time we had finally cleared the pass, or *poort*, dusk was already beginning to set in. A thunderstorm, moreover, which had been some time threatening, now commenced its downpour, and we found but a sorry shelter under a projecting rock, while a couple

of the "boys" hunted for a dry camping-ground for the night.

An hour having passed, and while the storm was still at its height, the boys returned, with the news that below in the valley, about a mile away, they had discovered a tent and a partly finished hut; so, judging that an unfinished house would be better than none at all, as soon as the violence of the storm had passed away we made for the more friendly shelter below.

It was quite dark by the time we reached it; and our advent being the signal for a host of barking dogs to join in noisy chorus, the inhabitant of the tent came out, rifle in hand, apparently ready to salute, with murderous intent, the intruders upon his solitude. On perceiving us, however, he dropped his rifle, and, calling the dogs back, hospitably welcomed us in English, and apologized for his apparent rudeness in coming out with his rifle cocked, but excusing himself upon the plea that a tiger (leopard) had been paying him nocturnal visits during the last week, and that he thought, by the dogs barking, that the animal had again appeared on the scene. He could offer us but poor accommodation, namely, that of an unfinished wattle-and-daub hut, the tent being occupied by his Dutch wife and children; but what he had we were welcome to.

It was not long before we were tolerably comfortable; our Kafirs had soon fraternized with his, and were already busy preparing their "scoff" and boiling the water for our coffee. Our host, who was a Scotchman, had managed to cut some steaks from the carcase of a large buck which hung in a corner, and these were quickly roasted on the embers of the fire, forming a savoury grill. Our supper despatched, we lit our pipes, and having gladdened the heart of "Scottie" with a drop of the "cratur," we drew round the fire and chatted agreeably for an hour or so before turning in. The tiger was to all an interesting subject, and as its arrival was anticipated some time that night, we prepared ourselves for him accordingly: the fire was extinguished, and, with our loaded rifles by our sides, we lay down upon a heap of dried fern in a corner of the hut, and were soon in the arms of Morpheus.

Twisting and turning about in my sleep, I was awakened by a piece of the dried fern tickling me in the face, and being thirsty, was in the act of rising in search of a drink, when a peculiar tearing noise attracted my attention to the corner where the buck was hanging. The hut being only partially illumined by the moon's rays, which came in at the open door, the corner in question was involved in total obscurity, and I could see nothing. Neverthe-

less, I cautiously took up my rifle, and, keeping a spare cartridge in my hand, held myself in readiness for an immediate shot. The tearing process continued some minutes longer, when presently the string holding the buck gave way, letting the carcase down with a crash, and the leopard, alarmed, sprang through the door before I could get my rifle to my shoulder. I instantly awoke Van, and together we patiently waited until he returned. Presently, a dark object (his head) appeared at the doorway. We remained as still as mice until his body following presented us with his full broadside; then taking a sure aim, we both fired simultaneously, hitting him fairly behind the shoulder, and dropping him dead in his tracks. Our shots aroused the sleeping Kafirs, and what with their shouting and the barking of the dogs in the stillness of the night, one would have thought Pandemonium had been let loose. Our host was delighted, and, in the exuberance of his joy, insisted upon the immediate absorption of a half-bottle of brandy he knew we had with us; at the same time despatching a Kafir to the Spitzkop camp with note and money for another to replace it. Luckily, he thought we had only that one bottle, or surely he would never have turned in again as long as he knew another remained. At length, having satisfied his alcoholic proclivities, he retired to his tent; and peace

and quietness being restored, we again sought a few hours' rest.

The sun was already high, scattering golden clouds in the bright sky, gilding the hill-tops, flooding the plain, and gladdening the whole animal creation when, on the following morning, we awoke to the events and exigencies of another day. The first thing was to inspect our prize of the previous night—a large, full-grown male leopard, magnificently marked, and with a splendid tail. The bullets had entered within two inches of each-other, and either would have proved immediately fatal. He was speedily skinned, and his large teeth being drawn, his carcase was thrown out into the brook and soon whirled out of sight. After breakfast, the Dutch wife became visible; and we could not help thinking that our host must have been pushed to very considerable extremities when he chose his life-partner —she was literally hideousness personified, having a wrinkled, crooked, patched-up frying-pan of a face, armed with two enormous fangs protruding from her mouth, and disfigured on neck and cheek by past and present signs of that terrible disease, scrofula. There was a perfect litter of scrofulous children, and their presence was far from pleasant.

Our host took us to his workings, where he was ground-sluicing, and, having a large body of water at

command, had been able to get through a considerable amount of work. His findings were, he averred, very small, and quite insufficient; but as he had evidently been working here some time, I could at the moment hardly believe that tale, although I afterwards discovered it to be true. By this time, the Kafir he had despatched to Spitzkop had returned with a bottle of brandy. Kafirs get over the ground very quickly, and this one had probably run the entire distance, thirty miles there and back, having only been gone some six or seven hours. So, after having been put in the right direction for the Crocodile river, in order to avoid precipices and other necessities for making long *détours*, we shouldered arms and departed.

Our route lay along the bottom of a beautiful valley, full of verdure and park-like in its clumps of vegetation. On either side rose the mountains, whose bare summits and peaks jutted high into the sky. The air seemed filled with tiny birds, which fluttered in our faces as we walked along, catching the frightened insects our footsteps disturbed from the grass. Tree ferns, from ten to twenty feet in height, reared their stately heads in the hollows; and the little river gambolled at our side, sometimes darting along impetuously through the rocky boulders, at others gliding like a sheet of glass over the

polished surface of the rock, or spreading out into some miniature lake, completing the harmony and beauty of the scene.

Towards the afternoon we came to a gorge, where the water had cut a rocky channel through a large reef lying almost at right angles across the valley. The reef was very well defined, and its course could be distinctly traced from mountain-top to mountain-top by the line of broken quartz along its apex. The gorge itself was so narrowly cut, and the water dashed through it so tumultuously, as to render our passage through it, if not a dangerous, at least a difficult proceeding; consequently, we preferred climbing over the reef, and obtaining from its summit a more comprehensive view of the country before us. We found the dip on the other side to be greater than we had supposed; beyond it lay a deeper, wider, and more extensive valley still, along which, at some miles' distance, glistening in the sun, wound the Umgwenia or Crocodile river. Some two hours' walking brought us to comparatively level ground, and here we decided to camp and prospect the creek; for, thought we, if gold ever existed in the reef, the water which cut through it and wore it away must have carried the gold with it to its lower course.

Choosing a nicely sheltered and shady position,

we set the Kafirs to build us a hut of branches and grass, and to dig a trench round to keep off the storm-water; while, after a short rest, we separated, and beat around for something in shape of supper. I had not gone far ere I heard the report of Van's rifle. Fatigue and laziness prevailed, and, instead of proceeding in search of game, I sent the Kafir to ascertain what success his shot had had. Much to my relief, the boy returned with a satisfactory answer, and I was soon back in camp; Van and his Kafir appearing not long afterwards with a fine ram bushbuck. Steaks were speedily cooked and the coffee brewed, and a right pleasant meal we had, the weather still holding up beautifully. Supper over, pipes were lit, and we stretched out to a delicious dreamy rest on the grassy sward.

Oh the great delight of lying in the open veldt under the blue sky, your shirt-collar open, and the balmy breeze playing around your head and stealing down your back; your pipe well alight, and mind and body both at rest! You are under no apprehension of trespassing; nobody can warn you off. You can kick out your legs and sprawl, without danger of breaking something or knocking out somebody's eye. Nobody is here to bother about the man coming to be paid for the gas, or even to tell you to get up and "*behave.*" You do not care

a rap for politics or the symmetry of your neck-tie. Nothing restrains you. You can expand your lungs and breathe God's free air with a sense of glorious independence. There is bread and meat in the bag; some brandy even left in the bottle. No king is happier than you. Think of it, ye toilers—ye men of figures, anxious and ink-stained behind your desks and counters! Think of it, ye money-grubbers, who make your god only to be crushed beneath his weight! Think of it, ye men of routine, with lives like an algebraic equation—ye respectable machines, with your soft, white hands, stove-pipe hats, and choking collars!—think of it, and seriously ask yourselves the value of the supposed advantages of a high civilization, in which your joys are built upon the miseries of others, and your pleasures are only other forms of pain!

The inevitable thunderstorm and rain came on during the night; but, thanks to our precautions, we slept upon a dry bed, and not even the loud explosions of thunder woke me from my deep and refreshing sleep. The morning was, as usual, bright and cheerful. A dip in the little river obliterated the dilapidations of the night, and a hearty breakfast of buck meat and dough cakes put us in condition for another day's adventure, travel, or anything that might happen to turn up.

Our first care was to choose the ground for prospecting, and we marked off four spots as being the most likely. Then came the stripping and shaft-sinking. This was necessarily a slow process; only one could work at a time, as we had but one set of tools. Fortunately, however, the bed-rock, a kind of bastard granite, did not lie at any great depth, and the gravel-wash lay directly on it, between small boulders. By the middle of the day we had extracted about a hundredweight of wash, and this was carefully carried to the edge of the stream, and, with considerable back-breaking labour, was panned off in the dish. Our trouble, however, was not rewarded. The last pan gave but a single small colour, so small indeed as to be hardly visible; and we came to the disagreeable but necessary conclusion that there was no gold here worth getting.

Unwilling, however, to give up such a promising place without one more trial, we pitched upon another spot nearer the reef, and pegged away at it until evening, collecting a sackful of wash, which, the rain recommencing, we stowed away, to pan over in the morning. This night was not spent so agreeably as the preceding one, for a very strong gale sprang up, which partially unroofed our hut and gave admittance to the heavy weather. It was with considerable difficulty that we managed to keep

our flour, etc., in a dry condition. Clothes and rugs were, of course, saturated; but these were easily dried in the morning sun. Our second prospect was no better than the first, and we determined to move on, first taking the precaution of burying half a bottle of brandy in a spot where it might again be forthcoming when required on our return. This done, we packed up our traps and, following the stream, made straight away for the Umgwenia river.

This river, the same as that we crossed in the Crocodile valley on our waggon journey to Lijdenburg, now presented a very different appearance. In the Crocodile valley near its source, and as we saw it in the dry season, it was comparatively a paltry brook; but here, under the full influence of the summer rains, it formed a river of very decent proportions, and, to all appearance, impassable. The immediate direction of the river was then unknown—at any rate, it was not reliably marked in any map I had yet seen; so we agreed to accept our position, and, instead of attempting to cross, to continue along its banks, or as near them as possible, until we reached the edge of the plateau. Below that we knew there was a ford, namely, that on the road from Spitzkop to Delagoa Bay, which had been some time previously used by the Gold-

fields Transport Company of Mr. Compton and others.

Our intentions were, however, doomed to disappointment, for on continuing our line of march along the river-banks, we were pulled up by an enormous growth of bush, through which it was impossible to pass, and we were obliged to make a long *détour* along the ridge of the valley to avoid it. The heat was almost overpowering, the atmosphere being like that of an oven, and my back felt as if there were live coals on it. After trudging some seven or eight miles since leaving the river-side, it became at length unbearable, and we brought up under the shade of a large thorn tree, where our Kafirs, with their usual celerity, quickly constructed a little round hut for us, thatching it over with large broad leaves in anticipation of the rain. For a wonder, however, this did not come, though towards evening we could plainly hear thunder in the far distance echoing among the mountains.

Whilst lying quietly in the shade, in the latter part of the afternoon, we were aroused by the shouting of the Kafirs, who had gone to fetch water, and, looking up, perceived a troop of four or five animals making in our direction at a tremendous pace. They were *engalla*, or wild pigs; but in the excitement of the moment they might have been

elephants for all I knew. For the life of me I could not find my rifle, and in another moment they had seen us and turned—not before, however, Van's sure aim had stretched one, a fine tusker, dead on the grass. Sticking in his back was the assegai of one of our Kafirs, who shortly afterwards came limping into camp, with an ugly cut in his leg, the result of his temerity in attacking the boar at close quarters. This animal was about as unprepossessing a specimen of a pig as I had ever seen. His cheek-bones protruded like horns; and what with them and his enormous tusks—those in the lower jaw being as sharp as knives—his head had altogether a very spiky and prominent appearance. His flesh was, however, not at all bad eating, pork-chops forming a pleasant change for supper that night, in spite of the absence of sage and onions and apple sauce. Shade of Milo! what a twist the Kafirs had! We had reserved the two hind legs for our portion, allowing them to eat what they liked of the remainder. They sat by the fire until late in the night, broiling and toasting, munching and chatting, until there was nothing left but the well-picked bones and skin, and every now and then turning and telling us how fond they were of meat, and how they hoped that we should kill plenty more. That night, curious and fearful sounds issued from the bush, suggestive of

hyænas and various other unpleasant neighbours. We therefore kept up a good fire, and watched turn and turn about until dawn, but without anything unusual taking place. The following morning, however, we discovered the tracks of various quadrupeds in close proximity to our camp, whose presence during the night, had we guessed it, would hardly have added to our sense of security.

Resuming our march at an early hour, we for some time came repeatedly across large numbers of buck—chiefly *impalla*, or rooi-buck—returning from the river. They kept at a considerable distance; and, being desirous of husbanding our ammunition, we allowed them to pass unmolested. The country now became very rocky, the descent in many places being extremely abrupt, difficult, and fatiguing. Towards the middle of the day we forded a good-sized stream, a tributary of the Umgwenia, the water nearly reaching our waists; and a mile or so further we entered a gorge, or *poort*, through which the river ran into the comparatively flat country beyond, reaching to the Lobombo Mountains, which were now plainly visible some ten or fifteen miles distant.

An hour's march brought us to level ground; and, choosing a sheltered spot in the midst of a clump of large trees, where there was no brush-wood, a couple of grass huts were soon erected, and

by the time the rain came we were comfortably housed.

Towards evening the weather cleared up again, and Van and I, with two Kafirs, started off towards the river in search of game. We had not gone far when a herd of *impalla* came trooping by, making in the same direction as ourselves. Van was just going to let fly, when one of the Kafirs rushed to him, and, arresting his arm, pointed beyond the *impalla* to two enormous buffaloes, which were lazily strolling along. Immediately I changed my cartridge for another with an expansive ball, and, creeping towards a tree, waited for them to come up. Van, as usual, had first shot, but this time his bullet had no other effect than that of enraging the animal, which, with a sonorous grunt, rushed directly towards him. Van in an instant was up a tree, and the buffalo came butt up against the trunk with a thump that nearly shook him from his perch; the other buffalo kicking his legs up in the air and dashing away out of sight. Meanwhile I was watching my opportunity from behind my tree, with my heart bumping against my ribs in such a state of excitement that I could hardly take aim. Fortune favoured me at length; the bull, which was furiously kicking up the earth with his hoofs, turned a trifle more from me, and presented the rear of his

shoulder. At this I took deliberate aim and sent the expansive bullet crashing into him from a distance of not more than twenty yards, climbing up the stem of a tree the instant afterwards. But there was no occasion for my flight. The buffalo, true to his nature, charged towards me on receiving the wound; but it was a last effort, and he sank disabled on the ground, within ten yards of me, where the Kafirs quickly despatched him with their assegais. He was a fine, noble creature, and to me had a peculiar interest, being the first buffalo I had ever shot. His horns were tremendous, the whole of the front of his head being covered with their base, leaving only a space of a quarter of an inch between them in the centre. His head when cut off was quite a load, and I determined, rather than not take it back to Spitzkop with me, to relinquish the digging tools. By this time it was getting dusk, and we returned to camp with the tongue, leaving the two Kafirs to follow with the meat as soon as it was cut up. That night the Kafirs had another feast, as much to their satisfaction as to ours, for when they ate meat there was a proportionate saving of mealie flour. About fifty pounds of it was cut up into strips and hung to dry on the tree for biltong, which constitutes a very convenient and portable form of food.

As the hours grew later a most abominable racket

commenced in the bush, especially in the direction where we had shot the buffalo; the laughing and hooting were enough to make one's blood run cold, and in spite of fatigue I got very little sleep until the early morning. Moreover, mosquitoes were very plentiful and persistent in their attacks; smoke seemed to have no effect on them at all, and a mosquito net I had with me was no more protection than a pocket-handkerchief.

On the following morning we made for the river, passing by the spot where the buffalo had been shot the previous day. Not a bone was discernible. For a space some twelve yards in diameter where he had fallen, the ground was trodden bare by the skirmishing and fighting of hyænas over the bones, hide, and offal. Not a single vestige of the buffalo remained. Pushing on, we passed through a dense thicket of cactus and other thorny bushes, frightening innumerable birds, until we came to the reeds growing by the river-bank. Here the heat became absolutely stifling, and we were glad enough to sluice our faces with the cool water. The river, however, was not visible on account of the high grass until we had waded down some distance along it, when we came to a sandbank, upon which four enormous crocodiles lay asleep, with their mouths wide open. Leaving these gentry undisturbed, we made again for the dry

ground, and presently reached a bank where there were no reeds, and where we could see right across the river.

Here we waited, and were gratified by the sight of a herd of hippopotami, which came floundering out of the reeds on the opposite side, and swam about in the still water, with their nostrils just above the surface. They did not seem inclined to come our way, though we waited patiently for above an hour, and at length one by one swam down the river, and were lost to view. In disgust, we rose and were about to return, when a word of warning from Penny the Kafir made us resume in silent haste our look-out. Within fifteen yards of us, crashing through the reeds in the shallow water, came an immense river-horse, making slowly and unsuspectingly for the open river. As he got abreast of us he halted, and, raising his unwieldy head, sniffed in the air. Snatching my opportunity, I fired, hitting him behind the ear, and dropping him on his knees; but the next instant he rose again, and with a terrible snort darted off towards the deeper water. Immediately Van let fly at him, wounding him in the back and bringing him up short ere the water reached his hams. Jumping down the bank, I rushed into the shallow, the brute staring stupidly at me, and gave him a second ball in the head, which toppled him over. With frantic shouts the Kafirs

then sprang into the water, and with considerable labour towed and hauled the huge carcase to the bank. There we chopped his teeth out, and cut a good supply of meat, leaving for the crocodiles what we could not take away. The latter, I dare say, were not long in availing themselves of the opportunity offered.

Our return was tedious and fatiguing in the extreme. In the first place, we missed our way, entailing a long additional scramble through the thorny thicket; in the second, the heat became so stifling and overpowering, that we were almost choked. The perspiration rolled off me profusely, and but for the scratching thorns, I could have gladly stripped off every article of clothing. We killed a huge green snake, some ten feet in length, but as he possessed no fangs, I apprehend he was not a venomous one. At length, after considerable exertion and loss of time, we struck upon our former trail, and made our way back to the camp, reaching it quite knocked up, having been for nearly ten hours on the tramp in the blistering heat. It was a relief when the storm came and cleared the atmosphere.

The fall of night was, as before, the signal for the commencement of noise in the bush. What animals they were that created this racket I know not, but certainly I never before heard such a thoroughly

demoniacal yelling in my life. At times it was quite appalling. In the moonlight several animals (hyænas) could be seen skulking round the camp, probably attracted by the smell of meat, and one, which had the temerity to come within a few yards of us, received a bullet between the eyes from Van's rifle, which laid him low. We left him lying where he fell, but in the morning found that he had disappeared, his comrades having, according to the Kafirs, dragged the dead carcase away, and probably eaten it.

The greater part of the next day we spent in rest: both of us had passed a wakeful night; so, to make matters even, we slept the day away until late in the afternoon. In the mean while our Kafirs had been out hunting on their own account, and had taken with them an old Enfield rifle belonging to me. This they had loaded with a tremendous charge, and fired at a troop of *impalla*, but it is almost needless to say, without killing. The discharge had, however, one effect, that of nearly breaking Penny's shoulder with the recoil, and he returned very crestfallen and disgusted. About a mile distant they had discovered a water-hole, surrounded with numerous spoor; and we determined to go down there towards evening, and lie in wait for game.

Accordingly, after a good meal, we started, taking two Kafirs with guns, our own rifles with expansive bullets, leaving Penny and the fourth Kafir in charge of the hut. A half-hour's walk brought us to the pit, a hole about thirty yards in diameter, situated amid some large trees, and flanked on the northern side by a clump of dense bush. The great amount and variety of spoor marked the pit as evidently a favourite rendezvous of heavy game. Selecting two trees, Van climbed up one with a Kafir, while I mounted the other, similarly accompanied, and, sitting in a fork, waited patiently for the shades of night. Fortunately, no rain fell, and we were thus spared one great infliction. Just after sunset, the game commenced arriving, bush-buck and *impalla*; but as we had previously agreed to shoot at nothing less than a buffalo, these were not interfered with. The moon rose early, and its effect upon the water, with the drinking and gambolling antelope, was very beautiful. The close proximity of so much game was very tempting; two or three times I covered a large bush-buck with my rifle, my fingers itching to let fly, and it was only with difficulty that I refrained. As the night wore on, the frogs around the water's edge became very noisy, and I recognized in their voices some of the sounds which the two previous nights had given us much needless cause of alarm.

As the time passed slowly by, I became very sleepy, and once nearly let my rifle drop; it certainly was very monotonous work perched up there doing nothing. Again I nodded involuntarily, when a touch from my Kafir recalled me to a sense of my position, and warned me of a new arrival. Advancing in the full moonlight, with their beautiful spiral horns towering high above them, were two magnificent koodoos. For a minute or so they stood still by the water's edge, and, throwing back their heads, sniffed the air around them, and then slowly and majestically walked past the lesser game through the mud into the pool, until the water reached their haunches. The nearer one was within forty yards of me; so, pushing my rifle forward and resting it in a branch, I took deliberate aim between his shoulders as he lowered his stately head to drink. At that instant, just as I was about to fire, a report rang out from Van's tree, and the noble head in the water fell, shot through the brain.

A moment after a general stampede took place, and the game fled like lightning in all directions. The other koodoo was not so quick in getting away; he was stuck in the heavy mud, and received two shots from my rifle ere he succeeded in making off. Slinging his gun, my Kafir descended, and I prepared to follow him, when an excited shout from

Van, and a heavy footfall, accompanied with a puff, puff, like that of a small steam-engine, warned me to keep my coign of vantage, and caused the Kafir to return in double-quick time. "*Upetyane! Rhenoster!*" was the cry; and there, sure enough, came a black rhinoceros, on wickedness intent, butting at the trees and ploughing up the ground with his horn, in sheer spite at not being able to reach us. Shot after shot we put into him, making to all appearance no more impression on him than if we were peppering him with peas. Terrific were the charges he made at my tree, the concussion being so great as almost to shake us off. At length, as he stood preparing for another charge just below me, I put an expansive ball right on his snout, just behind his horn, which dropped him on his knees and thoroughly disgusted him of attacking us. He got up, though, directly afterwards, and, after impetuously stamping his feet, ran away round the pit and made for the bush.

A council of war was held at once, and we determined to follow him, as, after the amount of firing that had taken place, no further game would be likely to come near the pit. So we descended from our perches, for which I was not at all sorry, as my limbs were beginning to feel the strain of the cramped position they had held during the last few

hours. The moon, however, now became obscured by a cloud, and we deemed it advisable not to follow up the trail until dawn, which could not be more than an hour and a half distant. So we lit our pipes and smoked away, keeping all the time a good look-out, while the Kafirs hauled the dead koodoo out of the water, cut his head and haunches off, and, wrapping the meat up in the skin, stuck the parcel up in the fork of a tree, out of the way of four-footed robbers.

By the time this operation was completed, the morning had become sufficiently light for us to proceed, and, after fortifying the inner man with a pull at our pocket-flasks, we started on the trail. This was not difficult to follow. At first it was marked here and there with traces of blood, but these disappeared after a time, the thick skin of the rhinoceros being probably pinched up over the wounds, and thus stopping the bleeding. The footprints in the ground were, however, distinctly distinguishable, and the Kafirs followed up the traces with surprising dexterity.

After having travelled about a mile northwards, we came to a spot where the brute had evidently rested, as there was much blood about, and the grass was flattened down. To all appearance he had not long left here, and it became necessary to advance

with great caution. At every moment I expected he would jump out at us from behind some dark bush; and the remembrance of his desperate onslaught by the pool was anything but reassuring. Presently the trail left the bush, and continued some time on an open sward of grass, leading from thence into a small *ukaku* thicket, which we approached very cautiously. Just as we were about to enter it, a bird flew up, uttering a shrill "Tcha! tcha!" and out came the object of our search, staggering as though he were drunk, and making as best he could for the bush we had just left. Both the Kafirs and Van fired, bringing him again on his knees; but once more he got up, and, facing round, seemed in doubt as to what to do. If he had then charged, there would certainly have been a casualty, as there was not a tree within a hundred yards, and mine was the only gun loaded; he, however, changed his mind, and ran into the bush, whither, having loaded up, we followed him. Not far, however, for his trail became very broad, and great patches of blood showed that his wounds were telling on him. At length we came upon him, lying on his side, and quite dead, although, to make matters certain, I put a ball close behind his ear, but without causing him to move a muscle.

He was a huge, unwieldy creature, wounded in

no less than sixteen places, but his horn was small, being not more than a foot in length. However, we chopped his shattered snout off as a trophy, and with that and his feet returned to camp. Nothing unusual had occurred during our absence ; so Penny and his companion were despatched for the koodoo meat, while we sat down to a meal of beef, porridge, and coffee, and soon after fell into a delicious, undisturbed sleep, which we had, I consider, well earned.

CHAPTER VIII.

Arrival at the ford—An unexpected meeting—The homeward journey—Wet weather—Quaggas—A foolish bath—Fever—Pretorius Kop—A weary walk—Assistance—Lightning Gully—Spitzkop again.

A WEEK had now elapsed since the date of our leaving Spitzkop, and as we had yet some distance to travel, we thought it high time to be making a move. We began, moreover, to perceive that, whatever might be the attractions of the low country, summer was hardly the right season wherein to visit it, the continual wet nights being very trying, as also was the extreme heat of the day. So we rested as well as mosquitoes would allow us, and loading up on the morning following that of our rhinoceros tracking, we departed on our course towards the ford.

This was a good fifteen miles' distance as the crow flies, and what with the *détours* we had to make in order to avoid bush and morass, I should think we tramped thirty miles that day. We were all pretty heavily laden, the Kafirs insisting upon

carrying away an enormous amount of meat, and but for a sharp look-out on our part, they would have left the buffalo and koodoo heads behind in order to be able to load themselves with an additional quantity of beef. As it was, we were like a walking butcher's shop. We arrived at the ford dead beat towards the evening, to find it quite impassable. The rain was descending in torrents, and we were wet to the skin. The ground was little better than a swamp; our prospects for the night, therefore, looked somewhat dismal. Across the river, on a little elevation, a Kafir kraal was faintly visible through the murky atmosphere; but our shouts were drowned in the roar of the rushing waters. In despair we commenced erecting a little shelter by means of the Kafirs' assegais and our rugs, when we were suddenly startled by a "halloo" from behind us, and looking back, beheld a white man approaching, enveloped in a mackintosh. As he came up, we discovered him to be no other than a Spitzkop digger, well known to us, now on his way with several others to Delagoa Bay.

The state of the river had detained him here for several days, and he had a small tent about half a mile away, where he had left his companions.

This was a perfect godsend; we did not wait to be invited twice, but quickly trotted away with

him to his hospitable shelter. On our arrival at the tent, which was flanked by a couple of Kafir reed huts, we found two other fellows we knew, who quickly poured a mug of warm tea down our not unwilling throats, and assisted us in skinning off our soaked habiliments, providing us temporarily with a dry shirt *off their own backs*, while ours were dried at a fire in the Kafir hut. This done, comfort and good humour were restored, and we were soon pleasantly chatting, pipe in mouth, waiting the arrival of a koodoo steak, which the boy presently brought in hot and juicy from the fire. The chinks were filled up with boiled beans, and within another hour all five were fast asleep "spoon fashion" on the ground, heedless of the raging elements without.

The morning came as usual bright and sunny, but there was a heavy steam rising from the marshy swamp below, which filled the atmosphere with a rank, malarious odour, unpleasantly suggestive of fever and ague.

Indeed, one of our friends was already complaining of headache and pains in the limbs, symptoms which are only too often premonitory of an attack of fever. Having dried our rugs, and left a supply of meat in exchange for beans with the three (for they had no guns), we shouldered up and departed on our return journey north-west away from the river on

the Lijdenburg track, which had been formerly used by the Gold-fields Transport Company—an association of traders, having for its object the transport of goods from Delagoa Bay, but which had failed on account of the impossibility of keeping the animals employed safe from the deadly attacks of the *tsetse* fly, the pest of this region.

The track was fairly good, though occasionally there were some very bad spruits to pass, and also a river, tributary to the Umgwenia, to cross which we had to strip, carrying our effects over by holding them above our heads, the water reaching our armpits. Not that the river was a large one, but it was very full, and in other places where the water was shallow the stream was too rapid. I must say I felt rather nervous in crossing, when I reflected upon the possibility of a hungry crocodile being, perhaps, within a few feet of my body.

Another day's toil in the baking sun, taking us over twenty miles of ground, gradually rising as we left the river, brought us within sight of the ridge, and we encamped in the neighbourhood of a pretty brook, after having had our grass hut erected as usual.

The beef by this time was rather too high-flavoured for our palates, although the Kafirs still enjoyed it, and our supper consisted of a mess of

boiled beans and rice, with which, to give it a flavour, we had mixed the contents of a small tin of sardines. Tea we still had in plenty; and although it had been wetted and redried more than once, it yet made a very decent brew. Our brandy was all gone but about a teacupful, and this we reserved against future possible contingencies. How we regretted having left that half-bottle at the reef! But then we thought to have returned by that route. Teetotalers and *id genus omne* would probably cry out that we had done the best possible thing, and would bring up a host of statistics in support of their assertion. Let them; prejudice is unanswerable, but we had our own opinions on the subject.

Another soaking wet evening, and the little brook rose so high as to come within a few feet of our hut. In the night we heard an occasional roar in the neighbouring bush, which the boys said proceeded from a lion, and at which they appeared to be very much frightened; but I cannot say that it had any particularly terrifying effect upon me, although I was not altogether displeased when the dawn broke.

The remains of our supper formed our breakfast, and we hastened off as quickly as possible in order to get some distance before the intense heat of the day. But alas! for good intentions. A troop of quaggas crossed our path, and the temptation

was too great. Bang! bang! went both our rifles, and a fine male quagga fell. Skinning him, etc., occupied an hour, broiling and eating a portion of him another, so that by the time we started again the sun was at the meridian. We were determined, however, to get well up the ridge, and so tramped manfully on, still ascending, until we reached some curious stone formations on the mountain slope. Here we found a splendid natural shelter under a flat rock, and having well beaten about and burnt the grass to scare away any snakes that might chance to be there, proceeded to make ourselves comfortable.

Close by was a curious spring of mineral water, strongly impregnated with lime, which had formed for itself basins and terraces of singular and striking appearance. Some of these natural basins were three or four feet in diameter, and in them the water was as clear and pellucid as the purest crystal. Tired and hot as we were, the idea of a bath was very tempting, and the wish being father to the deed, we were soon paddling about in the water, which, however, we both found somewhat too cold. It was about the most foolish thing we could have done. Before midnight Van had a splitting headache, and every sign of approaching fever. I gave him the remainder of the brandy, which did him

some good, and by the morning he felt better, and able to continue the journey.

We were now, I calculated, still about forty miles from Spitzkop, but there were some fearful hills before us to climb, and, doubting the possibility of our reaching it within two days, I promised extra pay to the fleetest and most trusted of our boys, "Hind-leg," and started him on ahead of us, with a light load and message to Spitzkop for some brandy and medicine, knowing that he could easily perform the journey there and back to us within thirty-six hours.

Away he went delighted, and we continued our march, climbing the steep hills and rocky path for some miles, until we came to an old deserted station of the Transport Company's at a mountain named Pretorius Kop. Here Van, being so much fatigued, found it impossible to go further; we therefore took up our quarters in the empty store, of which the door and half the roof was gone. Some dry grass was cut, with which I made him a tolerable bed on the floor; but in the night he became delirious, and I had a good deal of trouble with him. By the morning he, however, again picked up; the fever seemed to have quite passed away; weakness was all that he complained of, but he hardly looked fit to continue the journey. Nevertheless, he insisted on doing so, and, as our provisions were running short,

I consented, although I had some compunction in allowing him to expose himself to the fierce rays of the sun.

Accordingly we left the station and tramped on towards home, but with rather less alacrity than had characterized our outward journey. My own feet were very much blistered, and some mosquito bites on my legs, which I had scratched, had degenerated into rather painful sores, so that our progress was somewhat slow, and by mid-day we had hardly covered seven miles. Wearily we sat down for a few minutes' rest in a glade sheltered by large tree ferns, and were bathing our feet in the little stream, when suddenly the step of a horse caught our ear, and, looking round, we saw, to our great pleasure, no other than our friend Cooper, riding up at a swinging canter. Our trusty Kafir had well performed his duty. He had reached Spitzkop in the middle of the night, and Cooper, who had himself only just returned from a long journey, rose immediately, caught his knee-haltered horse upon the veldt, saddled up, and, stuffing brandy and a bottle of Waters's quinine wine (for quinine itself he had none) into his saddle-bags, rode off at once to meet us, followed by another Kafir on foot to relieve our loads.

The main camp was yet some twenty miles

distant; but half-way there was a creek, known by the name of Lightning Gully, at which some digging was going on. With the idea of reaching this we started, Van riding Cooper's horse; but, as luck would have it, had hardly been an hour and a half on the road ere the rain began to pelt. We were now upon the open veldt; there was no shelter; so we had to make the best of it, and travel on, wet or dry.

The brandy did not come amiss now, for by the time we got to the creek we were perfectly waterlogged. Van was almost too weak to sit in his saddle, and I could hardly stand through sheer fatigue. So tired, indeed, was I that when we arrived at a friendly digger's hut, I did no more than simply divest myself of coat, shirt, and trousers, and, wrapping myself in a dry rug, lay down and slept until morning.

On the following day, much to our general satisfaction, we reached Spitzkop. Poor Van was quite done up, and could not, I think, have proceeded much further. As a matter of fact, for some days after we almost despaired of pulling him through; but at length he began to improve, although it was some time before he quite recovered his strength.

The marvel to me was that I escaped so easily.

Footsoreness and fatigue were my only ailments; beyond them I suffered no inconvenience, for which blessings I thanked Providence, and congratulated myself sincerely.

In my tent everything was exactly as I had left it—a fact that spoke well for the honesty of the camp. In my chest, which might easily have been opened, were articles of more or less value, especially to men suffering from that horrible disease—impecuniosity.

I had taken no precautions whatever in regard to the safety of my property. The door of my tent was simply laced up; any one who had chosen to enter might have done so: there was nothing to stop him save the voice of his own conscience.

Matters after our return having been settled up between Cooper and myself in reference to our business transaction, I began to think of leaving Spitzkop for good, there being nothing further to be done here. It so chanced that a small Dutch waggon which had brought mealies into camp was about returning to Lijdenburg, and I seized the opportunity which this offered of transmitting my heavy goods thither, retaining only my tent and such little things as I should temporarily require or did not intend moving.

CHAPTER IX.

Farewell to Spitzkop—Sabi-lala Falls—Mac-Mac—Fleas—Pilgrim's Rest—Kind friends—A contrast—Agents—The lower regions—Pilgrim's Hill on a wet night.

On Friday, the 22nd of November, having sold my tent, stores, etc., to a new-comer, I bade farewell to my camp friends, many of whose mangled bodies now lie rotting on the slope of the Zlobani Mountain in Zululand, and started with a single Kafir, who carried my rug and portmanteau, towards Pilgrim's Rest. The direction lay due north, by the side of the Spitzkop Mountain, across the valley of the Sabie to the Mac-Mac diggings, and thence over a spur of the Drakensberg to Pilgrim's Rest on the Blyde river.

The total distance is about fifty miles. I reached the Sabie in the middle of the day, where I found a little reed hut erected, with a piece of board stuck up in front, intimating that accommodation for the traveller might be had within. Neither rest nor refreshment being unwelcome, I entered, made the

acquaintance of Mr. Wilson, the proprietor of the "hotel," and had a meal there, crossing the ford later in the afternoon. Near this are some very fine falls, over which the river descends with deafening roar into a rocky chasm some hundred and fifty feet in depth. Although some little way out of my road, I could not but visit them, and I had no cause to regret doing so, for they were beautiful in the extreme. Continuing my walk, I reached Mac-Mac at seven in the evening, very tired and oppressed with the heat, having walked over thirty-four miles. Here I was hospitably received by the manager of Messrs. James, Fox, and Jones's store, who provided me with supper, shakedown, and breakfast, in return for which he refused to accept any payment.

The original Dutch name for this place is *Geel-hout-boom*, or "Yellow-wood Tree," from a description of timber which grows here in great profusion; but when the locality was "rushed" for gold, so many Scotchmen took up their quarters here, that it became known by the name of Mac-Mac.

Partly because I wished to look round, and partly to get rid of the fleas, which were having rather a "gay old time" with me, I rose early on the following morning and took a stroll round the diggings. Work was pretty brisk, but, as at Spitzkop, complaints were not wanting. Here, however, they

took a different line. At Spitzkop it was the lack of water that was the nuisance, here there was too much. The position of the gold-drift was very low, and the claims were continually being swamped out by the river. The gold found is very fine—there are no coarse nuggets; and on the whole I am inclined to believe that the distribution is more regular. Mr. Armfield's crusher was in full work, but the appliances were very crude and incomplete, and the quartz crushed not particularly rich. Moreover, as he employed no mercury, I think it highly probable that a large percentage of fine gold was lost. I did not remain long, but departed as soon as I had breakfasted.

Skirting the foot of a beetling precipice, the path led through a number of Kafir mealie gardens, until a break in the rock was reached, through which I travelled over the mountain. The ascent was very steep, and the heat as usual intense. At every little brook or rill I was obliged to stop and drink like a fish. On the other side of the pass the Pilgrim's Creek commences as a little ravine, rapidly widening out until it becomes a vast gorge, at the lower extremity of which, not a mile from where the creek flows into the Blyde river, the camp, or rather village, of Pilgrim's Rest is situate. The aspect of this gorge is very pretty, and recalls to mind many of

the little Swiss valleys so well known to Continental tourists. For some miles, however, the natural beauty of the landscape is marred by the excavations made by the diggers and the unsightly fluming and other erections which continually meet the eye, but in spite of these defects the *tout ensemble* is very charming.

Early in the afternoon, I reached Sheppard's store, to stay at which I had already previously received an invitation. Mr. Sheppard himself welcomed me at the door, and entering, I was introduced to his wife, an amiable and hospitable lady in the prime of life, who heartily endorsed her husband's kind invitation to remain their guest. Of course, I was only too pleased to accept. Bath, brushes, and other toilet accessories were forthcoming as if by magic, a little corrugated iron building was awarded to me as my especial bedroom, and in an incredibly short time the hot, dusty, footsore tramp was furbished and freshened up into at least a presentable character. A delicious dinner—not a half-raw steak from a lung-sick bullock, but one of choice delicacies, and that *summum bonum* of eatables, a crisp and artistically made salad, was followed by a pleasant social evening. One or two friends called in; we had a little music and agreeable cultivated conversation; and altogether the transition from the rough life

I had been leading for some months past to a thoroughly European civilization was so great and sudden, that I could hardly realize it, and was continually asking myself if I were not dreaming.

No hard, stony bed that night; no getting up to drive tent-pegs lest the shelter should be blown away; no anxiety respecting night adders, hyænas, and other abominations; no chance of waking up and finding myself lying in a pool of water, with my week's supply of meal converted into a poultice—but a soft, luxurious couch of English make, lined with snowy sheets, and protected with the gauziest of mosquito nets awaited me; and when I asked the nightly blessing on the dear ones at home, I felt I should be indeed ungrateful were I not to include in my request another for those kind people of whose hospitality I was partaking.

On the following morning, Sheppard took me through the village, and introduced me to a good number of pleasant and companionable people, all of whom were very attentive and civil to me during my stay.

I call Pilgrim's Rest a village for want of a better word. A camp it can hardly be styled, although many of the habitations are canvas-built. Perhaps it partakes more of an embryo town; for even though they are somewhat of a temporary and fly-

away character, the institutions of Pilgrim's Rest would warrant the adoption of the more dignified title. There are a number of stone and iron built houses, many of which are furnished with considerable taste and even elegance. There is a hospital and public dispensary, a magistrate's and a gold commissioner's court, a post-office, two banks, a gaol, a school, several hotels—one known by the high-sounding name of "The International,"—and a newspaper office. One feature struck me particularly, and that was the extraordinary number of agents, auctioneers, and notaries there were in the place. Every other individual one came in contact with appeared to be something of this description, and they all evinced a strong desire to do business *with* me or *for* me, in any capacity whatsoever, from negotiating the purchase of a water-race for *myself* to investing in straight drinks at the saloon bar for *them*.

At the bank I saw some very beautiful specimens of gold, both in nugget and in vein, and obtained a vast deal of information relative to the mineral resources of the country. One sample of the gold was very singular in appearance, and known as "crevice gold," from the fact of its being picked out of crevices in the bed-rock. In shape, size, and smoothness, the nuggets bore a striking resemblance to haricot beans.

In the hospital there were at present only two patients, but the attendant informed me that not unfrequently there were as many as ten or twelve. Dr. Ashton, the medical man at Lijdenburg, rides over once a week, or oftener, if required, to visit and prescribe for the sick. The greater number of cases are the result of accident, such as are not of unfrequent occurrence, from the giving way of shoring and sturts in tunnels and deep claims, and the consequent falling in of heavy boulders and reef. The two poor fellows who were patients at the time of my visit had each of them lost a leg. The hospital and dispensary are both supported by voluntary contributions, and, considering the small population and the hard times, I am inclined to think highly of the generosity of the contributors.

A remarkable circumstance occurred here in 1875. A very heavy rainfall had taken place, accompanied by one of those fearful thunderstorms so frequent in these latitudes during the summer. The quiet creek was converted into a roaring torrent, which was rolling the boulders along like wisps of straw, and shaking the very earth. Dams cracked and were swept away like paper walls, and the weary work of months was destroyed in as many minutes by the giant hand of the storm. The terrified inhabitants of the camp stood by, awestricken, watch-

ing the destruction of their labour, when, by some marvel and without a sign of warning, the boiling flood suddenly ceased, and where the moment before an enormous volume had been rushing by, an insignificant rivulet now trickled lazily along. Quite at a loss to account for this occurrence—the rain not having in any way ceased its impetuous fury—a detachment of diggers, clad in their oilskins, made their way up creek, and there discovered, to their amazement, the whole body of the surging flood precipitating itself into a vast black chasm, which yawned across the creek bed. Fearful sounds resembling thunder, and others like sharp explosions, issued from this mysterious opening into the nether region; and, under the impression that before long the surrounding crust would break through and engulph them, the spectators hurried back to camp, and that night shifted as much of their goods and chattels as they conveniently could to a safer position higher up the mountain-side. No such catastrophe, however, occurred; and on the next morning, the storm having ceased and the torrent subsided, a closer inspection was decided upon.

A channel was cut skirting the chasm, and the stream having been brought back to its original course, a couple of strong beams fitted with tackles

were placed across the opening, and a man, provided with a torch, was cautiously lowered into it.

At a depth of ninety feet, not being able to touch bottom or to distinguish anything in the dense darkness, which the torch failed to illumine, he shouted to be drawn up again, and was accordingly hoisted to the surface, but in a terribly scared state of mind. Below, he said, all was impenetrable darkness; a cold, gusty wind had several times nearly extinguished his torch, and sounds had reached his ear as of distant rushing water and the crashing of falling rocks. Nothing would persuade him to make another descent; and no one else volunteering, the mysteries of the abyss remain unsolved to the present day. A weight attached to a long line was lowered, and the depth of the cavern directly below the orifice found to be over two hundred feet, with a *dry*, rocky bottom. In all probability, this cavern was connected with a series of others of immense size formed in the bed rock, which in this district consists of dolomitic limestone, and possibly it communicated with some underground lake or river. At the time of my visit, the mouth of the chasm had been closed with stonework, and was no longer visible.

The days passed very pleasantly, Sheppard and his wife doing all they could to make my stay

agreeable. With them I spent several pleasant evenings at other houses, and had quite a gay time. Sheppard himself was much interested in the collection of natural history specimens, and as our tastes ran alike in this groove as well as in others, we got on capitally together, making numerous excursions into the surrounding country, hunting up butterflies, beetles, and other flying and creeping things, which added largely to my collection.

But as everything earthly must come to an end, the time arrived when I could no longer delay my journey, and as the opportunity of getting a lift only occurs in that locality perhaps once in three months, I promptly accepted a kind offer made by Mr. Roth, the district magistrate. This gentleman had a small waggon returning from the Rest to Lijdenburg, a distance of about forty miles, carrying a load of camp equipage for the Baron de Fanson, the late Belgian Consul in the Transvaal Republic, and it was in this vehicle that I arranged to depart.

The oxen were inspanned in the Market Square; I was quickly on board, and after another friendly pressure of the hand from my kind host and hostess, and repetition of some tender message for "home," the Kafir driver cracked his ponderous whip, and with the usual shriek of "Yek! Hambaake!" we jolted off.

A mile or two from the village runs the Blyde, or more correctly *Blaij* (gladness) river, which, when not in flood, is but an insignificant though pretty stream —albeit its colour is not improved by the mud and tailings which rush into it from the various creeks around where gold prospecting is going on. This we forded without difficulty, and then commenced the ascent of the terrible Pilgrim's Hill. This mountain is literally the *bête noir* of the place. Pilgrim's Rest can only be approached or left by it, as far as waggons are concerned, and the dangers of the road across must ever dwell in the memory of those who have journeyed to the gold-fields. The formation of the hill is a soapy shale, as greasy in some places as talc, and cut and furrowed out by water-action into innumerable dangerous gorges and "sluits." As the grade for about three miles is one foot in every six and enough to strain in pieces waggons of the strongest African build, transport-riders are unwilling to cross except at very high rates. Riding up this mountain was, of course, quite out of the question, and so I climbed on ahead, shouting back directions to the driver as to the choice of path for the oxen. This, however, did not last long, for at one slippery place the waggon came to grief and capsized, leaving us no alternative but to outspan the oxen for the night, and wait until sunrise next morning to make another start.

My camping-ground was not a nice one. Where there was not mud there was rock, and neither of these "bottoms" forms a pleasant couch. However, I had fared worse, so accepted the position without much grumbling, and, having despatched the boys for water, proceeded to kindle a fire, with the intention of having a mug of tea before sleeping.

But *l'homme propose et Dieu dispose.* Darkness came on, and as my little stock of dry *bois de vache* became exhausted and burnt out, I was compelled to make my meal off dry food for lack of other. "It is a hundred to one," thought I, "but what those rascally Kafirs have made their way back to Pilgrim's Rest, leaving me here in the lurch." And so in reality they had. It was, however, too dark for my return now; so I made the best of a bad bargain, and, curling up in my blanket on the hard rock, soon fell asleep.

I suppose I must have lain thus for about two hours, when I was unpleasantly awakened by rain falling on my face; so, purposing to get my mackintosh, I jumped up and made in what I conceived to be the direction of the waggon. The night was pitch-dark, and I could not even see my hand before my face. After groping about for some ten minutes, I began to doubt the wisdom of this game at blind-man's-buff amid precipices, and the folly of it being

conclusively brought to my mind by stepping into a deep rut and striking my forehead violently against the opposite bank, I gave up further attempts to find anything like a shelter, and, wrapping my blanket around me, sat down and hoped for the best.

The rain, which at first was only moderate, presently increased in vigour, gaining in violence, until it came down in all its tropical force—a perfect deluge—a very few moments of which sufficed to wet me to the skin. The lightning blazed out in awful splendour, while its thunder accompaniment kept up a continuous fearful roll, supplemented by ear-splitting explosions in rapid succession. The deluge of rain hardly permitted me to open my eyes, but at one opportunity, by the light of an almost blinding flash, I caught a moment's glimpse of the waggon some fifty yards from where I was standing. I then perceived I had been walking from, instead of towards it. An instant later, another and more suggestive sound caught my ear above the bellowing of the thunder, which brought me anything like a pleasant sensation. It was the roar—distant and dull at first, but rapidly increasing in sound—of countless stones and pebbles rolling over their rocky bed. *The hill water was coming down!*

I do not think I am a coward, but I must confess that that sound filled me with apprehension. The

idea of being washed helplessly off the earth by a rushing mountain flood, whirling my body downwards, as food for the alligators, to the distant Limpopo river, was not reassuring. I soon, however, dismissed the uncomfortable reflection, and fixing my feet firmly in the ground, prepared to offer a stubborn resistance to whatever might come. And it *did* come. For two or three hours—an eternity it seemed—I stood there, with the rushing water up to my knees, battling the flood, and not daring to move either right or left for fear of getting into deeper water. And lucky it was that I did not move, for when the storm abated, and the crescent moon shed her soft, silvery light upon the scene, I perceived that I stood upon a rocky shallow, dividing the current of a foaming torrent some yards in width, and deep enough to have swept away an elephant, much less a man; hurrying in its madding course onward over the precipice down into the surging river below, which, now swollen to giant dimensions, was rolling huge boulders along like balls of cotton. I shuddered when I thought of the terrible grinding I should have received had it been my fate to have made one single false step.

Weak and weary with my exertions, I still stood my ground until break of dawn, when, the water having assuaged to a considerable degree, I was

enabled to shift my position and reach dry ground. The waggon had been shifted some fifty yards or so down the hill, and had only been saved from taking a leap over the cliff by the projecting spur of a friendly rock. Of the baron's effects little remained. What I could I gathered up, and sticking the whip-stock upright in the ground to show that I was all right, I departed *en route* for the next human habitation. It was, of course, impossible to cross the Blyde. I had no choice, therefore, but to proceed onwards to a place some seven miles distant, where I understood there was a house of accommodation known as Paskins's. It was a long and weary path; my feet and legs were cut and bruised by the long action of the scouring shingle, and I felt most wofully chilled and miserable. But it had to be done, and was done, though it took me quite three hours to perform the task. I need not dilate upon the pleasure and relief with which I at length descried the dark-blue foliage of the gum trees which invariably surround every Transvaal dwelling; suffice it to say that I found all I desired—food, brandy, and rest; while Paskins himself, when he heard of the disaster to Mr. Roth's waggon, rode back with a couple of Kafirs to find the oxen and recover what remained of the waggon and its load.

CHAPTER X.

Deserters—Kruger's Post—A Nimrod—The bacon tree—Lijdenburg again—Fresh acquaintances—A ruined city—Steelpoort river—Thaba Mossequ—Stolen diamonds—Native fortifications—An inhospitable chief—Two months after—A couple of cowards—Middleburg.

TWENTY-FOUR hours' rest and some soothing ointment applied to my scarified limbs re-established my strength, and I became anxious to continue my journey. Paskins had managed to recover the waggon, but it was in a very battered condition, and two of the oxen were missing, as also were a good many of the baron's effects, and a few trifles of my own property. A new dissel-boom had to be supplied before I could go on, and I was detained another day while this was being done. Meanwhile, the two Kafirs who had originally started with me came up, not knowing I was there, and offered themselves for hire to Paskins. I, however, discovered them, and had them bound and fastened to the tail of the waggon to take into Lijdenburg as deserters, for Mr. Roth to treat as he thought fit.

Paskins showed me a reef of galena on his farm, and samples of peacock copper ore, which he stated were obtained close by, but I had not time to examine the place they came from. The galena, which I subsequently analyzed, was very rich in silver, and had not at that time been at all worked.

As soon as the repairs were completed, I trekked away, Paskins having supplied me with a couple of Kafirs to drive and voorloop; the prisoners following in the rear. In the evening, Kruger's Post was reached, and I outspanned for the night. Mr. Glynn keeps a store here, and close by is the residence of Mr. Louis Jullien, formerly of London musical celebrity. I stayed for the night at Glynn's house. He is a mighty hunter, and in the morning showed me a splendid collection of horns, skins, and other trophies of the chase. On the grass in front of his house a couple of tame elands were grazing, and he possessed a span of trek-buffaloes, which he himself had reared and trained.

Passing on from here, I reached the Spek-boom river valley, where a German has a little roadside shanty. Here there is a vein of copper cropping out, and evidences of old workings. The spek-boom, from which the river takes its name, grows here in great profusion. It is a very curious herbaceous tree, with a pulpy bark, which when cut resembles

the fat of bacon in appearance; hence its name, which in English signifies "bacon tree." There are also great numbers of sugar-bushes, from the flowers of which the Boërs extract a kind of sugar. The drift at the river was the scene of a battle fought between the volunteers and Sekukuni's Kafirs early in the year, and many bones and skulls still lie about in evidence of the fighting. Some would-be funny person, gifted with more bravado than brains, has fixed a Kafir's skull against the trunk of a tree close by the drift, and adorned it with a bead necklace, in addition to sticking a clay pipe in its ghastly grinning jaws.

From here to Lijdenburg is but seven miles, and I reached the town late in the afternoon. Calling at Dalmaine's hotel, I found my baggage, which I had forwarded from Spitzkop, all safe; and after a change of dress and a bath, I went to pay my respects to Mr. Roth and deliver up my prisoners.

This gentleman was very civil; he apologized for the desertion of his Kafirs, which, of course, there was no occasion for, and insisted on my staying to dinner. The baron was present, and pressed me to go with him to Lake Chrissie, in New Scotland, in order to inspect the coal-mines there; but as I was desirous of personally making a proposal to the Government in Pretoria, I reluctantly declined his offer.

My quarters at the "hotel" were not the most comfortable I have known. In common with all South African hotels, it contained a limited number of bedrooms, and the idea of having one to myself was simply out of the question. On my return from Mr. Roth's, I found two other individuals sharing my apartment, and as they were both intoxicated and smelt horribly of drink, I preferred bringing out my rugs and sleeping in the garden, taking care on the following morning to make a fresh arrangement with my landlord.

The next day, I received a visit from the baron, who was accompanied by Mr. Louis Jullien, of Kruger's Post, better known by the name of Dr. Birch—a very agreeable man, but somewhat of an enthusiast. This gentleman had a scheme for the regeneration of the country, and shortly intended proceeding to the seat of government, in the hopes of putting it into execution. He was very musical, and an accomplished performer upon several instruments, as I subsequently had ample opportunity of judging.

Of course, I renewed my acquaintance with "Ex-President" Stafford Parker and Dr. Ashton, both of whom assisted materially in whiling away the long hours' and days' enforced stay in this tomb-like city. Mr. Beeton and Lieutenant White, both

well-known ex-filibusters, also proved very pleasant companions.

A trader, ——, whose name is somewhat prominent in the blue-book reports in connection with the first Sekukuni campaign and the annexation, had forwarded several loads of mealies to Sekukuni's town, and, being about to proceed thither on horseback himself, offered me the loan of a horse in return for what he was pleased to call the pleasure of my company. This proposal I jumped at; and accordingly, at an early hour one morning, we left Lijdenburg and cantered away to Sekukuni's. Our route lay first to Kruger's Post, and thence, turning off to the left, along the Ohrigstad valley to the Steelpoort river, fifteen miles beyond which lay the turbulent chieftain's town. Kruger's Post we reached in about three hours, and off-saddled at Glynn's store, allowing the horses a feed of mealies, while we refreshed the inner man and rested. Another two hours' ride in the afternoon brought us through a very beautiful valley to the homestead of the Wainwrights, an English family, who have settled in this locality in spite of its unhealthiness and proximity to the strongholds of the robber-chief Umzœt and his liege lord Sekukuni. Here we passed the night, continuing our journey on the following day. Not far from the Wainwrights' farm is the ruined town

of Ohrigstad. This was the first chief town erected by the northern Boërs when they settled in the district; but the site proved very unhealthy, and, after having been twice decimated by fever, they removed to a more salubrious spot, and built the town of Lijdenburg. At the present time, the shells of the houses still remain, but are entirely given over as haunts for the owl and jackal.

Leaving the Wainwrights' in the morning, we struck through a gorge to the north-west, and came to the drift across the Steelpoort river, just below Fort Burghers, erected by Schlieckmann in 1876. The scenery here is very beautiful, and the river is of considerable width. There is, however, a good ford, and we had no difficulty in crossing.

—— advised me to look out for crocodiles, but I saw nothing of them. After leaving the ford, the country became very hilly, and the Thaba Mossequ, close by which Sekukuni's town is built, came in view. This is a lofty mountain, very inaccessible, and forms a great stronghold in time of war. We came up with the waggons in the course of the afternoon. They were outspanned in the valley, quite two miles from the kraal, the chief not allowing any nearer approach. ——'s brother was there, and had already disposed of the greater part of the mealies. He expected his brother would have brought another

waggon-load, instead of riding over on horseback, and was consequently rather disappointed. By what I saw, they were making a pretty good thing out of these mealies, receiving in return for them cattle and diamonds. These latter originally came, no doubt, from the diamond-fields, where a great many Makatees (Sekukuni's tribe) hire themselves out as labourers, and, by their chief's command, secrete a stone whenever they have an opportunity, with which they eventually return to their kraal. At this period it would seem that Sekukuni's harvest had been very bad, and that his people were much in want of food; the Kafirs I saw had a very half-starved appearance.

That night I slept under one of the waggons. In the morning, —— informed me of the necessity of his immediate return, in order to send on some more mealies, so as to make hay while the sun shone. I was, however, reluctant to depart without seeing, if possible, something of the town, and asked —— to make the attempt with me. This, however, he declined doing, as he averred it might prejudice his market, but told me that, if I went alone, he would wait for my return. Accordingly, I started in the direction of the town, but my efforts to enter were quite unavailing. There are but two entrances, and these are through passes, or *poorts*, well fortified

with stone walls and dense hedges of prickly pear and *kameeldorn*. The road is very narrow, hardly admitting of two persons walking abreast. I reached the entrance to the poort without opposition, although some Kafirs spoke to me and laughed rather insolently; but, as I did not understand their dialect, which differs from the Zulu, I walked heedlessly on. Arrived at the poort, however, my further progress was impeded by a band of armed warriors, who significantly warned me back, and when I tried to force a way, opposed force to mine. There was nothing left, therefore, but to retrace my steps and return to the waggons. Here, of course, I had to go through the usual "I told you so," etc., and to swallow my disappointment as best I could.

Seeing nothing further to be done, I rode back to Lijdenburg with ——, reaching it early in the morning of the second day after, having been detained on the road from Kruger's Post by a fearful storm. I rode ten miles in a thoroughly drenched condition, and the constant friction of my wet breeches completely skinned me.

Two months after my visit, Sekukuni broke out again in open rebellion, this time against the English. Lijdenburg was invested by him, and cut off from communication with the outer world. Fever raged there with great violence, while war and famine ran

riot throughout the district. Even now, at the time I write, the rebellion has not been quelled, and a strong British force is at this very moment operating, though apparently without much effect, against this fierce and irrepressible chief; so that, with all the vaunted advantages which were to accrue from the annexation to the British empire, the Transvaal seems at the present moment to be almost in as much of a hobble as it was at the time of Sir Theophilus Shepstone's first visit. Sekukuni complains of breach of faith; Cetywayo does the same, although *he* now is *hors de combat;* and so do the Boërs. As regards these last, let any of my readers who care to study the subject carefully examine the Treaty of 1854 between the British and the Transvaalers, and then turn to the Proclamation of 1877, and judge whether or not there is reason in the complaint. Time, it is true, will heal all sores, and future generations will doubtless regard with a more lenient eye crimes which they only view half obscured in the mists of the past; but nevertheless the fact remains that the history of South Africa is written in tears and blood, for which the universal law of compensation will one day exact a deep and deadly retribution.

On my return to Lijdenburg, I heard of a Dutch waggon intending to depart on the following day,

and at once sought the owner. He was bound, he said, for Potchefstroom, but for the consideration of £2 10*s*., which sum was to include rations, could take me to Middleburg, a hundred miles on my journey. To this I agreed, and accordingly, on the afternoon of the 21st of December, I bade farewell to the City of Sorrows, and again started on "trek."

The journey was monotonous in the extreme, the commissariat abominable, and the two Dutchmen, to my mind, no better than a couple of demons. It rained nearly all the way, and, as the wet dripped continually through the tattered tent, things inside were anything but comfortable. About half-way we came to a store—Grobler's—where I discovered my friend Cooper, who had been there some few days. My stay, however, was somewhat limited, for the waggon did not stop, and I had a long run to catch it up.

The Steelpoort river was crossed near its source. At this place it is very different in size and character to where it runs at the foot of the Ohrigstad valley, being little better than a mere spruit. Here one of the Dutchmen became very insolent to me, so much so that I was compelled to pitch into him, and prove the two to be the veriest cowards alive. Subsequently I actually overheard them discussing a plan to *disfigure me during my sleep!*

It so chanced that the Kafir they had as attendant was no other than my old acquaintance, Bovan, who had come with me from Maritzburg to the gold-fields. He could speak Dutch, and, as a precautionary measure, I privately arranged with him to sleep near me, and, if he awoke—which he was almost certain of doing—to rouse me in the event of any one coming near. Whether, however, they were afraid of the consequences or what, I know not, but their diabolical plan was never carried into execution; and I reached Middleburg on Christmas Eve with my frontispiece as beautiful as ever, and not in the least sorry to get rid of my undesirable travelling companions.

CHAPTER XI.

"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"—South African hotels—The Landrost—A strange Christmas—Mining speculators—A "sell"—Cobalt—Midnight revels—The ball—The stolen cannon—Bustard-shooting—The horse sickness.

MIDDLEBURG was originally known as Nazareth, but the inhabitants were so long jeered with the taunt of "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" that in disgust they changed it to its present and certainly less beautiful name. It is a small village of not more than 150 inhabitants, some few of whom are English, while the majority is made up of Boërs and other Africanders. There is hardly a tree in the place, which in this respect presents a marked difference to other South African towns, generally so thickly planted with gums and willows. South of it stretches the wide High Veldt already noticed, while to the north lies the jungle or Bush Veldt, the haunt of the lion and giraffe.

C——'s hotel is the only place of accommodation—if abominable board, combined with dirty beds full of fleas, for which an outrageous price is charged,

can be construed into that meaning. To this establishment I had my baggage conveyed; my arrival causing no little stir among the innumerable "kinderkins" and Dutch-bred Kafirs, with which the place seemed to swarm; and after making arrangements for my stay with the landlord—a burly, excitable, though not unpleasant Boër—I performed a hasty toilette, and proceeded to call on and deliver a letter of introduction, with which Sheppard had provided me, to Dr. J. Scoble, the district magistrate, or Landrost. This gentleman had formerly held the office of Gold Commissioner at Pilgrim's Rest, which indeed he still retained in name, but upon accepting the post of Landrost here, the former duties had been delegated to the Acting Commissioner, Mr. Gunn.

Dr. Scoble accorded me a most hospitable reception. I was at once pressed to remain to dinner, and spent an agreeable evening in his company and that of Mrs. Scoble, a highly gifted and intellectual lady, and her amiable daughter, both of whom insisted upon my spending the following Christmas Day at their house, an invitation I was incapable of refusing.

The next day saw me, therefore, again a guest under the roof of the worthy magistrate, where I also met a number of ladies and gentlemen, invited, like myself, to enjoy the Christmas fare. A strange

Christmas it seemed too; not but what the roast beef and plum-pudding were both toothsome and succulent, the boned turkey and mince-pies savoury and delicious, and the welcome hearty and hospitable. But attendant Kafirs with fly-whisks, summer fruit on the side-tables, doors and windows wide open, a cloudless sky, and the thermometer at 98° in the shade, combined to imbue me with a strong sense of the incongruous; and in spite of the seductive character of the viands, I felt that, had I been allowed my own way, I should have been tempted to let Christmas "slide," and to have regaled myself with delicacies of a less substantial, though unorthodox order.

My acquaintance with this family quickly ripened into intimacy, a circumstance which conduced in a remarkable manner to my comfort and entertainment during the somewhat prolonged stay I made in Middleburg, and I shall ever bear with me a grateful recollection of the pleasant hours I spent in their society.

The report of my being interested in scientific chemistry soon brought a host of demands for me to look at this and inspect that. At this particular period Middleburg had a mineral mania, and speculations on an extensive scale were rife in the neighbourhood. Many investments were made on the

strength of the unsupported assertion of an ignorant adventurer, who had ingeniously contrived to infect the Middleburghers with the idea that their district was extremely rich in mineral resources, and that they should employ him in prospecting and exploiting the same. This game he carried on for some time at a considerable profit to himself, but, as may be imagined, with but little to his supporters.

As an instance of the sort of thing that was going on, it may be amusing to mention a speculation entered into by Messrs. Henwood and Roseveare, the well-known Durban merchants. These gentlemen, upon the representation that a certain farm contained minerals of great value, purchased it at an enormous figure, £2000 I think, its market value being about £150. Our adventurer was then employed to strike the vein, which in course of time he did, and pronounced the ore to be that of silver. At the time of my visit, a gentleman named Weber, ex-Landrost of Middleburg, and agent for Henwood and Roseveare, had secured several large sacks full of the ore, of which sample packets of some pounds weight were to be forwarded by express mail-cart to Capetown, 1200 miles distant as the crow flies, at a heavy cost, to be analyzed. Mr. Weber made a great fuss about the silver-mine, and every post from Durban and the branch house at Lijdenburg brought fresh communi-

cations bearing on the subject. A watch, day and night, was instituted at the mine, and great precautions taken lest some dishonest passer-by should help himself. With some difficulty, I induced Mr. Weber to show me a sample of the ore, and when after a prolonged hesitation he did so, I could scarcely refrain from laughing in his face. The ore was a beautiful specimen of pure *micaceous* or *specular iron*, worth in England perhaps some £3 per ton, but in the High Veldt of South Africa of no more value at present, nor for many years to come, than any other stone of which the crust of the earth is built up. The look of horror he gave me on the pronouncing of my verdict was intense. His hopes of future wealth were rudely dashed to the ground, and I really felt sorry for the man, who, though only an agent in the matter, would doubtless, in the event of a real silver find having taken place, have come in for a good share of the pickings. By the time I next met him, however, some three or four days afterwards, he had been perfectly reassured that *I* was the ignorant impostor, and the samples had been duly despatched for analysis.

There is, nevertheless, not the slightest ground for doubting that the district is extremely rich in minerals; and, as I afterwards strongly impressed upon the Government at Pretoria, the proper and

most reliable plan by which a great many of the financial difficulties of the state might be relieved, would be to have a geological and scientific survey made by competent persons, and by this means arrive at a definite and accurate knowledge of the value of the country's resources, mineral and otherwise.

About thirty miles north of Middleburg, on the Kruis river, in the Bush Veldt, is a cobalt-mine, which is being worked by a London company, who in a very short space of time completely glutted the home markets with cobalt ore, and brought the price down from £140 to £50 a ton. The vein was lost immediately after things arrived at this pitch, and the management consequently changed. I should have taken the opportunity to inspect the mine, but on my casually meeting the new manager at the hotel at Middleburg, on the occasion of a visit of his there, I was so little impressed in his favour that I determined not to risk a visit which would probably be attended with an insolent reception by the cub in office.

New Year's Eve is attended in Middleburg by some remarkable vagaries on the part of the inhabitants. A Whitworth three-pounder, belonging to the Government, was dragged out of its place at the court-house, and fired continually for the space of an hour in the middle of the night. This little caper

being concluded, the revellers called round at the houses of such as they knew would be most inconvenienced by the untimely visit, and commenced the operation of battering doors and windows, until the distracted occupant came forth with a supply of liquor for the ever-thirsty besiegers. To refuse is considered a breach of hospitality, and on this point Africanders are most conservative. So it happened that as I lay in my bed, fighting fleas and mosquitoes, and trusting the cannon would burst at the next round and send its demon firer to Jericho, a horrible battering suddenly commenced at my door, which opened out upon a court-yard in the rear of the hotel. Wondering and somewhat startled by this unexpected row, and almost concluding that I was about to be mincemeated by a Basuto impi, I snatched up my revolver, and shouting out, asked the cause of the clatter. An English voice replying that according to the customs of the place it was necessary for me to open my door on New Year's Eve when called upon, I somewhat crustily complied, when immediately in rushed a troop of masqueraders, who, taking up strong positions within the apartment, declared their intention of remaining until I had made the customary gift due from all sleepers on New Year's Eve, and from strangers in particular. In vain I protested I had no liquor. A canteen

formed part of the hotel, and being a visitor, I had the right to call for as many drinks as I liked. The final arrangement was that I had to call for *more* than I liked, and as drinks were high priced, the *pour-boires* amounted to something like fifteen shillings.

On the following evening, there was a subscription ball held at the court-house, to which I was invited by Mr. A. H. Walker, the principal steward, and one of the Government surveyors. All the *élite* and fashion of Middleburg were present, many also coming long distances from the outlying farms. The evening proceeded merrily: the people came to dance, not to stare at one another; and dance they did with a vengeance! A quadrille was a quadrille here. Partners did not walk through the figures as though they had swallowed a poker or were afraid of splitting their dresses if they bent their bodies. Each one vied with the other in the execution of their *pas*, and heel-and-toe'd it lustily, until the perspiration coursed down their foreheads in big drops. Waltzes they were great at, but their *grands coups* were the Dutch country dances, of which they had several, the names of which I now forget, but which had a most ludicrous and somewhat weird effect. One, I remember, was accompanied by each dancer with a song, the words, as far as I could catch, being—

"Vaat euwre hoet en trek Ferreira,
Take your tings and go.
Zwaa! draa! alle oef de een kant,
Vaat euwre hoet en go."

As I don't profess to understand Dutch, more especially African Dutch, I must be excused if the orthography is somewhat incorrect.

In accordance with European notions, there was a supper. This was provided by the ladies of the place, the sterner sex supplying the liquid adjuncts. "Dry Monopole" is the favourite brand of sparkling wine in South Africa, and to-night there was plenty and more than plenty of it, as slight subsequent disagreements among the revellers amply testified.

By six o'clock in the morning I left them still at it, and having escorted the Scobles to their residence, repaired to my own, in the hope of snatching an hour or two's sleep before the noise of the day.

But in vain! Scarcely had I been in bed ten minutes, when the door opened, and an ex-filibuster artilleryman, who had been blazing away half the night, entered and inquired as to what had "become of the cannon!" In a terrible passion I turned him out, threatening to give him "cannon" if he disturbed me again, and was once more composing myself to sleep, when another intruder, this time a mild Hindoo with my morning coffee, presented himself. He was, I fancy, considerably astonished to find the

coffee-cup knocked out of his hands the instant after, by a boot which lay conveniently within my reach; certainly he made a quick and quiet retreat, prudently closing the door behind him, and hanging for some minutes with all his weight on the handle outside. Whether he informed others of the state of my temper or not, I cannot say, but I certainly remained free from further disturbance until the bell rang for tiffin at noon.

On rising, I discovered that the cannon had actually been lost during the night. Taking advantage of a short absence of the artilleryman, some individuals had dismantled the gun and departed therewith, leaving the carriage. Great was the consternation; the Kafirs were at once credited with the theft, and a rigorous search was instituted. No Kafir was, however, found to be absent from his work, but still the cannon was not forthcoming. Suspicion then fell upon a waggon which had left that morning for Lijdenburg, and the European constable, sheriff, and two Kafirs were despatched in hot pursuit. The waggon was caught and overhauled, but the missing gun was still not to be found. Dr. Scoble, who was responsible for it, became very anxious on the subject, the loss being a serious one, and the cannon being, moreover, not a desirable weapon to place in the hands of Sekukuni, to whom

it was supposed to have been despatched by prowling Kafirs or renegade whites. Fortunately, however, the gun was discovered, two or three days subsequently, hidden in a ditch, where it had probably been mischievously placed by some harmless individual, and the sense of security was again restored to Middleburg.

Meanwhile, festivities continued to be the order of the day. On the night following the court-house ball, C——, my landlord, gave a party on his own account, which was also prolonged until long past sunrise, so that for another night I had no sleep, and was heartily glad when all this racketting was over.

A day or so after the festivities, Mr. Walker, of whom I have already spoken, sent me an invitation for a day's bustard-shooting with him, accompanying his message with the loan of a horse, his residence being about seven miles from Middleburg. Accordingly, in the early morning I went out, arriving at his place in time for breakfast, after which we rode out on the veldt together, and made a very good bag of pauw (large bustard), korhaan (a smaller variety), wild duck, and spring hares.

South African horses are remarkably well trained to the gun, and do not make the slightest start at a shot, even when it is fired close to their head.

The Boërs rarely shoot from the saddle, and

to-day we copied their example. Immediately the dogs pointed, we would dismount and throw the rein over the horse's head, so as to allow it to trail on the ground. In this position a Transvaal horse will never stir, and may safely be left to himself without fear of his moving or running away.

The Boërs are great horsemen, and are very fond and careful of their horses. If one meets a mounted Boër upon the veldt, and stops to exchange courtesies, the Boër will invariably dismount, and if the stoppage be likely to last more than a minute, he will loosen his saddle-girths. While in the Transvaal, I never saw a saddle-horse trot. His only paces are the walk, the canter, and the gallop. Travelling is always performed at a canter, the trot being discouraged as tiring to both man and beast. As a general rule, the horses are very much smaller than those we are accustomed to in England, few standing more than fifteen hands. When Paul Kruger and Dr. Jorissen, the Transvaal delegates, were in London last year, nothing appeared to astonish them more than the size of our horses. The price too is low—£5 will buy a very good colonial horse, though if what is called a "salted" one is required, as much as £40 is often demanded.

The horses of the Transvaal, and indeed of all the South African colonies, are subject to a disease,

which, occasionally taking the form of an epidemic, is productive of the most disastrous results. At certain seasons of the year, more commonly in the summer months of December and January, the disease is most prevalent, and "unsalted" horses, *i.e.* those which have not passed through the ordeal, are most likely to catch it, and will, unless extreme precautions are taken, succumb to it. The disease and its predisposing causes are very little understood; but from what I could gather from my own observation and the representations of others, I judge it to be a violent inflammation of the lining of the thoracic cavity, something akin to pleurisy, which appears to be contracted by the horse grazing while the dew is still upon the grass. Horses that are only allowed to graze in the middle and warmer parts of the day, and are fed during the night from a nosebag, enjoy comparative immunity from the disease. What there is in the dew that acts as a poison has not been determined, but certain it is that if, in the sickly season, horses be fed with either grass or forage wet with dew, they almost invariably die. The mists also have something to do with the cause of sickness, and for this reason an elevated camping-ground is always to be preferred. I was told of a Dutchman who, in the great horse sickness of 1855, saved the greater part of his horses (about fifty in

number) by taking them to the top of a mountain, 1500 to 1600 feet above the spot where they had commenced dying.

A "salted" horse will always command a good price. He is generally slower and duller than the other, and somewhat mulish in character, but he is to be depended upon; whereas an "unsalted" horse may die on the road, scores of miles from any human habitation, and leave the ill-starred traveller to carry himself and saddle as best he can.

CHAPTER XII.

The *nachtmaal* — Hotel inconveniences — A mission station — Starved-out miners—An entertainment!—Trip on the High Veldt—A Boër at home—*Daager*—Mr. Erasmus—A philosopher—Coal.

WALKER returned with me on the following day to Middleburg. During the night there had been a very heavy storm, and we came to a spruit which, when I crossed it on the morning previous, had been perfectly dry, but was now a river some twenty feet wide and two or three in depth. We found the town in an unusual state of bustle. In obedience to an old custom, the Boërs of the district had trekked hither to partake of the *nachtmaal*, or sacrament, and waggons were outspanned and tents pitched in great numbers in the neighbourhood of the church. I should think there were quite fifty families encamped there, and as the Boërs combine business with religion, the two or three stores were doing a roaring trade.

On attempting to enter my bedroom, I found it in the occupation of a couple of Boër women and

a host of slimy children, some of whom were in the bed, and others coolly turning over the contents of my portmanteau. I had already tasted uncomplainingly some of the discomforts of a Transvaal hotel, but this was rather too much of a good thing, and I departed in high dudgeon to find the landlord. To my disgust, this worthy did not at all view the matter in the same light as I did; indeed, he appeared to think that I was the party in the wrong, for, inquired he, what *could* I want of a bedroom when I was absent? At length, however, after kicking up a shindy, I managed to get rid of the intruders, who seemed to consider themselves uncommonly badly used in having to give up their quarters.

Twelve miles north of Middleburg is an important station of the Berlin Mission, named Botsabelo. I had, however, no opportunity of visiting it. From what I heard, the Kafirs there are trained to read and write, and learn some useful trade, such as blacksmithing and carpentering. The missionary himself, Mr. Merensky, keeps a store, at which are retailed to the Kafirs clothes, etc., made for that purpose by the ladies of Berlin. He also trades a good deal in various parts of the country, and I have myself seen waggons, bearing his name and loaded up with Kafir goods, leave Pretoria for the

northern districts of Waterberg and Zoutpansberg. During the Sekukuni war, he narrowly escaped getting into a scrape with the Government, on account of a charge brought against him of supplying the enemy with provisions.

To most lay travellers, the word missionary is like a red rag to a bull. I feel sorely tempted to say something on the topic, but I fear to hurt people's susceptibilities, and should unduly swell the proportions of this little book. So I prefer to abstain from a discussion of the question, omitting even to account for the fact that too frequently, among Kafirs in particular, the words heathen and honest man, thief and Christian, are convertible terms.

During my stay in Middleburg, numbers of starved-out diggers from the gold-fields came through on the "Wallaby track" towards Pretoria. Many of these were in a most pitiable plight—sick, penniless, and almost starving. To relieve some of their immediate necessities, an entertainment was promoted at the court-house by the inhabitants, who engaged a travelling actor, named Colville, to perform. In company with the others, I attended this performance, and certainly was highly amused, though not, perhaps, in the way intended. There had been some slight hitch in the arrangements, and the "artist," during the period of delay, had

improved the occasion by imbibing rather too freely. The consequence was that when everything else was in readiness, the actor was not, and when at last he appeared to make his introductory speech in evening dress, his braces were hanging down behind.

Quite unconscious of this little eccentricity in his appearance, he floundered through the speech, and leaving the stage, ostensibly for the purpose of transforming himself into some "impersonation," was discovered by the enraged audience, half an hour afterwards, sound asleep upon the floor of his dressing-room.

As I understood there would not be a waggon going to Pretoria for some time, I took the opportunity of accompanying Walker on a journey in a pair-horse gig towards the Vaal river, where he had some surveying to do. Our way lay along the High Veldt, the distance being about sixty miles. On the first day out I lost a pocket-book from the breast-pocket of my coat, containing valuable papers. In hopes of recovering it, I offered a Boër, at whose house we stopped for an hour, £5 if he found it by my return in a day or so; but the Boër was not successful. By a singular accident, I, however, reobtained possession of it some months afterwards from a Natal trader, who had found it among the properties of his Kafirs.

At nightfall we outspanned on the veldt, knee-haltered the horses, turning them adrift to graze, and having cooked and eaten our own supper, crept underneath the gig to sleep until sunrise.

After breakfast, the horses were caught and in-spanned, and we continued our journey, passing on the way large herds of game, bless-bok, spring-bok, and wildebeest. Our next stopping-place was at Peel and Warburton's store, where Mr. Minton, the manager, prepared us a savoury meal, and where we were joined by two mounted Boërs, who had come over to meet us and guide us to the spot to be surveyed. This was a two hours' journey further on, and we reached it about midday in a storm of hail and rain.

There was some question of a disputed boundary, which Walker had to settle; but upon entering into the matter, it was discovered that several surveys were necessary, and as Walker would be required to make a considerable stay, he deemed it best to return home, and bring down his travelling waggon and assistant. No surveying was, therefore, performed this time.

The amount of game here was something astounding. For miles around the face of the country was absolutely moving with the buck, which might be easily approached within two or three hundred

yards. Troops of vultures were sitting around on every little eminence, waiting for the chance death of a buck, in the event of which they would immediately be on to him, and in a few minutes leave nothing but the skin and bones.

Mr. Cronje, a Boër of intelligence and good appearance, invited us to his house, where we supped and stayed the night. Like all his race, he was a very religious man, and after supper offered up an extempore prayer, in which he made especial reference to the guests under his roof. His house was orderly and well conducted, and his children, of which twelve were present out of a total of eighteen, showed him great respect and reverence. Of course, his great theme of conversation was the annexation, upon which point he felt strongly, but, out of respect to the nationality of his guests, handled the subject with great delicacy.

Walker, a land-jobber named M'Hattie, and myself were assigned to one bedroom, which I suspect was our host's own, and we all three slept, or tried to sleep, in one bed. In the night, however, the fleas and M'Hattie's struggles became rather too much for me, and I preferred the daagered floor, which was comparatively flea-free. This *daager* is a great South African institution; it consists of a mixture of blood and cow-dung, which is daily smeared upon

the floor, and is the only means by which the fleas can be kept under. As in England a room is daily swept, so in South Africa it is daily daagered—a process which not only has its sanitary objects, but assists also in consolidating the clay floor, and gives it a not unpleasing polished appearance.

During the night the galloping past of large troops of antelope was plainly to be heard, their hoofs sounding loudly on the ground through the stillness of the night. On the following morning we started on our return journey to Middleburg, which we reached on the Friday, having been away for five days.

The post-cart had arrived from Lijdenburg, and brought down several acquaintances from that town on their way towards Pretoria. Amongst them was Jullien, who was now proceeding to the seat of government, in order to call the attention of the authorities to his reorganization scheme. During my absence, the Sheppards had also passed through Middleburg, Pretoria-bound; in fact, a general tide of emigration appeared to have set in that direction. The accounts from Lijdenburg and Pilgrim's Rest were very bad. An outbreak of Sekukuni was considered imminent; fever had made its appearance, and the gold-fields were being rapidly forsaken. Dr. Ashston, the only medical man at

Lijdenburg, was struck down with the epidemic, and Captain Aylward, who alone could have taken his place, was now in another part of the country. Subsequently, however, the captain suddenly turned up at Lijdenburg, and, resuming his Esculapian staff, nursed his friend Ashton through his long illness, and performed the general medical duties of the district.

On the 21st of January, Walker called on me at Middleburg with his trap, and again invited me to a trip on the High Veldt, this time in a spring-waggon, which was waiting for us at his father-in-law Mr. Erasmus's farm, some ten miles off. So, putting a few things, together with my rifle, in the trap, we left for this place. On our way we encountered a heavy hailstorm, which peppered and alarmed the horses to such an extent that they flew along as if racing for their life; and when, after a perilous ride, we arrived at the farm, the harness was hanging from them in ribbons.

Mr. Erasmus, whose daughter Walker had married, was a fine specimen of an Africander. He was a Boër of the old colony, having only moved into the Transvaal two or three years since; his political views were for this reason not so conservative as those of the genuine Transvaal Boër, and altogether his opinions were more advanced.

A tall, powerful, handsome man, between eighty and ninety years of age, he had the history of his country by heart, having been actively engaged in nearly every war that has been waged with both Europeans and natives since the cession to England in 1814. At this advanced age he was nevertheless still wonderfully active, personally superintending all the work of the farm, while his firm and erect seat in the saddle would have shamed many men thirty years his junior.

As we were detained here by the wet for two days, I had an excellent opportunity of improving my knowledge of South African matters generally, in conversation with this gentleman.

Walker's assistant, a young Belgian named Polchet, was here with the waggon. This young man had originally come to the Transvaal in connection with the proposed railway, but as the scheme fell through, he had accepted the situation in Walker's employ. In the long lone hours we subsequently had together on the wide veldt, I found him a very interesting companion; for although he could neither shoot nor ride, and hardly *see*, being very short-sighted, he nevertheless possessed powers of conversation and argument which amply compensated for his deficiency in other respects. Among his peculiarities were his opinions, which were de-

cidedly advanced. He declared himself a positivist of Auguste Comte's school, was a member of the International, and invariably signed his name with small initial letters instead of capitals—an idiosyncrasy dictated by his political modesty.

As he spoke only two words of English, and Walker's French vocabulary being of a similar extent, conversation between the two was necessarily somewhat limited, and my services as interpreter were pretty frequently called into operation during our trip.

At length, after a couple of days' waiting, the rain cleared off; and as there was now some prospect of a few days' fine weather, the oxen were inspanned, and we trekked away in the spring-waggon, loaded with a plentiful supply of camp-furniture, provisions, and a tent. In the rear of the waggon came three horses of Walker's—these and a couple of Kafir attendants completing the roll.

At Steenkohlspriut, near the Olifants river, I first saw actual Transvaal coal. The seam cropped out in the spruit-bank, and was some six or eight feet in thickness. A few sackfuls were cut and placed in the waggon for future use. It was not at all bad coal, being something similar in quality to that known in Lancashire as the "Arley main." The Boërs do not use much of it, preferring to do their

cooking with bricks made of cow-dung, which burn with a steady glow and answer their purpose better. One whom I met informed me that he had formerly used it, but that now the depth to which he had cut was too great to make it worth his while going to the trouble of getting further supplies. Upon my questioning him, this extreme and inconvenient depth proved to be twelve feet. What would our English pit-sinkers say to this?

Coal crops out in this manner in many parts of the Transvaal. At Lake Chrissie, in New Scotland, there are two seams cropping out within a mile of each other, the upper one being over thirty feet in thickness. There can be little doubt but that the whole High Veldt is one immense coal-field, which at some future day is destined to play a most important part in the history of the world's industry.

CHAPTER XIII.

A giant mushroom—Brandspruit—The Boër memorial—A patriarch—Sport—The vulture—Bad water—Conversation—A mortal combat—An African idiot—Return to Middleburg—Journey to Pretoria—"Good fors."

OUR first stopping-place of any importance was Peel's store, which we reached on the second day after leaving Mr. Erasmus's farm. On the way hither I had been lucky enough to shoot a couple of spring-bok, so that we had plenty of fresh meat. In addition to these we had come across a remarkable growth of mushrooms, one of which measured no less than nineteen inches in diameter. Walker would not touch it, but Polchet and I found it a very agreeable substitute for preserved vegetables.

Leaving Peel's on the following morning at sunrise, we trekked on to Brandspruit, the boundaries of which farm Walker had to rectify, and pitched our camp and erected our tent in a little dip of the land. Hard by grazed the game in countless numbers, watched from every little rise by troops of vultures.

Although not a house was in sight, it was not long before we were "spotted" by the Boërs of the

vicinity, who, while Walker happened to be away in the afternoon, came down, eight in number, mounted on horseback, with their half-cocked rifles slung across their shoulders. Having dismounted at the tent, one of them commenced an oration, from which I gathered that they objected to the survey taking place, and intended preventing it by force. Walker not being present, I was at a loss how to act; but these gentry spared me all trouble on that score by quietly easing their saddle-girths, squatting down on the ground, and entering into a general discussion amongst themselves, while Polchet and myself, hardly able to make out ten words of their conversation, returned into the tent and bothered our brains no more about them.

After some little while, another arrival took place, also in the shape of a Boër, mounted and armed like the others—an old man, with long white flowing hair and beard, and singularly mobile features. Evidently he was a person of note and reverence among them, for as he dismounted from his horse, they all rose with one accord and saluted him with heads uncovered. After a few words of greeting, this ancient Boër, whose name I subsequently discovered to be Joubert, a descendant of one of the exiled Huguenots, took from his pouch an immense scroll, and commenced reading. It was the famous petition for restoration

of independence, which, when forwarded to England, had the genuine signatures of 6951 adult Transvaal Boër electors appended to it, and which they in their simplicity fondly believed would be an effectual appeal to the honesty and Christianity of England, but which, I believe, made no more impression upon the Colonial Secretary than if it had been an advertising circular handed to him in the street.

As the patriarch read, there was no doubt as to their feeling upon the subject; each one listened with rapt attention, and when finished, it needed no pressure to obtain their signatures.

This done, Joubert remounted his steed and departed, almost at the same minute as Walker returned; upon which an exciting conference took place, the gist of which was that the Boërs were averse to the beacons being meddled with, and meant to oppose Walker's survey by force. Walker had, however, a duty to perform, and consequently rode to the beacon and planted his flag. This the Boërs immediately pulled down, and having thus forcibly asserted their intention, it became useless for us to act further, and therefore we returned to the tent, informing the Boërs that the next proceedings would be in a court of law.

This matter was not, however, the only one which had to be settled here; there was another

survey to be made, and we therefore remained in the same place for the following eight days. During this time I had ample sport, over sixty head of game falling to my rifle. Among these were no less than seventeen wildebeest, or gnu. These animals have a most peculiar appearance and fierce aspect, although in reality they are very harmless creatures. They never can resist the temptation to look at anything new, and, when they see a man they will often stand staring him in the face for some thirty or forty seconds before they make off. Even then their conduct is very extraordinary. Having made up their mind to escape, they do not turn and run at once, but jump up in the air, kick up their heels, and shake their heads in such a manner as to make one think them possessed. Many of them suffer from a malignant skin disease—a description of mange—which, being contagious, frequently carries them off in great numbers. All are much infested with internal parasites, more particularly in the head. From the cavity between the skull and the horns of a large bull gnu I once counted thirty large maggots, each over half an inch in length.

The meat of all these buck was cut up and dried for biltong, a process which brought more flies to the tent than was agreeable. The vultures sitting around were a curious spectacle. There they would

sit in rows of from fifty to a hundred, watching for offal or a chance buck to fall. At night-time they would disappear, flying away probably to the distant mountains, but with the rising sun back they would come to their watch. They had apparently no fear of man, hardly troubling themselves to fly away at his approach, but lazily hopping off to a safe distance. At other places, where game is not present in such amazing quantities as it was here, a vulture is rarely to be seen, except upon the occasion of the death of some animal, when they almost miraculously appear from all quarters of the sky. Where they come from, and how they have discovered the proximity of carrion, has been a matter of great dispute ; some declaring that it is to their sense of smell, others to their organs of vision, that vultures are indebted for the discovery of their food. For my part, although no naturalist, I am inclined to believe this latter is the right solution of the riddle, for I have known vultures to come *with* the wind from a direction to which, on this account, no scent can possibly have penetrated. Moreover, I think that although no vulture may be visible at the time of the death of a buck, there may be many high up in the sky, altogether out of the reach of human vision, but whose ever-keen eye is able to detect what is going on upon the darker background below.

Out of curiosity, I shot one of these remarkable birds and examined it. Its odour was sickening, somewhat resembling that of musk, and overpowering in the extreme. Even at the present moment, twelve months after its death, the head, which I preserved, retains the same persistent smell. He was a mighty bird, the wings measuring, when stretched out, eight feet from the tip of one to that of the other, and I should guess his weight to have been from thirty-five to forty pounds.

In shooting this bird I came very near to killing a man. I was leaning across the front of the waggon, with my rifle levelled at the vulture, and was almost in the act of drawing the trigger, when one of the Kafirs stepped out from the side and passed his head within a foot of the rifle-muzzle. An instant later, and the ball would have crashed through his skull. He noticed nothing, however, and bearing in mind the proverb of "Where ignorance is bliss," etc., I saw no necessity of enlarging to him upon the subject.

Every day Boërs would call at the tent, generally while Walker and Polchet were away taking their angles. These gentry would come in and sit down, making themselves quite at home, and drink coffee until further orders. Having a good knowledge of German, I managed in a short time to make

myself understood, and became able, with the help of my gesticulating powers, to carry on a certain limited conversation, which in all cases was invariably the same, and consisted in answering the following questions :—"What is your name?" "Where do you come from?" "What are you doing here?" "Where are you going?" "Where is Shepstone?" "Have you any caps (for rifle)?" Sometimes there was a little variation in this last, and it would read, "Have you a soopje (a drink of brandy)?" If by accident I answered in the affirmative, the Boër would remain all day.

Other than buck-shooting, there was not much to be done, and after the first few days the time passed rather wearily. Books we had none, and even the pleasures of gastronomy were denied us. The water we had to drink was simply filthy, and I wonder it did not make us ill. People in London make a great stir when the water contains the faintest trace of decomposing matter; but what would they say if they had to drink a fluid which was absolutely as black as ink and as thick as pea-soup? Our only supply was derived from little pits, or depressions in the land, and here the game would likewise come to drink, and churn the water into mud with their hoofs. Moreover, a wounded buck will invariably come to the water, and often, not having

the strength to drag his feet out of the deep mud, will die in it. Water-snakes, newts, toads, and all sorts of loathsome creeping things would frequent these pits; and we had to filter the water through pieces of rag in order to avoid swallowing a small museum of zoological specimens.

I sat one morning gazing on the ground, absorbed in thought, when an interesting little incident forced itself upon my observation. A little brown-and-black caterpillar, similar to and perhaps identical with the larva of the mealie-bug—the pest of the Transvaal—was crawling along at a rapid rate, pursued by a host of small black ants. He was evidently endeavouring to escape his pursuers, who in their turn seemed bent on mischief. The ants were much more rapid in their movements than was their object of pursuit, and every now and again one would clamber on his back and bite him; but the caterpillar fought bravely, and, the instant he felt the bite, would pause, turn his head, and pinch his rash tormentor in half. This sort of thing went on for some minutes; the caterpillar had slaughtered a dozen or so of his pursuers, but at length commenced to show symptoms of fatigue. The ants then redoubled their exertions; fresh reinforcements came up, a combined attack followed, and the caterpillar had a lively time of it. Presently

he bethought himself of a plan. A stalk of grass was growing hard by, and to this he betook himself for safety, climbing up tail first, the undaunted ants following. Here for some time he had the best of them. As each one approached, he quickly seized them in his jaws, and with a rapid movement of his body threw them to some distance. Perceiving this, the ants changed their tactics, and actually began to saw the grass-stalk through, one relieving the other as they became fatigued. After a minute or two's toil this operation was completed ; the citadel fell, and with it the besieged. A lively scene now ensued, the ants attacking the caterpillar on all sides, until at length, worn out with repeated onslaughts, the unfortunate insect gave up the ghost, his victors marching off in triumph, leaving the dead body of their vanquished foe lying on the plain.

On the 2nd of February, the survey having been completed, we pulled up stakes and trekked away, across the Waterfall river and back to Peel's store, where Mr. Minton again received us with his usual hospitality, and Walker engaged two coolies. Fifteen miles to the north of this another farm had to be surveyed, belonging to a Boër named Wesel Swart, close to whose house we again pitched our tent. The survey occupied two days, and I had to amuse myself as best I could. One of Swart's relatives,

an idiot, insisted upon keeping me company for the greater part of the time. Every dodge I could think of I tried to get rid of him, but all to no purpose. Once I gave him a shilling to take a message I knew would occupy some considerable time to convey, but the wretch artfully sent a Kafir, and I was "sold." I tried taking up a book, or pretended to sleep, but whenever I slyly raised my eyelids to see if he were off, I would catch sight of him playing at "bopeep" from behind the tent flap. Everywhere he followed me like a dog, and I really think, if I had remained much longer in the locality, he would have driven me into a state of mind similar to his own. One good service, however, he did render me. I had gone in the evening to bathe in a water-hole, and, not calculating possible contingencies, had got myself firmly fixed in deep black mud, which already reached beyond my knees and bade fair to engulph me. Fortunately, the idiot was present, and with the assistance which he obtained from the farm, I was dragged out of the perilous position. In return for this service, I presented him with a clasp-knife, the first use of which he directed towards carving a square hole in the tent side.

On the 5th of February, we moved on again to within fifteen miles of Middleburg, outspanning at evening near a saltpan, or depression in the land,

which contained brackish water. Here I shot a *vlaaght-vark*, or wild pig, and numerous aquatic and other birds. In the morning we passed through a tract of veldt which was literally covered with a species of grasshopper, each measuring quite two inches in length, and black in colour, with red-and-yellow facings. A large army of black-and-white locust birds and cranes were in attendance, gobbling them up, but apparently without making the slightest impression on the innumerable host.

Another two days' surveying, and then we returned to Erasmus's, from whence, on the following morning, I rode into Middleburg. Fortunately, my return was just in the nick of time. An empty waggon, belonging to a Scotchman named King, was to leave for Pretoria in the morning, and I was enabled to make arrangements for the transport of self and baggage.

My Middleburg friends supplied me well with letters of introduction to the people of Pretoria, and to the Government, with whom I hoped to come to an important arrangement, and on the 10th, after a farewell feast at the Scobles', I joined Mr. King's waggon and we trekked away. King had with him another friend, who was travelling about to recruit his health. Both were very nice fellows—a fact which conduced much to my comfort during the journey.

Honey's hotel was reached on the following morning. Here I halted in order to cash a "good for" I held of the owner. These "good fors," which answer to an English I O U, are common enough in South Africa, and, if backed by good names, circulate pretty freely. In this case, however, I had to submit to a discount of nearly twenty-five per cent.

On entering the "hotel"—a small roadside place of accommodation—I was surprised to meet an old acquaintance of Spitzkop and Lijdenburg, Colonel ——, and still more astonished at his reply to my "Halloa, colonel! What are *you* doing here?" "For God's sake, my dear sir, don't call me colonel; I'm the barman now!" By which I perceived how the mighty had fallen.

Our little waggon travelled along briskly, the oxen being strong and fleet and the roads passable. The country through which we passed as we neared the capital became less monotonous in appearance; there was less of the everlasting flats of grass, and more variety of scenery in general.

On the evening of the 13th, we reached Pretoria, and outspanned on the Market Square, having performed a journey of 112 miles in about three days —a somewhat uncommon feat for a South African bullock-waggon.

CHAPTER XIV.

The capital—Improvements—Misrule—Old friends—Snobs—The Wonderboom—Borers—A queer fireplace—Adventure with a lion—A fearful mistake—A waterspout—Transvaal agriculture—Return of the Governor—Ridiculous proclamation—An empty ball-room—Departure for Utrecht.

PRETORIA, the capital town of the Transvaal, takes its name from that of General Pretorius, the former chief of the Republic, who died in 1853. Until the annexation, Potchefstroom, or Mooi rivier Dorp, was the seat of government; but after that event, the *Volksraad* having been dissolved, Pretoria became the centre of business and authority. It has also wonderfully increased in size and population since that date—many speculators having made it their temporary residence, while the head-quarters of the military are likewise established here. The population at the date of my visit numbered quite two thousand whites, inclusive of some six hundred soldiers. The town is beautifully situated in a valley at the foot of the Magaliesberg Mountains, on the banks of a small river, the Aajes, one of the sources

of the Limpopo, which runs northward from the town through a poort, or gorge, it has cut through the chain of mountains. Although the elevation of Pretoria above the sea level is considerable, viz. some four thousand feet, it is nevertheless not by any means as healthy a locality as either Lijdenburg or Middleburg. Fever is by no means uncommon in the hot season of the year, and children are more especially liable to its attacks. The heat here is also very trying. On all sides the town is shut in by hills, the cool southern breezes in vain seeking an entrance. There is no doubt, however, that within the last few years, since the planting in large numbers of gum trees, there has been a marked improvement in its sanitary character. Compared with other Transvaal towns, Pretoria is a pretty place. The houses are not built with that prim Dutch regularity so noticeable elsewhere, although in the original plan the intention, no doubt, was different.

At the time of my visit the town was overrun with land speculators and place-hunters, among whom were a number of men from Natal, old friends of the Administrator, who was now daily expected in the capital on his return from Zululand, where he had been staying for the last eight months, conferring with Cetywayo, the Zulu king. During

this period of absence, there had been no government at all in Pretoria. Everything was at sixes and sevens, the Government Secretary, Mr. Osborn, and the Chief Judge, Mr. Koetzee, being the only responsible authorities in the place. Sedition was rife; the Administrator was openly vilified by both Dutch and English; and, only a few days before my arrival, three thousand mounted and armed Boërs had paraded in the Market Square and openly defied what authorities there were with impunity. The presence, however, of a large armed force, with Gatling guns, and holding a strong position upon a hill immediately commanding the town, had kept the ardour of the rioters below boiling-point.

The discontent was not by any means confined to the Boër element. English and Africander traders and others felt themselves equally aggrieved, albeit they did not much sympathize with the grievances of the Boërs. The articles in the *Volksteem* newspaper, the Transvaal Conservative organ, were very inflammable; and a special weekly periodical, the *Tsetse*, devoted its columns entirely to the abuse of the Governor and his party. Everywhere among civilians the cry was the same—separation or change of administration. It was only among the military and place-men that existing things were supported. Such was the state of political feeling at the time of my arrival.

There is only one properly so called hotel in the town—the Edinburgh—kept by Mr. Taylor, a Scotchman; and here I took up my residence for the time being. It was not particularly comfortable or well-appointed, and for the money charged, namely, twelve shillings per diem, a trifle better accommodation might have been reasonably expected. Still, it was the best, if not the only place, and, as it was the great rendezvous of the town, I fixed upon it. Almost one of the first individuals I met at table was Jullien, who had come down by post-cart in furtherance of his scheme and a lawsuit; and before I had been twenty-four hours in the place, I met as many persons with whom I had been previously acquainted up country. I had also called upon several gentlemen to whom I had letters of introduction, and had had an interview, in furtherance of my plans, with the Secretary of Government, Mr. Osborn, who, however, was unable to enter very far into the matter, on account of the absence of the Administrator.

Mr. Brodrick, a friend of Walker's, was very civil to me, and introduced me at the club, putting down my name as a visitor for the period of a fortnight. Messrs. Green, Gaisford, and several other prominent residents of the town also showed me much attention, and supported my scheme. As

usual, I came upon a large number of ex-filibusters, among whom was the redoubtable "Gunn of Gunn," who was here maturing some little plan of his own, which eventually brought him into trouble with the Government. My old friends, the Sheppards, had also taken up their quarters here, and I was much with them during my stay. In fact, altogether, I had quite a gay time of it.

Of course, the military formed a great attraction for the Pretorians. Twice a week the band would play a selection of music, either in the Market Square or at the flagstaff in camp, and thither the citizens would flock and ape the manners of a Hyde Park crowd. The antics of the young subalterns were very noticeable upon these occasions. They would appear dressed in mufti of the most extreme fashionable cut, and strut up and down like young peacocks, objects of especial admiration. I have no doubt, though, that warm service has by this time taken the starch out of these young fellows, and taught them many a wholesome lesson beside.

In company with several others, I enjoyed a picnic to the "Wonderboom," a banyan tree growing some few miles north of Pretoria. In order to reach it, we had to drive through the poort, or pass, through the Magaliesberg, and I had a fine opportunity of seeing the country. I should imagine this

part to be particularly rich in minerals. Brodrick showed me some galena which came from close by here. The Wonderboom, however, belied its name. Perhaps, some few years ago, it might have had a striking appearance, but at present the rooted branches have been chopped away for firewood, and nothing remains but a mouldy, dilapidated stump. We had, however, fine fun on the road, and that in a measure compensated for our disappointment in respect of the tree.

At the hotel I had an excellent opportunity of noticing the depredations caused by an insect called the "borer." The bedrooms were placed in close contiguity, and one morning, as I lay half dozing on the sorry pallet the hotel provided, I was startled by a cracking sound in the adjoining apartment. Hurrying in, I discovered a crossbeam of the roof broken, and the occupier of the room almost in a fit from the fright. An examination proved this to have been the result of the operations of the borer, whose little mandibles had, by dint of perpetual gnawing, so completely honeycombed the wood that at last it had given way. Often, while sitting in a wood-built house, I have noticed small streams of sawdust falling from the beams, the handiwork of this little destructive pest.

There is also another insect which causes a con-

siderable amount of destruction in this part of the world, namely, the white ant. Once in the house, it is almost impossible to get rid of them, unless one makes a lucky hit and finds the queen. As this lady takes very great care to keep her whereabouts secret, the discovery is a difficult matter. On the veldt these same insects are very harmless, but are remarkable for the peculiarity of their heaps, which differ from those of the red ant in being provided with an open tower or chimney issuing at the summit of the heap, which gives this latter the appearance of a miniature extinct volcano. This effect is very much heightened when the heap is actually converted into a fireplace—a frequent use to which both settler and native put it. An old one is chosen, and a hole about eight inches in diameter is tunnelled in from the side to meet the natural shaft at right angles. A small fire is then kindled in the tunnel, which slowly ignites the collection of seed and husks in the nest, and forms a fire which, when fairly alight, will last for many hours without attention, and is particularly useful either in wet weather or in a country where fuel is not plentiful, as, for instance, on the High Veldt. Of course, this proceeding comes rather hard upon the ants; but the convenience to man is great, and the weaker, by a natural law, must go to the wall.

A few miles north of Pretoria the Lion Veldt commences—a locality where, within the last few years, lions were very common, and are even now to be found, although they are gradually being hunted off. Jullien introduced me to a gentleman—Mr. Leathern—who had, a year or so previously, met with rather a singular adventure with one of these formidable gentry. He was travelling in the Lion Veldt, and, having knee-haltered his horses, was proceeding to make himself comfortable for the night, but hearing a commotion, returned to his horses, whip in hand, to quiet them. Noticing in the half-light something moving which had not the appearance of a horse, and being somewhat of an impetuous character, he struck at it with his whip, intending to drive it away, ere he discovered his mistake. The lion—for it was one—immediately sprang at him, and seized his arm between its teeth, literally chewing it to a jelly. The only weapon Leathern had was a small revolver, and with this he did his best to protect himself, with such good effect that the lion stopped with the destruction of one arm, and returned to the horses, which it killed. Leathern lay all night in great agony, dreading every instant that the lion would return to finish him. In the morning, having torn his linen into bandages for his mangled limb, he started

on foot, and walked some thirty miles, until he came upon a Kafir kraal. Here the people mocked him, and, in consequence of a superstition that it was unlucky to help a man who had been wounded by a lion, refused him assistance, one woman only relenting so far as to bathe his arm with warm water. It was not until the third day following that he reached, more dead than alive, a waggon belonging to a Mr. Courtenay, who took him down to Eerstelling, where he received all the attention that kindness could suggest. He never, however, recovered the use of his arm; and when he bared it for my inspection, I could plainly see the cruel marks of the lion's teeth.

In furtherance of my scheme, which, however, ultimately fell through, on account of the apathy of the Government, I was brought into contact with Colonel Weatherly, a retired English officer, late of the Inniskillen Dragoons. This gentleman was much interested in the mineral resources of the country, and held an immense tract of land of the Republic, the title to which, however, the British Government refused to ratify. Hearing that I contemplated returning shortly to England, he expressed a wish for me to stay and join him in raising a troop of border horse for the expected Zulu war. Disgusted with the treatment I had received at the hands of

the Government, I felt half inclined to accept his offer, and should, in all probability, have done so but for matters of domestic importance. "You know," said he, "in fighting niggers, one incurs no personal danger, as is the case in a European or civilized war. It is either a case of cover-shooting or badger-drawing." Alas, for that sentiment! The same was our disgrace at Isandlana and Zlobani; the pheasant proved a buffalo, and the badger a lion. Poor Weatherly paid dearly for his words. At Zlobani his troop of border horse was cut to pieces, only one escaping, almost by a miracle, to tell the tale; and the last that was ever heard of its commander was that he was seen cutting his way on foot through a dense body of Zulu warriors, sabring them with his right hand, while with his left he clasped the dead body of his son, a boy of fifteen.

I had been about a week in Pretoria when the town was almost drowned out by the breaking over it of a waterspout. Many houses were completely wrecked by the sudden and heavy fall of water. On the Market Square, in less space of time than five minutes, there was an accumulation of water from two to three feet in depth, which took hours to run away. Many cattle were drowned, and the damage done to property was enormous, the flood having come on without giving ten minutes' warning. The

downpour hardly lasted more than a couple of minutes, but rushed down in unbroken sheets of water, which sounded like thunder as they crashed upon the galvanized iron roofs. Never before or since have I witnessed such a torrent. Nor was there any one else in the town who remembered Pretoria to have been flooded to such an extent, not even after a prolonged rainy season. All the Indian corn in the neighbourhood was broken down while it was yet green, trees were stripped of their fruit-laden branches, and gardens utterly ruined.

Speaking of agriculture reminds me of the singular absence of wheat and barley in the Transvaal catalogue of productions. Oats are plentifully grown for forage, and so is Indian corn and millet; but of wheat and barley I saw absolutely nothing. At the Capetown Exhibition I had been shown a sample of wheat, which was *said to have been grown in the Transvaal*, but IN the Transvaal I never saw a grain. I have not the slightest doubt that all cereals would grow well, and I think it a pity that the attempt should not be made. As it is, the whole supply of wheaten flour for both the Transvaal and Natal colony is derived from Australia, the sacks in which it is imported bearing the Adelaide mark. Neither should oats be depended on solely for forage. Mr. Jullien, who has a model garden at Kruger's

Post, assured me that the "prickly comfrey" grew remarkably well there, and showed me a sample of the same dried for forage. But South Africa is very slow in making attempts at improvement. Laziness is the first rule, drinking the next, and everything else may go to the dogs. But it is to be hoped that better times are in store for the country, and that as the land is divided into *smaller* holdings, matters of agriculture and economical farming will receive their due amount of attention.

At length the Governor arrived from the Zulu border. He met, however, with a very cold reception; no one but the military rode out to meet him, and his entrance into the town was a very dismal affair. This, I suppose, did not go far towards improving his temper, for on the very next day following his return a proclamation was issued, declaring that every individual, Boër or European, who spoke disrespectfully of the Government or of its representatives was forthwith to be dealt with as a rebel. This manifesto was regarded in the way it deserved: friend and foe alike ridiculed it; and when the State Ball was given, to which invitations had been issued to half the population, the military and officials who attended had scarcely half a dozen ladies between them to choose as partners. Altogether, the proclamation made bad worse. One single

arrest was made, and the prisoner, an Englishman, was liberated by special order the next day, with a mild reprimand—a fact that only added to the puerile absurdity of the whole thing. Matters standing thus, I determined to pursue my scheme no further, and made preparations to depart in the very next waggon for the coast. Luckily, I had not to wait long. A transport-rider named Sussens was proceeding to Utrecht, on the Zulu border, with three waggon-loads of forage; and as he intended to continue his journey as far as Maritzburg, I made arrangements to take a passage with him.

CHAPTER XV.

Leave for Natal—High Veldt again—Wild turkeys—Slang river—Accidents—Utrecht—The Buffalo river—An obstinate fellow—Nearly choked—A curious remedy—Lost on the veldt—The Tugela—Loss of property—Tit for tat—The volunteers—Durban—Afloat again—A fearful trial—Home.

THE journey was commenced on the 5th of March, that is to say, the waggons, three in number, started away from Pretoria, and took up a position at about a mile's distance from the town, ready to make a good trek in the morning. I went out with them; but as in the evening it came on to rain, and I had moreover forgotten a small parcel, I returned to town for the night. The return was performed in the dark, during a heavy fall of rain, and in crossing the little river at the ford, I missed my footing and was swamped in the water, an incident which completed the wetting I had already received.

On the next morning, however, we made another start, trekked through the south poort, and got fairly under way. During the day the waggons were overtaken by a man, M——, whom I had known in

Pretoria, and who, at the eleventh hour, had made up his mind to travel with me to Natal. His traps were, he said, to follow per Kafir; but they never turned up, and I am inclined to suspect that there were none to follow. At all events, his intentions to proceed to Maritzburg were cut short at Utrecht, he having neither cash nor credit to proceed further.

I had provided myself on the day previous to the date of starting, with what I considered a bountiful supply of mutton and bread, but on examining it to-day, found, to my disgust, my mutton to be putrid and my bread mud-soaked. This was due to the wilful neglect of the transport-riders, and was the commencement of a long series of petty annoyances I had to suffer at their hands. In fact, the three brothers in charge of the waggons seemed to have made up their minds from the beginning to put me to as much inconvenience as possible, and as they had my money paid down before leaving, I was not in a position to alter matters.

The 8th of March saw me again on the High Veldt; the wooded country was left behind, and the everlasting grass commenced once more. My commissariat having thus failed, M—— and I ran rather short, tea and sugar being the only articles of food we had until we reached the Waterfall river on the evening of the 9th. Here, having outspanned

close to the head of the river late in the evening, M—— and I went down in the dark to fetch a kettleful of water. As we approached the river below the drift, we came upon a black-looking place, which I at first mistook for a bog, but which, upon a closer inspection, proved to be an immense depression in the land, girt round the upper end by a precipice of great depth, over which the river fell, or rather would have fallen had there been sufficient water in it. As we stood peering into the depths, wondering what description of place it was, we were startled by a horrible noise from below, and M——, in sudden alarm, clutched me violently by the arm, causing me to drop the kettle, which careered away into the abyss with tremendous clatter. Immediately an indescribable cackling and hullaballoo followed, and it became evident that we had disturbed a flock of wild turkeys in their roosting-place.

The next morning being Sunday, there was no trek, and M—— and I were up early with our guns at the roost, and managed to pick off four of these birds just as they were arranging for their morning flight to the plains. One of these was soon skinned and stewed, and constituted the first "square meal" we had eaten since leaving Pretoria.

Along the bottom of the *kranz*, or precipice, were a number of caves, where these turkeys and

other birds were in the habit of repairing for the night, and, judging by the depth of guano, the numbers must have been immense.

About a mile down the valley we came to a Boër's house, where we purchased, or rather I purchased, a supply of butter and meal, and the Boër's wife presented me with some peaches and melons. The melons were very acceptable, but the peaches were not up to much, and more resembled carrots than any other vegetable, both in taste and colour.

On the Monday, we continued trekking, and on the 12th reached Price's store. On leaving this, young Sussens, who was driving the waggon that I was in, caused it unexpectedly to lurch, the consequence of which was that I was thrown out and had my wrist dislocated. Our route lay to the right of the town of Standerton, and as I wished to visit this place, M—— and I started ahead with the intention of walking there and rejoining the waggons further on, on the other side of the Vaal river. Our walk, however, was in vain; we lost ourselves on the veldt, and after some hours' toiling in the broiling sun, found ourselves upon the same road again as that upon which the waggons were travelling.

The Vaal river was forded on the afternoon of the 14th at Retief's Drift. Here a grand dispute took place. It appeared that among our train there

had been a lung-sick bullock, which Sussens, discovering, had turned adrift. The Boërs had, however, not been long in detecting the animal, and as turning adrift an ox suffering from a contagious complaint is an offence severely punishable by Transvaal law, they had followed us up, and now obtained what particulars they could, with a view of enforcing the law upon the offender on his return—an operation in which I trust they were successful.

After being stuck for something like six hours in a mud-hole, from which it required the united efforts of forty-two oxen and a screw-jack to extricate us, we reached Mickel's store in the Grass-nek Hills, an off-shoot of the Versammelberg, where we found encamped a detachment of the 13th Regiment, on their way from the border to the capital. These poor fellows were in a sad plight; their commissariat was disorganized, and they had been marched all the way from Utrecht hither without rations. In addition to this, there was great discontent among them, due to the fact of their having been marched backwards and forwards from Utrecht to Pretoria no less than four times without rhyme or reason, except to suit the whim of the Administrator, who evidently was making the most of his hour of power.

That night we outspanned in the valley of the Slang, or Snake river, where we remained the whole

of the next day—Sunday. The scenery here was wild but singularly beautiful. The road wound through a labyrinth of hills and frowning precipices, down and over which coursed innumerable brooks and rivulets, which every here and there broke into foaming cascades as they leapt in their impetuous career to the river below. Large tree ferns and other exotics shaded the river-bank and peeped forth from nook and crevice on the mountain-sides, while creepers of every hue and variety clothed the overhanging cliffs. Above, towering into the sky, the rocky summits reared their stately heads—the homes of the eagle and the vulture. From a low hill hard by our camp Marthinus Weselstroom, or as it is more commonly called Wakkerstroom, was plainly to be seen some miles towards the north-west, its little white houses dotted at the foot of a mountain like distant sheep; while to the south a giant peak of the Drakensberg loomed out among the clouds, like a sentinel among its lesser comrades. *Immanis pecoris custos, immanior ipse!*

On the Monday, we again trekked on. The roads, however, were now very rough, and it was only with difficulty that the waggons got along. It was impossible to ride for the jolting, and this was perhaps a fortunate circumstance, as, in crossing a very bad spruit, one of the waggons turned right

over—all four wheels upwards. Two hours were occupied in getting this righted again and loaded up, a good deal of the forage being damaged with water and mud.

The next day, another accident of a like description occurred, but this time of a more serious nature. M—— and I had been walking on ahead in the early morning, and waited some considerable time for the waggons to come up. These, however, not appearing, it occurred to us that something might be the matter, and accordingly we retraced our steps. At a spruit, close to where we had left them, I found, to my disgust, that the waggon containing my effects had been overturned, and all my property scattered about amid the rocks and shallow water. The accident was entirely owing to the carelessness of the driver, who, instead of attending to his business, was actually asleep in the waggon at the time, leaving the bullocks to pick their way as best they could. Forelooper there was none among the three, and therefore the more reason why the driver should have exercised especial care.

The damage done was considerable, but what I was most vexed about was the total destruction of my bottled collection of choice beetles, the greater part of which were smashed to atoms, and the remainder washed away by the current. The worst

of it was that I had no remedy: my agreement with them being that they should carry me with my *effects*, but these latter were not further specified, and the law is, moreover, very queer with respect to transport-riders' loads. They have it much their own way. So I had to console myself with pitching into the driver—a foolish act on my part, as I only increased the pain and inconvenience of my damaged wrist. After this accident one would have thought they would have exercised a little more care, but not so. That very afternoon another waggon capsized in a brook, and about half a load of oat hay was swept away or trodden into the mud.

It was late in the evening when we reached Utrecht. This is a place hardly worthy of the name of town, although its plan is laid out in a most pretentious style. The Market Square is nearly three-quarters of a mile in length, and half a mile in width, but altogether there are not more than a dozen houses in the place. At the present moment, it derived its importance from the fact of the head-quarters of the 24th Regiment being here, and the Administrator had but just left it himself. It is situated in the very heart of the mountains, which surround it on all sides. At the hostelry I met two young men whom I had known up country. These were attached to the commissariat department, and

through their agency I was enabled to lay in a good stock of eatables at a very reasonable rate.

On the following morning, while the waggons were unloading, I went up to the camp, and called on several of the officers with whom I was acquainted. Many of them now lie at Isandlana. They kindly invited me to the mess, and I spent a very jovial evening.

The journey was resumed with empty waggons on the next day, the 21st of March, and we trekked towards Newcastle. I had been warned that the Buffalo, a river we should have to cross, was not at present fordable, owing to the heavy rains, and I communicated this warning to Sussens, who scouted the idea. I was determined, however, not to be let in for any further loss, and so perched myself upon the leading waggon, in order that I should be the first to sight the river, my traps being in the rear. Sure enough, as we trekked on by moonlight, when we came to where at low water there is a ford, Sussens, with his usual carelessness, omitted to make any preliminary examination before attempting to cross. The sight of the river, which we came upon suddenly, was, however, enough for me. I saw the pont-line stretched across, and knowing by this that the water must be deep, immediately jumped off. On drove Sussens, heedless of my warning cry. A

minute afterwards the whole span was in the water, the strong current took them off their feet, the dissel-boom, unable to bear the side strain, snapped off like a match, and away went the oxen, entangled in the yokes and trektouw, down the rapid stream. Every one of them was drowned. The next morning we found them about two hundred yards down the river—the trektouw caught in a projecting rock, and the carcases of the choked and drowned bullocks swinging in the current below it. Ten bullocks, worth £9 apiece—£90 sterling money—a dead loss, all through his obstinacy and spite; and I cannot say I pitied him.

A military pontoon had been constructed here, and had Sussens but had the smallest grain of sense or patience, he would have waited until the morning, and crossed by it. As it was, he had to cross in this way after all. On the other side of the river was a tent, and when the morning came the soldiers in charge put the waggons across without difficulty. There were a few spare bullocks, and after a new dissel-boom had been tinkered up, and the dead oxen hauled out and skinned, the waggons were again ready to continue the journey. This was not, however, before the night; and as, after what had occurred, there existed little friendly feeling between me and the Sussenses, I remained with the soldiers,

who, while I had a bottle of brandy with me, were not backward in showing me the best places to fish and otherwise to amuse myself until the time of starting.

Early in the morning of the 23rd of March, we reached Newcastle, in Natal, the boundary being the Buffalo river. This place had wonderfully grown since I was here last year on my journey up to the gold-fields. Stores and houses had shot up like mushrooms, and the place was remarkably busy. As at Utrecht, so here, there were a large number of soldiers, and fresh arrivals were expected every day. Mr. Steere, the bank manager, was very civil to me. He assisted me in obtaining a Kafir servant for the journey to Maritzburg, as, on account of the way matters at present stood between the Sussenses and myself, I could scarcely even get my food cooked. Now, however, it would be different; my Kafir would chum in with the others, and there would be no more battling in order to get a kettle boiled or a dough cake baked.

Soon after leaving Newcastle we took the wrong road, and lost at least a day. In retracing our steps, it became necessary to pass through the smoke of an extensive grass fire, and I was all but suffocated. Holding my felt hat to my mouth and nose was useless —the smoke oozed through; and, with my eyes bursting and chest racked with cough, I leapt out of the

waggon and rushed like a madman ahead, until I cleared the choking atmosphere. All came pretty badly off, the bullocks not excepted, and I did not get over the effects for nearly twenty-four hours.

At the Ingagani Drift, it was discovered that some of the oxen showed symptoms of red water. This is one of the diseases which, next to lung sickness, is most feared among owners of cattle in South Africa, and calls for immediate treatment. I should have thought opium to have been a good remedy, and, having some by me, offered it to be tried; but Sussens, as usual, would have his own way, and so I refrained importuning him further. It certainly was a curious proceeding, but was, without doubt, successful in its operation, always supposing that red water was actually the disease the beasts were suffering from. The *modus operandi* was as follows. The ox, after having been thrown, had a vein opened in the neck, and blood was drawn therefrom to the extent of about three pints. Meanwhile a soup, consisting of half a pound of soft soap, half a pound of salt, and half a pound of gunpowder, was prepared with a little water over a fire, and, when ready, mixed with half the blood which had been drawn from the bullock. With this hell-broth the wretched ox was then drenched, and the vein closed by passing a pin transversely through the cut

edges, and overcasting it with a hair plucked from the beast's tail. When he rose again, after having been released, he certainly had rather a groggy appearance, but in a few hours he picked up wonderfully, and soon afterwards he was as sprightly as ever.

As we continued our journey through Natal, I was much impressed with the different appearance of the country to that which it presented when I came up through it in August last. Then it was winter: the veldt was black and desert, and green food could not be obtained for love or money. Now it was summer: the veldt was one mass of flowers, fruit of every kind was plentiful at the farms, and all along the road we were continually meeting with Kafirs anxious to sell us bundles of sugar-cane, bananas, and melons. Every now and then we came across a detachment of soldiers, either encamped or on the march up to the front, all in hopes of lively work to do, and ready to do it. Among them was a young officer, mounted on a horse which, I subsequently heard, he had purchased two days previously at Colenso. His men were a long way ahead of him, and as we passed them, they laughingly asked us to help him on when we met him further down the road. When we did meet him, I nearly choked with laughter. Evidently

quite fresh from his mother's drawing-room, he had not the slightest notion of sitting in the saddle, but was clinging to the pommel with one hand, and to the reins and horse's mane with the other, while the animal was going along at a very quiet jog-trot. When he perceived us, he reined in violently, but, evidently not calculating upon so sudden a stoppage, was quietly dropped over the shoulder, and fell plump on the ground at our feet. His mortified look saved him from further ridicule; but in order to avoid the chance of it, he led his horse by the bridle until we were safely out of sight.

Between Lady-Smith and Colenso I met with another little adventure, for which I had to thank the idiocy of my drivers. It was a darkish night, and I was sitting half asleep on the tail-board of the rear waggon, when the driver, finding himself not as close up to the other waggons as he should have been, set up an infernal whip-smacking, which caused the bullocks to swerve from the track and make a swift trot across country. Presently, down went a wheel in a deep hole; I was pitched out, and lay for some seconds half unconscious on the ground, the waggon meanwhile proceeding.

When I arose and looked around me, I could discover neither road nor waggon, neither could I hear it, nor by any means get at the direction it had

taken. For some minutes I listened attentively for a chance smack of a whip, but in vain—I could hear nothing. The night was now pitch dark, and rain began to descend in large drops. In desperation, I ran along, hoping to regain some point of the road, every now and then putting my foot into some hole, or tripping over an ant-heap. At last, after toiling about in the wet for two hours, I struck the road, and followed it until I arrived at the waggons, outspanned some seven or eight miles ahead, and every one quietly asleep, my Kafir included. I quickly, however, stirred him up, and made him cook me some tea, while I crept under the waggon and stripped off my soaking clothes; and when the morning came, I spoke my mind pretty freely to the scoundrel in charge.

The Tugela at Colenso was unfordable, and we had to cross by the pont. Here it appeared that I was again to be made a victim of misfortune, for in pushing off, one of my cases, containing skins and other trophies of the chase, fell into the river, and was carried out of sight before I could even think of making an attempt to recover it. Altogether, my journey was proving a most calamitous one, and I looked forward with considerable pleasure to the time when Messrs. Sussens and I should part.

After a long and weary trek, the happy release

at length arrived, and I reached Pietermaritzburg. My first act, after having my baggage brought into the town, was to lodge a complaint with the magistrate against the Sussenses. Being unsubstantiated, my own personal charges, however, fell through; but I had the satisfaction of having them fined heavily upon no less than nine separate counts of breaking the law (three to each waggon), one of which was travelling upon the postal roads without a forelooper, and another of bringing unhealthy oxen into the vicinity of the town without notice and permission from the magistrates. In all, their fines amounted to nearly £40, and with that and the loss of the bullocks at Buffalo river, I felt I had had my revenge.

Everything at Maritzburg was at sixes and sevens. Cetywayo was daily expected to break out—although, after all, he never did, for the breaking out was entirely confined to the English side—and military evolutions and parades were daily performed on the Market Square, while recruiting for the volunteer forces was going on right and left. I did not remain longer, though, than two nights, and, on the 4th of April, I departed by the post-cart for Durban, leaving my baggage to follow per local waggon. Here, as at Maritzburg, the war fever was strong. There were already about twenty different rival corps—the "Town Defenders," the "Royal

Rifles," the "Durban Artillery," and a host of others, some of which were more curious than otherwise, such as, for instance, the "Durban Mounted Scouts" (on bicycles!). Some of these corps numbered quite ten men, all told. But if they were small in number, they were great in bluster, and, according to them, every nigger Zululand could produce would soon be either dead or working in irons at their precious harbour.

At Durban I was detained for three weeks, waiting for the mail, which, for some reason or other, was greatly behind its time. During this period I took up my quarters at the Prince of Wales hotel, kept by Lumsden, where I was as comfortably housed and fed as I had been in any place during my trip. For some days I was laid up with an attack of low fever, known as the dengue, and from which nearly every one in the town had been attacked during the last month or two. It was not by any means a serious illness, but its effects were unpleasant, and, for the time it lasted—four or five days—painful and prostrating. I imagine the prevalence of this fever to be due to the unhealthy situation of the town and the absence of pure water.

Two wrecks occurred on the coast during my stay. The *Ponda Chief*, a barque, broke from

her moorings and drifted ashore, but was safely got off, after having been sold as wreck, a transaction over which the purchasers were supposed to have netted something like £3000; and another, the *Teresina*, barquentine, loaded with spirits, which also came ashore in a south-east gale, and soon filled with sand as she lay in the breakers. In the morning the beach was strewed with cases of brandy and gin, a circumstance of which the Kafirs took full advantage, and for some time many of them were to be seen lying about in the sun in a most helpless state of intoxication.

On the beach I met my old acquaintance, the Baron de Fanson, who was on his way to Cape-town. This gentleman had met with a disaster similar to my own in crossing the Buffalo, with this difference, that in his case he lost horses and traps, both his own property, together with effects and papers of considerable value, while he himself had had to walk into Newcastle with nothing on but his shirt and top-boots, it being his custom in hot weather to travel in this airy costume.

At length, on the 23rd of April, the *Nyanza*, Union Mail steamship, being ready for departure, I took my passage in her to Southampton, and bade farewell to Durban. The tug *Scout* took out passengers and luggage, and at the same time towed

out a lighter with cargo. Just as we were embarking at the Point, and I was on the tug, the agent for the company, with whom I was acquainted, gave me what is vulgarly called the "tip" to travel in the lighter instead, by which little arrangement I managed to save a ten-shilling fare and a considerable wetting as we crossed the bar. As we neared the ship, however, the advantage did not appear so clear, for, by an accident, we broke loose from the tug, and, drifting stern on to the ship's side, smashed in our stern bulwarks, and carried away the rudder, leaving us for some minutes helpless in the trough of the sea.

At length, however, after some manœuvring, we managed to get another hawser bent on, and soon boarded the *Nyanza* in safety. The anchor was weighed at midnight, and the homeward voyage commenced.

At East London, which we reached on the 25th of April, we transhipped into the steamship *African*, a ship a trifle smaller than the *Nyanza*, and whose equal at rolling I have never met with. Sometimes I thought she would hardly right again, so little stability did she appear to have.

On board were a number—perhaps two hundred—of Galaeka Kafirs, prisoners of war, who were going to work out the rest of their lives on the

breakwater at Capetown. They wore a dejected and miserable air. A number of criminals, chiefly Fingoes, also formed part of the live stock. These gentry were, however, anything but unhappy, and amused themselves mainly in singing hymns.

Port Elizabeth was passed on the 26th, Mossel Bay on the 28th, and on Monday, the 29th, we entered the docks at Capetown. Here the Kafirs were landed, and we took in our ocean supply of coal.

I passed the night and greater part of the following day with some friends in the town, re-embarking on the afternoon of the 30th of April. The long voyage then commenced, and we remained out of sight of land until we passed Teneriffe, on the 17th of May.

The passengers were not particularly entertaining. Drinking was the chief amusement on board, and there was always some quarrel or other going on. Forward there were three man-of-war's men, invalided home from the Mozambique station, who gave me an interesting account of the cause of their illness. They belonged to H.M.S. *Vestal*, a cruiser on the look-out for slavers, and formed part of a crew of twelve men and one officer, who, in an open boat—the ship's pinnace—had been cruising on special duty along the north coast of Madagascar,

out of sight of the ship. They had already been six weeks at this interesting occupation, when, on the 8th of February, 1878, the boat was capsized in a sudden squall, fifteen miles off False Cape. In the water, the men stripped off their clothing as best they could, and made for the shore, eight only succeeding in reaching it, the other five being either drowned or falling a prey to sharks.

Landing had to be performed through the surf, and, when they reached dry ground, the survivors were terribly prostrated. Their troubles, however, had as yet hardly commenced. They were quite naked, and the mosquitoes lacerated their bodies fearfully. In the morning they walked fifteen miles before they could obtain fresh water, their poor bodies blistering in the burning sun. For ten days they walked on, swimming *en route* three rivers swarming with crocodiles, and subsisting on limpets and other shell-fish they picked up on the rocks. Their skin was hanging from them in rags, and they had to coat their bodies with mud to protect them from further injury from the sun. On the eleventh day a dhow appeared in sight, and, having hailed her, they swam out half a mile through the surf to her, losing another of their number on the way. The dhow took them into Majunga, where they were well received and kindly treated by Mr. Downey,

a companion of the late Consul Elton on his last African journey. The *Vestal* came in here some days subsequently, much to the joy of the unfortunate men, who were at once transferred to the ship's infirmary, and were thus enabled to pick up their strength again, though, from what I judged, one of them, a young fellow of about twenty-three, was, at the time I saw him, fast going to his last home.

Little now remains to be said. In due course of time we reached Madeira, where we had an outing; Cape Finisterre and Ushant were sighted soon after; and on Friday, the 24th of May, we ran into Plymouth Sound, after a long passage of twenty-four days. Southampton was reached on the next day, and the evening saw me once more strangled with a starched collar and crowned with a stove-pipe hat!

THE END.

PRINTED AT THE CAXTON PRESS, BECCLES. *S. & H.*