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The Farm in the Karoo, or What Charley Vyvyan and his friends saw in South Africa

Mary Ann Carey-Hobson

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THE FARM IN THE
KAROO



A STORY OF ADVENTURE
IN SOUTH AFRICA.

BY

MRS CAREY MOBSON.



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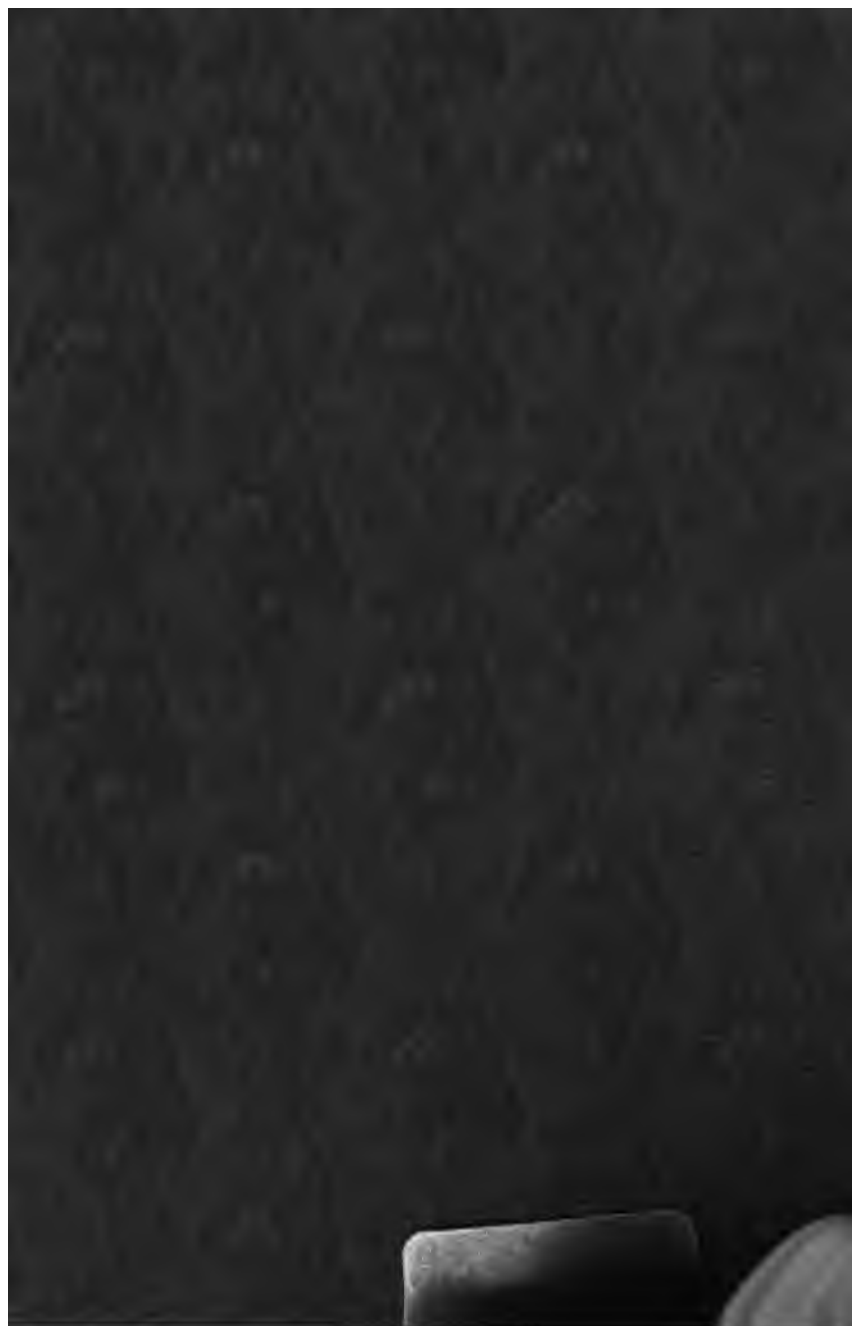
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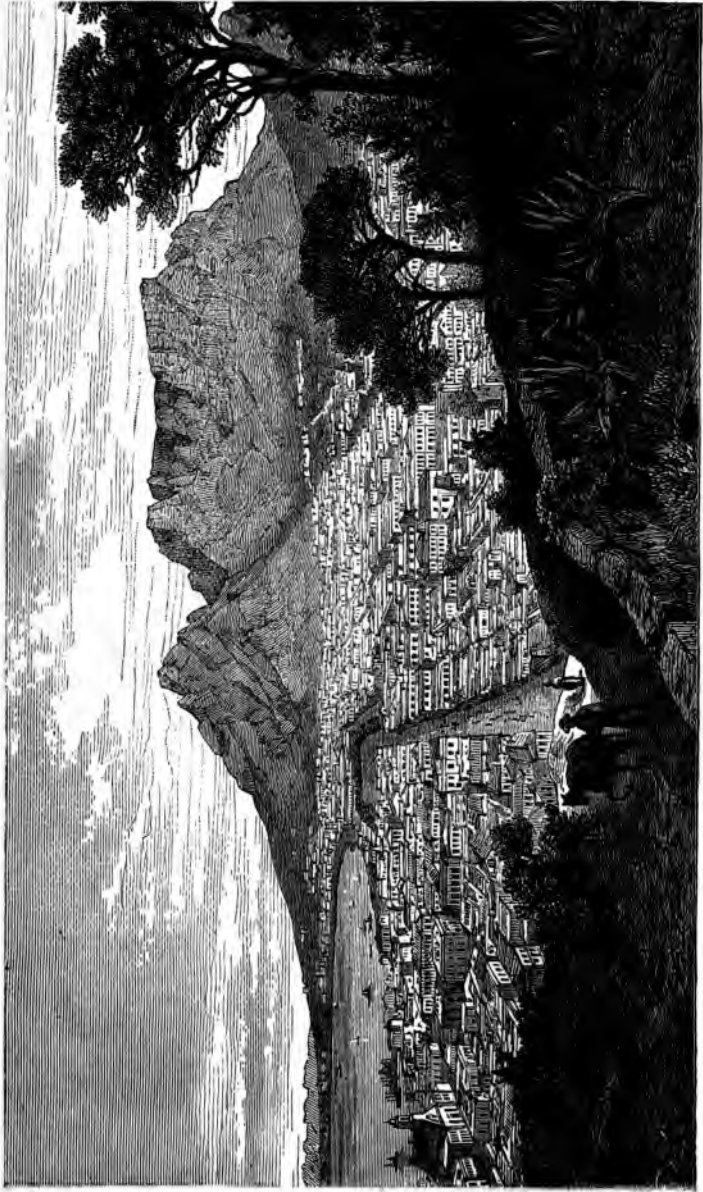


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THE FARM IN THE KAROO.

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CAPE TOWN.

Frontispiece.

THE
FARM IN THE KAROO;

OR,

*WHAT CHARLEY VYVYAN AND HIS FRIENDS
SAW IN SOUTH AFRICA.*

BY

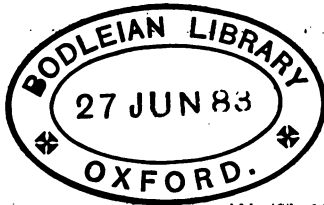
MRS. CAREY-HOBSON,

FOR MANY YEARS RESIDENT IN THE CAPE COLONY.

With Illustrations.

JUTA, HEELIS AND CO.,
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1883.

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Dedicated

TO

THE BOYS OF ENGLAND AND OF THE "CAPE,"
AND ESPECIALLY TO THOSE WHO
W.L.L. RECOGNIZE THEMSELVES AS HAVING PLAYED A PART
IN MANY OF THE
ADVENTURES AND INCIDENTS HEREIN DESCRIBED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E.



AT a time when South Africa is attracting much attention, I feel that the words of one who has spent a quarter of a century in the colony cannot fail to interest the rising generation, many of whom have friends or relatives among Cape colonists, or who perhaps themselves hope some day to seek a life of adventure among the snakes, elephants, tigers, and baboons of the great continent, which has had attractions for so many explorers, and has become the home of so many young and ardent spirits; and for not a few who have, from sickness or disease, been banished from



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BOOK I.

OUTWARD BOUND.





THE FARM IN THE KAROO.

CHAPTER I.

SHOWING WHY CHARLEY VYVYAN AND HIS FRIENDS
WERE SENT TO THE CAPE.

“**T**ALK of the fox and you’ll catch sight of his brush! Glad to see you, old fellow!” The speaker was Charley Vyvyan, and the old fellow an old schoolmate and Charley’s most intimate friend.

“And, pray, what were you two taking my name in vain about?” inquired Fred Dalrymple, as he shook hands with the occupants of the room.

“Charley was asking me to ride over with him to see you this morning,” replied Florence Vyvyan, Charley’s only sister; “but I am so glad you have come here instead, because I can show you what I wanted to ask you about, that is my fern book.”

“But we were not going over solely on account of a fern book,” said Charley. “You told me you

would be home yesterday, Fred, and so, of course, I thought I would go over at once. But, what's the matter, old boy? Your face seems to have assumed, to use old Scott's words, the lugubrious expression of a fellow that's been plucked, instead of one who is at this present moment the envy of all the undergrads in Oxford."

"I don't envy myself, and I don't think any fellow will envy me when they hear that I am not going up again next term," said Fred, walking towards the window.

"Not going up! Why, what's that for? And the scholarship? Come, Fred, you're joking."

"I wish I were. Hard work (for I'll acknowledge I have worked), scholarship, and all thrown away."

A small hand was placed upon his arm, and a gentle voice inquired, "Fred, what is it?"

"Oh, Florrie," replied the youth, "it is so hard! just as I have got into the thing, to be sent away."

"But, look here, old fellow, you haven't told us yet why you are to be sent away. I'll swear you've done nothing to be rusticated for."

"No! it isn't quite as bad as that," replied Fred, smiling; "but it's almost the same in effect. The doctors—the medical ones, I mean, not the Dons—declare I'm such a soft, that they consider it best to pronounce sentence of transportation upon me for a year."

"What have you done?" asked Florence.

"It seems that I was stupid enough to faint, or do something of the sort, and so my brain is judged to be out of order, and I must be punished for its irregularities."

"Is that all?" said Charley. "Never mind, old fellow. I am going down to the moors in August, and you shall go with me, and if the Scotch air doesn't put you all to-rights—Why, I won't believe in it again."

"Who says you are to go?" asked Florence.

"Well, Dr. Carrington, at Oxford, has been writing a long rigmarole to my father, and he has had it all out with Carrington this morning, and that's the upshot of it. If I might go with Charley to the moors, or do anything at home, I wouldn't mind; but a long voyage is part of the blessed prescription, and I am to go to the antipodes, but which part of them is not yet settled."

"A voyage to the antipodes! And you are be-moaning your fate! Why, Fred, I envy you indeed! Fancy, preferring the moors to the prairies, and Scotland to New Zealand or the Cape!" said Charley.

"Yes, the Cape is what Carrington proposes. He has been there. I dare say it's all very well for those that like that sort of thing; I don't, and I would much rather remain quietly at home."

"Well, but Fred, if the voyage is to make you quite strong and well again," said Florence, in a tone of half entreaty, "you ought not to mind it, ought you?"

"That is what my mother says, Florrie, and yet the poor darling has been crying all the morning about my having to go."

"Because she does not like to lose you for so long," said Florrie, her lips beginning to quiver a little bit as she ran out of the room.

"I declare, womenfolk are all alike, little or big,"

said Charley. "They'd all keep us tied to their apron strings, if they could."

"My mother and Florrie excepted," said Fred, "for they have both been trying to persuade me to resign myself to my fate with thankfulness."

"Well, joking apart, Fred, I'd give something to be in your shoes. There is nothing I have longed so for all my life as a good sea voyage, and a long spell of travel in some rough country at the end of it. How often have I envied Livingstone, Cameron, and these fellows! I should like of all things to be going with you, and if I hadn't been so awfully extravagant at Oxford I'd have asked my pater to let me go."

"Where, my son?" This question was put by the young man's father, Sir John Vyvyan, who had just entered the room. "Well Fred, my lad," he went on, turning to Dalrymple; "I must congratulate you upon your success. But what's all this that Florence is telling her mother about? What's the matter? Have you broken down?"

"Something like it, sir, I'm afraid; I'm ordered abroad for a year."

"That's a nuisance just now, is it not? Pity you couldn't put it off for two or three years; however, if the word is *now*, it won't do to put off till *then*. Where are you going to?"

"Not quite settled, sir; but I believe the Cape has the preference."

"Is not that where Colonel Sinclair was stationed for some time?" asked Sir John, turning to his son.

"Yes, father; and from what he says I should

think it must be one of the jolliest countries in the world to learn how to rough it as a settler. Marston is always longing to go there, and I expect his uncle will send him out some day to learn farming. It's certainly a nuisance that Fred has to go just at this present moment, but a year is soon gone, and I think he ought to be only too thankful for the chance."

"That's all very well for you to say, Charley, but remember that you are older than I by a couple of years, and have finished your University business, while I'm only just beginning."

"It's a pity he can't go instead of you, isn't it?" remarked Sir John.

"I wish I could, that's all," said Charley; "I'd do it with the greatest pleasure in life."

"Your mother wants to speak to you, Charley; I almost forgot to tell you. I suppose you'll stay till evening, Fred? Lady Isabel and I are going to drive over to the Rectory to see your father and mother. And now that Charley has gone, let me remind you, my boy, that you are my godson, and if there be anything at all that I can do for you, don't scruple to ask me."

"Thank you, sir. I shall always remember your kindness with gratitude."

"You've been a good lad always, but I'm afraid we let you work a little too hard for this scholarship; however, don't bother yourself about it. You're full young, you know, and never fear it will be all right, and you shall go up, if you are well enough, this time next year. Come now, they will be waiting lunch for us."

“John,” said Lady Isabel to her husband as they drove from Winter Court, on their way to the Rectory of Fairlands, “was Charley very extravagant at Oxford?”

“Extravagant! bless the woman, no! not what many would call extravagant. Of course, he spent a little money—outran his allowance now and then, and so on. He wouldn't have been a Vyvyan if he hadn't; but this I know, that he was a thoroughly good, honest lad. If he owed a few extra pounds at the end of the year, he always told me of it; and he didn't cost me what I cost my father while I was there. But who's been putting that notion into your head, my dear?”

“Only Charley himself, dear. He is quite crazy now to go with Fred, but he says he thinks he ought not to ask you, because you've had to spend so much upon him at College.”

“Fiddlesticks! I didn't spend enough to ruin me anyhow, and if he likes to pass a year or two in travelling about the world he shall do it; the two lads will be good company for each other. I thought he had got something of the sort in his head when he said he wished to go in Fred's place.”

Through the pleasant Devonshire lanes they soon reached Fairlands, and gladdened Mrs. Dalrymple's heart by telling her of the proposed plan. Both she and Mr. Dalrymple were pleased indeed, and grateful that such an arrangement could be made.

“It did seem so like sending the poor boy out as an exile all alone into a far off land,” said Mrs. Dalrymple. “George could not leave his parish, you know, to go with him, even putting the extra

expense out of the question ; and I could not leave George. I *am* thankful that he will have such a companion as Charley."

"And Charley will be thankful when he hears of what there is in store for him," rejoined Sir John, "for Isabel and I only settled it as we came along."

"And are you sure that he will like it?"

"No fear of his disliking it," said Sir John. "I fancy that it is what he has been wishing to do before now ; and, indeed, I think it is only right and proper, where it can be managed, that young men who are likely to enter Parliament at some time in their lives should personally make themselves acquainted with at least a part of the outlying portions of our great empire."

"You and I contented ourselves with a little European travel when we were young men," said the Rector, "and even then you sacrificed yourself in going as far as you did, when you would rather have stayed among the Lakes, and I was so anxious to see Rome."

"How we enjoyed those days together, George. I only hope our boys may have no worse experiences than we had."

On the way home, Sir John and Lady Isabel met the three young people on horseback, Charley and Florence escorting Fred in order that they might enjoy the ride together.

"Well Fred, my boy, are you making up your mind to look at the bright side of things?" said the Baronet.

"I'll try to do so, sir, though I can't say that I feel like finding any bright side just now."

“Do you think Charley would help you to find it? he’s generally successful that way, and as his mother and I have come to the conclusion that the Cape would be a good field for his labours in that line, you’ll have the advantage of all the sunny sides he turns up.”

“Oh! Father, you don’t mean it?” exclaimed Charley, “how good of you. I have been longing to ask you to let me go with Fred, but I did not like to do so.”

“And poor Florrie,” said her father, “will have to accept me as a cavalier again.”

“I shan’t fret about that, dear Papa, though of course I shall miss old Charley, but there’s one comfort, I shall have oceans of letters by the Cape mail. Fred has already promised to write, and Charley of course will.”

Fred had gone round to speak to Lady Isabel, and as Sir John turned towards him, and saw the pleased and happy expression which his face wore while thanking her for her good offices, he exclaimed: “Why, I do believe my dear, that you and I have helped the lad to find one bright side already.”

“As bright as day, sir. I am so glad—thank you no end.”





CHAPTER II.

WHO'S WHO?

SIR John and Lady Vyvyan were, as you will doubtless have surmised, "county people." Winter Court had belonged to the Vyvyans, "time out of mind," as one of the peasants had told Mr. Dalrymple on the occasion of his first visit there five-and-twenty years before the opening of our story.

"It were allays a good old family it were. I've heer'd *my* grandfather say as *his* grandfather used to say as there was allays Vyvyans up to 'Court, and he said, he did, as there were a grand old big castle, but it were burnt down somehow in a way, I think. The present house is built on to the ould walls, least-ways, you can see bits of them at the back and side."

Sir John had married soon after inheriting the estate, which he did at the age of six-and-twenty, and from that time had resided the greater part of every year at Winter Court. About two years after his marriage the living of Fairlands became vacant,

and he presented it to a much esteemed college friend.

The Rev. George Dalrymple was then single, but an attachment had sprung up between him and Mary Willis, a dear friend and distant connection of Lady Isabel's, and in due course they were married.

Charles Vyvyan, best known as Charley, who will take a prominent part in our narrative, had just now attained his majority. A fine, handsome, manly fellow, fond of riding, boating, shooting, and indeed all active sports ; and he had one sister, Florence, a sweet merry girl of fourteen.

Charley Vyvyan had been at home now about six months, part of which time had been spent with the rest of the family in London, but Charley cared very little for the gaieties of the season, even the morning canter with his father and Florence which had been his greatest pleasure grew monotonous from being so generally confined to the Row ; the sweet Devonshire lanes, or a good breather across country were infinitely preferable to him.

Fred Dalrymple was two or three years younger than Charley. He was what would be termed nice looking rather than handsome. He was studious, and ambitious where learning was concerned ; his manner was eminently fascinating. Perfectly unreserved and thoroughly truthful in every thing both with his masters and his fellow pupils, it was not to be wondered at that he was a favourite with them all. He was a delicate looking boy, but one who never seemed to know what fear was, and would put himself in any danger to shield another. Charley had never had a brother, and loved Fred with a devotion that is

rare among boys. This affection was thoroughly reciprocated, and although Fred might often as it were stand in danger, it seemed perfectly natural to him that it was more often the stronger arm of Charles Vyvyan which averted it than his own.

But the last two or three years had been passed by Charley at the University, and Fred, not having the inducement of his companionship to join in outdoor sports, scarcely went out at all, but passed nearly all his time in reading, and pursued his studies far too closely; and, as we have seen, thereby injured his health. Hence the necessity for the proposed trip to South Africa.

We have still another friend to introduce, and then we shall proceed with our story. The name of Sinclair Marston has been mentioned. He was the son of an officer who had served and died in India, whose widow, having two or three children to educate, had returned to England immediately after her husband's death.

The eldest son had been a schoolfellow of Charley's and Fred's, and was at the present time at the Military College, preparatory to entering his father's profession.

The second boy, Sinclair, was so named after his uncle, Colonel Sinclair; who, upon retiring from the army, had taken up his abode with his sister, Mrs. Marston.

The Vyvyans and the Marstons had always been in the habit of exchanging visits, and Mrs. Marston had lately, with her younger son and her daughter Edith, spent some weeks at Winter Court.

Sinclair was a generous, open-hearted, and high-

spirited boy ; intelligent, though decidedly not too fond of his books. His uncle had early come to the conclusion that a University education would be wasted upon him, but that the boy would learn more from observation while travelling about when once his schooldays were ended.

Florence Vyvyan and Edith Marston were great friends, but, as our story has but little to do with them at present, we will speak more of those who are about to start on their travels.





CHAPTER III.

THE ANCHOR WEIGHED.



MR John Vyvyan could not but notice with astonishment the eagerness and delight with which Charley entered into the scheme, for of late the want of some settled occupation had even in so short a time begun to tell upon the activity of his nature.

He was now quite in his element at once, and surprised every one by the thought, vigour, and expedition with which he set to work to prepare for the voyage and subsequent land travel. He rode over to Fairlands every day, and soon succeeded in inspiring Fred with some of the love of adventure that he himself felt, although it was but a reflection of Vyvyan's own feelings.

Charley also went over to Mrs. Marston's for the purpose of gaining information from Colonel Sinclair, and the reader will not be surprised to hear that it was soon decided that young Marston should be of the party.

The old Colonel was enthusiastic. "My dear Vyvyan," he said, "I have a great mind to go with you myself. By George! how I should enjoy it! but I am afraid a year of it would be rather too much for me now. Do not be astonished, though, if I join you in about six months' time. What capital sport we had there, to be sure! I never had better in my life. The fine old bush-bucks I have stalked in some of those densely wooded Kloofs and Vleys!"

"What are 'Kloofs' and 'Vleys,' Colonel?" said Charley; "I never heard of them before."

"Ah! you will soon become acquainted with these local terms. No other word than kloof seems to convey the idea of the beautiful ravines running up the sides of the Cape mountains. They are generally thickly clothed with evergreens, both large trees and shrubs, and of course form a fine covert for animals of every description. You must take a good gun with you. I declare to you that there was one fine old buck that, as sure as ever I went out botanizing, as I did sometimes, without my gun, or even if I had it and had fired off the ball side, would walk straight out of the jungle most majestically, and come forward, bowing his head in a provoking manner, as much as to taunt me with not being ready for him, keeping his eye fixed on me to see whether I were reloading or no. But I would not have shot that old fellow for anything. I wonder if he's still alive! If I join you, I declare I shall certainly look out for him. I remember his haunt well; it was in a lovely valley between the Chalumna and the Keiskama rivers. What ferns and lilies there were there, too, to be sure!

“That will please Fred,” said Charley, “for he is an enthusiastic botanist.”

“Is he? Well, I have been about a good deal, and I don’t know a finer field for botanizing than the Cape Colony, of course including Kafirland. He should get Harvey’s ‘Flora Capensis;’ he can do nothing in that line without it. Dr. Harvey died before he completed the last edition. I met him once at Government House, and we had one ramble up Table Mountain together. Your friend should see Dr. Hooker before he goes out; he will tell him what particular species stand most in need of especial working up. You see, there are plenty of dabblers in botany; people who collect all the ‘pretty flowers’ and ‘lovely ferns’ that come within their reach. I did that myself; but one who loves the science will, while not neglecting the beauties, do his best to develop the botanical resources of a comparatively unknown region scientifically. He will find his sketching apparatus, too, very useful. By-the-by, Sinclair is a very tolerable draughtsman. Do not let him be idle: and while I think of it, Vyvyan, I want to speak to you about the lad; *my* boy, I call him. You must look after him, and keep some check upon him now and then; he is thoughtless and rash sometimes, and a bit of a ‘dare-devil.’ He ought to be at school still; he’s too young to be away from home, but your going was a great temptation, and he begged so hard that at last I persuaded his mother to let him go. I hope no harm will come to the lad.”

“Dear Colonel,” said Charley, “depend upon my acting by him as though he were my own brother;

Fred and I are both fond of Marston. He is, as you say, a little impulsive at times, but he has a noble disposition, and as to his submitting to control, independently of your having placed him under my charge, as it were, he was always our junior at school, and I have no fear on that score. I wish I could get Fred to care half as much for going out as Marston does. I have done my best, but I can see that he has even now no heart in the preparations that are going on. I should like to take a note of that botanical work and get it for him when I go up to London. I hope great things from the 'botany.' I think, if he could have some conversation with you about the Cape, it would do wonders."

"Can't you bring him over here? Mrs. Marston will be pleased to make his acquaintance. I have met his father at Winter Court."

"Thank you, very much, but I doubt if I shall be able to get him so far. I have tried to entice him over to Winter Court more often. He used to like being there, but it's distressing to see the old fellow's white face looking up so resignedly, and to hear him say, 'No, thank you, Charley; I'll stay at home while I can.' As if he thought he was never coming back to it, but he is coming over to-morrow to spend a long morning."

"Is he? Well! will you tell Lady Isabel that I shall do myself the pleasure of taking lunch with her."

"Thank you, Colonel, that is very kind of you," said Charley. "If I can only see Fred better, and not so quiet, I shall not care. Generally, he enters into anything with his whole heart and soul."

“Oh,” said the Colonel, “never fear, that will all come right in time! What day does the mail steamer leave? On the 25th, does it not?”

“Yes, and I have secured a nice cabin to ourselves. I wanted to secure a quiet place for Fred, and so insisted upon my right of choice. They usually keep those particular cabins for ladies.”

The following day, when they all met at Sir John Vyvyan’s, Charley’s hope was realized. Colonel Sinclair was most eloquent upon the sport, told amusing anecdotes of the natives, and then turning to Florence, said, “You should get your brother to bring you home some heaths and ferns; I never saw a greater variety anywhere than there is out there. You should make him a fern book for mounting them in, and then he will be sure to remember it.”

“Oh, how delightful!” said Florence; “I will make one for Fred. I don’t think Charley will think of ferns, but Fred will if he gets a chance. I only wish I were going too, to help to press them.”

Fred’s interest was soon awakened, and before half-an-hour had passed, he had received and accepted an invitation to see the Colonel’s collection of dried plants, &c., on the morrow.

As for the old soldier, he was charmed with Fred’s manner, gave him the vasculum, boards, and straps, that he had used in making his own herbarium, such as it was, and persuaded Fred to accompany him to Kew Gardens, to be introduced to Dr. Hooker, who seemed so intimately acquainted with the botany of the Cape, that Fred thought there could be nothing *new* to discover; but, at the same time, did at last become animated with some sort of

desire to see for himself a country so rich in floral beauty.

But we must not linger upon this introduction to the journeyings of our young friends. Another fortnight saw them in excellent spirits, with the adieus all said, and the kindly wishes all uttered, at Southampton, ready for a start, and Charley, here, there, and everywhere, doing everything for everybody, forgetting nothing, especially where Fred's comfort was concerned; while Sinclair Marston was exuberant, rushing about in the wildest style.

"What has that madcap done with my dressing-bag and all the rugs?" exclaimed Charley to Fred, in one of the pleasant drawing-rooms of the South Western Hotel, where they had taken up their abode the day before the vessel was to leave.

"I fancy he has taken everything on board," said Fred, "such a working fellow as he is! He actually wanted to carry all those heavy portmanteaus himself, but, of course, I could not allow *that*."

"Ah, well! he has marched off with that bag, and he must go and bring it back, for I can't pay the bill here till I have it. I put all your money and his in that, as well as my own."

Just at that moment Sinclair made his appearance.

"There, now!" said he; "the cabin is as jolly as your little room at Winter Court; and I got 'chips' to nail up that nice bag my mother made, with partitions in it, for our brushes and things. We ought to be on board in an hour's time."

"And my black leather bag?" said Charley.

"Oh, that's Fred's sofa-cushion, with a rug over it." But soon the bag was fetched, the bill discharged,

lunch eaten, and they were all on board the good steamer *American*.

Such din and bustle of departure! From the deck they could watch the last of the cargo being taken in, the passengers' luggage let down into the hold, and the farewells of friends; and as they steamed out into the beautiful Southampton Water, past the magnificent military hospital at Netley, with the exquisite country around, they were struck by the lingering, hungering looks of more than one of their fellow passengers, who seemed deaf and blind to all but the one idea: that they were leaving their own beautiful land for, perhaps, a life-time! With the young this is scarcely so; but it is hard indeed when middle life has been reached, when, from no love of adventure, but from stern necessity, men have to leave their dearly-loved homes, breaking off old ties, with but a hesitating, glimmering notion of what the future may evolve. There are few, indeed, who can thus leave their own dear land, without a heart-longing, even at the outset, to return to it some day.





CHAPTER IV.

WHAT CHARLEY AND HIS FRIENDS SAW AT MADEIRA AND ST. HELENA.

“**W**ELL, Fred, old fellow,” said Charley, about five days after their departure from Southampton, as he came down into the cabin from having his early morning bath ; “do you feel up to doing a bit of land this morning ?”

“Why, Charley,” said Fred, starting up, “you don’t mean to say that we shall get to Madeira to-day? I’m well enough, thanks to your good nursing and that most wonderful cure for sea-sickness—champagne. I shall enjoy getting on shore amazingly.”

“We are still some little distance from it,” said Vyvyan ; “but it is a lovely island. It was difficult to withdraw my gaze from the scene, but I could not find it in my conscience to let you lie here and lose such a glorious sight. Why, I declare, there’s that lazy young dog not up yet! Here, Marston, tumble out of that and get your bath while you can,

man! There's a sight from the deck worth looking at. You'll have to unpack your sketching materials.

"What is it, Charley?" asked Marston, sleepily, dangling one of his legs out of the top berth, where he looked as if he had been literally laid upon the shelf; "what is it? A whale?"

"Ha, ha! *Very* like a whale! But don't dawdle any longer, Marston. When I came down I could, with the glass, see about a hundred boats getting ready to put off from shore."

"Shore! Good gracious!" said Marston, all alive in a moment. "Why did you not say so before?"

"I *did*," replied Charley. "Ask Fred. But you do pay such profound attention to your sleep when you are about it that you have neither eyes nor ears for anything else."

They were soon all of them dressed and on deck in time to witness a perfect flotilla of boats come alongside. And then such a Babel of tongues! Men, boys, and parrots, English and Portuguese, mingled in hopelessly incomprehensible confusion.

There lay Funchal before them, and a little to the left the splendid Loo Rock; Madeira itself seeming to consist of terrace above terrace of cultivated beauty—the dark evergreen of a kind of rapidly-growing fir tree, much planted there for the sake of fuel, contrasting vividly with the brighter tints of the vineyards and sugar plantations, dotted here and there with pretty residences or convents, half hidden by the groves of trees in which they were embowered.

Fred stood gazing with rapture upon the exquisite verdure. Charley had just been buying some of the native straw hats for use during the rest of the voyage,

and was then bargaining with some noisy Portuguese who had climbed like monkeys up the side of the ship, for some of the beautiful feather-flowers, hair chains, bracelets of Job's tears, and those wonderful-looking embroidered eggs, when they heard Marston's voice calling to them from the stern of the vessel :—

“ Oh, Charlie! Fred! come here! Here's awful fun going on! Bring some sixpences and shillings. I've used up all mine.”

The “ awful fun ” consisted in the feats of about a dozen diving boys, who from boats lying off the stern, plunged into the sea after any silver coin thrown in by the people on board ship. They were wonderfully expert, the water was as clear as the sky above it, and the coin as it sank, had a shimmering, bright, waving appearance. The diver allowed it to go gradually, till those above feared that it would be lost to him, when he darted down as swiftly as a shark glancing through the waters, and with wonderful precision caught the piece of money, placed it under his great toe, and came to the surface, putting the foot up to the boat's side, where the man in charge removed it, and the boy was all ready for another plunge.

Our party now went below, took a hurried breakfast, and together with some other passengers engaged a boat and went on shore.

The Captain had said that he could not allow them more than six hours on shore; they were not at all sorry to find that the surf that morning would prevent them from landing on the shingly beach, and necessitated their going to certain steps, on their way to which they passed the beautiful Loo Rock, and

they landed very near to the house of the British Consul, upon whom Sir John and Colonel Sinclair had particularly enjoined them to call.

At the landing place, they found a curious kind of carriage-sledge drawn by two oxen; patient-looking, soft, large-eyed creatures led by a crimson cord attached to the outer horn of each; but our friends were too glad to use their own feet on terra firma once more, to put themselves into one of those "queer machines," as Marston termed them.

They called first on the Consul, and were most kindly received and invited to stay, but excusing themselves on account of the limit to their excursion into Funchal, etc., they took their leave, not however without walking through the pretty grounds, the paths of which, like the streets of the place, are paved with different coloured pebbles in geometrical patterns. Charley craved permission to take a few flowers on board for the ladies. This was gladly granted, and the gardener promised to have a bouquet ready for each of the gentlemen on their return. There was one magnificent (*Magnolia Standard*) that particularly attracted their attention; Charley standing on the gardener's shoulders, could even then but just reach to pluck a couple of the splendid goblet like flowers from the lowest branch.

The view from the summer house was very fine, overlooking the Loo Rock with its fortress, the Bay with its shipping, and Funchal with its mountain background; but, lovely as it was, they had no time to lose, therefore set off at once to see the town itself.

The "Bazaars," as the open shops are called, were

very attractive, reminding them of tales of Eastern life and as Marston expressed it, making them feel so very far from home already.

There were several places of interest to visit, among them the beautiful little English cemetery, some of the vineyards, where they ate delicious grapes, and Ribeiro's, where they bought photographs and sundry curiosities to send home. It had been arranged that they should meet their fellow passengers at a pleasantly situated hotel, and there enjoy the luxury of a sub-tropical lunch.

Oh! the delicious ripeness of the fruit! the sweet fresh butter, the home-made bread, and the pleasant Madeira wine, with the scent of the flowers coming in at the open windows. After even a week on board ship, how very much is the first meal on land appreciated.

But all were soon on board again, and steaming away at the rate of ten knots an hour.

They had by this time become such good sailors that, having a pleasant party on board, they really enjoyed the voyage very much.

Among the passengers there were one or two old Cape colonists, who, having amassed considerable wealth, had reckoned upon spending the remainder of their days among the well-remembered scenes of their youth, and the pleasures and luxuries of England, and English society.

For a year or two, taking care to run down into Devonshire or the South of France during the winter months, the realization of the old longing had seemed feasible enough; but, when tired of roving and sight-seeing, one very cold winter, and

above all, rain, rain, continual rain, had sufficed to moderate their love for life in the old country, and to give them as great a wish to return to the land of sunshine.

Then, too, the old friends of childhood were gone ! either scattered in different parts of the world, or, as in too many cases, covered by the green sod of the village churchyard. In the colony every one knew them and they knew every one ; it seemed like a " going home " again. No wonder that they looked forward with a pleased expectation to the hearty welcome that they knew awaited them from all those old friends among whom they had lived so long.

From these gentlemen and their families Charley and Fred obtained very much information concerning the manners and customs of the colonists, the natives of Kaffraria, &c.

The steamer touched at Ascension, a barren volcanic island used as a coaling and fresh water station. Large numbers of turtles are caught here, and kept in tanks for the home market ; and the manner of capture, &c., was, of course, a matter of great amusement to Marston. On the summit of Ascension there is a garden, all the mould for which was brought from the mainland near Cape Town.

The next point of interest was St. Helena, that grand old rock, jutting clear up out of the sea, with its bold, rugged, hard, iron-bound cliffs associated with so much romantic and historical interest.

" What a hopeless idea would be escape from such a prison ! " is the almost involuntary thought of any-one upon coming to the anchorage. There is no pleasant, easy landing-place here. The sea seems

to be for ever lashing the rocks with never-spent fury, as if vainly endeavouring to make some impression upon the image of stone. The wonder was, with the dashing of the boats on to the rocky landing-steps as each rough wave came bounding in, and receding again, how the boatmen managed to land their passengers as safely as they did, each one having to seize an opportunity and jump for it, the ladies, in many cases, being literally thrown from one person in the boat to another on land.

From the first moment of their getting on shore, they were surrounded by beggars or children, having some trifle to sell, strings of dried berries or ornaments, made of acacia seeds, very poor peaches, but most delicious mangoes. Every inhabitant had turned out for the day, the great event of their monotonous lives being evidently the advent of the mail steamer, and the great influx of people requiring, with the least possible delay, guides, carriages, and horses; for Longwood had, of course, to be visited, and Longwood was on the very summit of the rocky island.

"I don't think I shall bother about a horse," said Sinclair Marston, "climbing Jacob's Ladder will be fine fun, and I shall be up at the top while you are only thinking about it."

"You will not call it *fun* by the time you are half way up," said one who had tried it many years before. "The steps being quite perpendicular against the face of the precipice, makes the ascent most trying to a novice, and yet, of course, when you once begin your journey, you have no alternative but to go on to the end."

"Look at those fellows going up now," said Marston, "with little buckets in their hands. They do it easily enough."

"Yes, and have done so all their lives, which you have not."

"Besides which, Marston," said Charley, "you'll have no horse up there, unless you send one round, and I know you will not like coming *down* alone; and we must go and visit Napoleon's tomb; for although his remains are no longer there, still much interest is attached to the place."

"Oh, I *must* go there!" said Marston; "I have something to do—but, Jacob's Ladder, I do so want to try it!"

"Well," said the other, "if you really are so bent upon it, I will try to get a boy to meet you with a horse at Longwood; and, if I cannot, why we can but ride in turns back, as Dal and I used to do with the old grey pony, when we were little fellows. Indeed I shall enjoy having to walk part of the way."

"What an old brick you are, Charley," said Marston; "thank you so much." And off he bounded as fast as he could.

Carriages, with the postillions mounted, and horses already saddled, with their attendant guides, were found waiting in the first open part of James Town that they arrived at in walking up from the landing. There were two or three side-saddles, which the younger ladies eagerly took possession of, and rode on ahead in company with the gentlemen, the rest being content to occupy the easy seats in the old-fashioned, heavy lumbering carriages, in themselves

quite sufficient for the three poor, half-fed horses to draw up the very steep ascent.

James Town is a straggling, queer-looking place, built on both sides of the lower part of the deep ravine running from the top of the hill to the sea.

From the deck of the steamer the island had appeared to be, throughout its extent, a barren, rugged rock, but as they rode up they were struck with the verdure and beauty of the scenery, the yuccas on the road side, together with numbers of beautiful shrubs, being very pleasant to the sight.

Above James Town were many nice-looking places ; one, surrounded by groves of mangoes, was pointed out as the residence of a good, kind lady, who spent much of her time in endeavouring to ameliorate the condition of the native children, with which the island is swarming. But "The Briars" was by all agreed to be the most charming little spot, with its beautiful fairy-like cascade, falling like a silver stream over the rocky cliff at the head of the ravine.

It was at this residence Napoleon passed so much of his time prior to the building of Longwood. He liked the host and his family there, and became somewhat at home with them ; the daughter, a child of about thirteen or fourteen, being his frequent companion, even sometimes luring him to a game of romps with her ; but there is an oft-repeated story told that one day she drew his sword, and in play chased him about the room with it, though he told her to desist ; at last, getting him into a corner, she exclaimed—

"Now I have the great Conqueror of Europe at my mercy!"

It is said that he never quite forgave her, and from that time ceased to allow her the same licence.

On the plateau at the top of the hill they espied Marston lying at full length on the grass.

"Halloa, Mars!" said Charley; "have you had enough of it?"

"Oh, Charley, man! I'll tell you what it is," said Marston; "I think that climb has done me good morally, although it may have been through a painful experience. I can fully sympathize now with poor old Mary Simmonds in our village, who used to say every time I inquired after her health, 'Laws bless ye, sir, my back be that bad, the Lord his self only knows what I suffer with un.' I didn't know I had a back before to-day, but it will be all right soon; I am right down glad you brought me a horse, for my legs are rather shaky too—I suppose it's being on board ship so long. Whenever I think of the steps in that ladder hill, the old copy-book motto will come into my mind—'Experientia docet;' it *does it* in this case with a vengeance."

They reached Longwood, which is now viewed with a melancholy interest only as the last residence prepared for the mighty eagle-like nature which there closed its soaring career; and after going through the house they rode to the head of a valley where all left their horses in charge of the guides, and walked down a pretty winding pathway to the "tomb," and drank from the trickling fountain of clear water that had so often in like manner served to quench the thirst of the "great Conqueror of Nations."


Here as at Longwood they found some one selling photographs, but Marston was for once industrious enough to sketch the place in his book ; as Vyvyan observed, quite "a work of supererogation, for it had been so be-sketchd by every traveller that really one knew the railings and the willow as well as every boy knew the footprint in the sand of Robinson Crusoe's savage."





CHAPTER V.

WHAT THEY THOUGHT OF TABLE BAY AND MOUNTAIN.

“AN it be possible that we have already come to the end of the voyage I once so dreaded ?” said Fred, as they all stood with several other passengers on the deck of the *American*, watching the grand old Table Mountain as they steamed into the Bay. “How beautifully blue the sêa is reflecting the mountain in that peculiarly clear-cut manner. I should think, Charley, that it must remind you of Naples.”

“Yes,” replied Charley, “I was thinking so while you were talking ; that is certainly more exquisitely lovely, but this is grander. I feel sure that we shall find this ‘Cape of Storms’ as it used to be called, worth visiting, Fred.”

“Yes,” said Fred, “I am very glad now none of you listened to my lazy longing to be allowed to remain at Fairlands. The dear old father and mother ! how glad they will be to hear of our safe arrival.”

“And that you are already looking and feeling so much stronger and brighter, old boy,” said Charley, linking his arm in that of his friend. “We must all finish off our letters as soon as we land, for Captain L—— tells me that the homeward bound mail will leave Cape Town in a day or two.”

“I’ve got a glorious budget ready,” said Marston ; “I’ve written to mother and Edith and Florence, and an awfully long letter to uncle Sinclair. I’ve told Edith all about those diving fellows at Madeira, and the swarms of little coloured children at St. Helena, and I have sent Florence two or three sketches; the one of Napoleon’s tomb has a bit of the willow with it ; there was a notice board stuck up forbidding people to touch it, but I had promised Florence a few leaves, so I felt *obliged* to jump up and grab at the lowest branch while you were busy buying your photographs and diverting the woman’s attention.

“In perfect innocence, I am sure, of being made to screen your peccadilloes !” said Vyvyan ; “but I have no doubt that Florence will be highly delighted. She will be able to make up a splendid page in her scrap-book ; a St. Helena page. Fred’s ‘Longwood’ and my photograph of the ladder, which I have told her you climbed, and your sketch of the tomb, around which, of course, she will arrange the willow leaves and the solitary everlasting flower from the bust of the Emperor, and altogether it will form quite a nice touching souvenir.”

“Look !” said Fred, “at that cloud of mist coming down over the flat-topped mountain. How singularly white it is, and in descending so decidedly, it reminds one of St. Peter’s dream of a great white

sheet being let down from Heaven, only, I suppose, that the 'four-footed beasts' will be under this one instead of in it."

"That is what the Cape Town people call the 'Table-cloth,'" said a gentleman standing by, "and sometimes it is so dense that I have known travellers lost on the top of the mountain, though I scarcely think that any one ever goes up without having been cautioned as to the sudden manner in which this white mist will at times envelop the whole of Table Mountain; but many, and particularly botanists, are so irresistibly led on by the beautiful flowers, for which the neighbourhood is so deservedly famed, that they miss their way unconsciously."

The landing was a novel and amusing affair, the Malay boatmen, in their picturesque costume, their conical hats and large white sleeves, being especially striking; the dark coolies working on the quay, and the Europeans with their puggaries and white umbrellas, all contributed to impress them with the difference of everything here from what they had left at home.

The hotel to which they had been recommended for their few days' stay they found pleasant enough; an obliging host, a good table d'hote, and among the resident inmates a kindness and sociability that caused them to feel at home at once.

They left all luggage on board, as they had taken their passage to Port Elizabeth, to which place the *American* was to proceed when she had discharged her Cape Town cargo, it being their intention to seek adventure in the eastern part of the colony.

"Now then," said Charley Vyvyan, as they rose

from breakfast the first morning; "we had better present our letters of introduction at Government House, then that will be done with."

"Oh! bother the Governor," said Marston, "we have so few days to be here, I did hope that you would go up the mountain to-day. I've got all my sketching things ready."

"And I my vasculum and the other botanical apparatus that your uncle gave me," said Fred, "but I quite agree with Charley, that business ought to come before pleasure."

"Well! from all I hear," said Charley, "and from what my father and others at home said of Sir George, I fancy our visit to Government House will certainly not be an unpleasant one."

They went, and were charmed with the hospitality that they met with, just the very kind to make them all perfectly at their ease.

Sir George had known Sir John Vyvyan intimately as a young man, and of course also remembered his friend, Mr. Dalrymple. Marston's uncle, Colonel Sinclair, had been Sir George's travelling companion a few years before, during a journey he had made through some parts of Kaffraria, so that he really felt an interest in all of the young men, and was happy in being able to show their fathers' sons some kindness.

After they had, in every possible way, been made free of Government House, Sir George vainly endeavouring to persuade them to stay for the following mail steamer before proceeding to the Eastern province, said, "I dare say you would like to see as much as you can of this neighbourhood during your

short stay. I will introduce Trevelyan to you ; he is one of my aides-de-camp, and is somewhat of a botanist, I believe ; at all events, he knows all the kloofs and passes of Table Mountain and the Lion's Head, and will be just the one to delight in showing you all the most interesting spots, and it will, I am sure, be a great treat to him to have some one fresh from home who can tell him all the news ; so I shall give him leave for the time you are here."

Trevelyan proved a charming addition to their party. He seemed to partake a little of the nature of each, and a few hours sufficed to make them all thoroughly at home with each other. What scrambles they had ! But first of all Trevelyan took Fred to the Botanical Gardens, a lovely place under the shadow of the mountain, and where, under the supervision of the Curator, a very good collection of indigenous trees, plants, and flowers had been brought together. The Library and the Museum they also found particularly well worth seeing.

In the afternoon they all obtained horses, and went for a ride round the Kloof Road, as they had wisely determined to have the day before them for their long mountain rambles.

"Round the Kloof Road" is the favourite ride of the place, and deservedly so. It is a military roadway, part of it being cut out of the side of the mountain. The entire length of the ride is between nine and ten miles. For the first three miles there is a gradual ascent from the base of the Lion's Head, on the north-western side of Cape Town, to a table-land, from which, at different points of the road, magnificent views of the broad Atlantic are obtained, the

bold and rugged cliffs of the Lion's Head standing out in clear-cut relief against the blue sky ; and then, in descending, the eye is charmed by the evergreen foliage of the Kloof, and that part of Cape Town called the Gardens, dotted here and there with pretty villa residences.



BOOK II.



CAPE TOWN AND PORT ELIZABETH.



CHAPTER I.

RAMBLES AND ADVENTURES ROUND CAPE TOWN WITH A NEW FRIEND.

THE next morning they were to begin their rambles in earnest. Fred was voted not quite strong enough to do the amount of walking that the rest intended to do. So Trevelyan procured for him a sturdy little Stellenbosch pony that had been reared among the hills, and could climb like a cat. Another addition to their party was Dollie, a Malay boy, who was to take charge of the horse when Fred wished to walk.

“Now isn’t this awfully jolly,” said Marston. “I say, Fred, this is something like the Arabian Nights, you know. Look here! Whole beds of these white lilies! My mother has one pot of them in the little greenhouse, and thinks no end of it when there are two or three flowers out at a time, and here are hundreds all growing wild. Fancy rushing into a lot of exotics like this.”

“But, my good fellow,” said Trevelyan, “if you

must rush about in that wild manner, do look where you put your feet, or you may chance to place them on a snake."

"Oh, Marston," Fred cried, "do be careful, and please bring me some of those 'arums.' What do the natives here call them, Trevelyan?"

"I don't think the coloured people have any particular name for them," replied Trevelyan; "but they are commonly called pig-lilies. Why, I do not know—unless it be that the pigs are very fond of the roots, and eat them voraciously. I have also thought that it might be on account of the similarity in shape of the large single convoluted petal to a pig's ear."

"What has the boy found," said Charley," "he seems to be busy gathering something?"

"Master likes Gocums?" said the boy. "Hottentot figs very good."

"It is the fruit of the figbearing *Mysembryanthemum*, and many people are very fond of it. You had better let him show you how to peel them, for if you get any of the very saline outer covering, you will find it extremely disagreeable."

Just as they had all tasted the gocums and pronounced judgment upon their flavour, the boy leaped back exclaiming, "Master, just now talking of snakes, look at him there."

And there, sure enough, lay coiled up in the bed of gocums a snake, not one of the most venomous, but still sufficiently so to be dreaded.

Trevelyan and Vyvyan had both armed themselves as they came along, with sticks out from a hedge, but had put them down on the grass at a

little distance while eating the gocums. Fortunately Fred had still his riding whip in his hand, and as the thing reared its head apparently with intent to spring at the boy, he gave it a smart cut which caused it to collapse, and it was immediately despatched by the others.

"Well," said Marston, "there goes our first snake! and a pretty long fellow he is! It wouldn't have been at all pleasant to have had him twisting about one's legs. I wonder what he came here for; does he eat gocums?"

"No, Master," said the boy, "but the birds do, and birds very 'lekker kos' for that green snake."

"Which means a dainty dish," said Trevelyan. "We must put him up into a tree or bush. It is a sort of rule among the colonists never to leave a dead snake on the ground, for, they say, the poison still remains in the head, and may do serious damage even in a dried state if trodden upon inadvertently by some bare-footed native."

"Before you throw it away, Trevelyan, I should like to look at the poison fangs," said Fred.

"Master must let me open his mouth," said the Malay, as he saw both Marston and Fred about to take hold of it for the purpose of examination.

"He is quite right," said Trevelyan, "there will have been venom ejected and still adhering to the mouth, and if you have a slight scratch on your hand, or should it get into the finger nail, it would cause mischief."

The boy cut some sharply-pointed twigs and after forcing open the mouth and keeping it so with a kind of gag, they, with the help of some long thorns

found the fangs said to contain the poison ; they then disposed carefully of all, thorns, sticks, and snake included, and went on their way. They were on the banks of a very pretty stream that they had to cross at a certain drift or ford before climbing the mountain, and as they neared the fording-place they heard a great deal of chattering and screaming, with a noise above all which sounded like the axes of half a dozen woodmen at work at once.

"What Babel have we here," said Charley. "Good gracious ! What a noise ! Bedlam would be nothing to it ! And look ! there they are. What in the name of good fortune are those black women about ? for I suppose they are women by the shrill tone of their voices. Some of them are actually in the water beating the rocks !"

"It is a party of washerwomen," said Trevelyan. "Banging the linen on the rocks in that way is their mode of getting it clean."

"I wonder they don't bang the clothing to shreds," said Fred, "and what are all those women on the edge of the water doing that are sitting down on their heels ? they seem to be rubbing on something."

"Master, see," said the boy, "they got nice plat (flat) stones, put soap on there, then 'klop' them on the rocks. Master, see, nice hole in the rock, with 'blue water' rinse them out, then dry them on bushes."

"You seem to know all about it, Dollie," said Fred.

"Yes, Master," replied the Malay, "my mother wash for three or four ladies, but not with *these Hottentots*."

They found in the vicinity of this drift in a small

kloof or ravine of the mountain, a variety of most exquisite ferns and some beautiful little ixias. In the water above the washing place were the most beautiful lotus lilies, with their exquisitely blue petals and canary-coloured centres. Sending the pony round by the Malay boy to where he could join them afterwards, they all climbed up by way of the little kloof to the first plateau on the side of the mountain, Trevelyan knowing of a rough path by which they could get through the jungle and up the krantz or cliff at the head of the kloof.

"I am taking you to one of my favourite resorts," he said; "every season brings fresh interests in the variety of plants and flowers; and in the hottest weather, with the thermometer at 96 or 100 in the shade in the town, it always seems pleasant and cool in my little sanctum."

"I admire your taste," said Fred, who was fully occupied in gathering specimens till his arms were so full that he could scarcely hold them. "This is such a little paradise, I don't think I should care to go much farther."

Trevelyan laughed. "We have not come to the prettiest spot yet," said he. "I got Sir George and some of the ladies up here one day last summer. I don't know whether I should have told them anything about it, but the Governor asked me himself to look out a very pretty spot and have a little clearance done, so I brought two or three orderlies up and I will show you what we did."

As he spoke, a sudden turn in the stream, upon the edge of which they were walking, and an opening in the "bush" showed them one of the loveliest spots

that they could have imagined. Facing them was the most silvery and lovely little waterfall they had ever seen ; it was the stream which, in its course down the mountain, had to take a sudden leap of about fifty feet over the cliff. To the right of the cascade an old dead tree had fallen from where it had been growing on the side of the hill, and was still held foot upwards by the roots, just within reach of the spray. It was a mass of beautiful moss, the bright pale green of which contrasted vividly with the dark foliage of some lofty pines that grew about it : the face of the cliff itself and the sides of the basin into which the streamlet fell were luxuriantly decorated with large clusters of maiden-hair of different varieties, tufts of a graceful-hanging grass, the bright scarlet coral flower, and the large white arum. To the left of the waterfall an overhanging portion of the cliff which a beautiful trellising of the wild vine enclosed made a natural verandah, and here they found the Malay boy and another servant who had been sent out unknown to them, busily arranging a luncheon.

"This is fairyland !" exclaimed Fred, "one could live in such a place as this for ever."

"Especially if the fairies always have a good lunch provided for them unexpectedly," said Marston. "I will confess now that I was beginning to feel ravenous. I had two biscuits in my pocket, but they were devoured an hour ago, and I was just wondering whether I couldn't find another gum bed or some eatable berries. Mr. Lieutenant Trevelyan, you're a regular brick !" said the merry boy, taking off his hat and bowing low.

"It was indeed a thoughtful thing to do," said Charley, "and others, besides Sinclair will, I fancy, enjoy the rest and refreshment in this veritable Arcadia. Travelling in South Africa cannot be such an arab-like life if there is much of such scenery as this."

"From all I have heard of travelling on the frontier," said Trevelyan, "there must be some very rough work to go through, especially with the bullock waggon; but the scenery must, of course, be varied, and you may meet with many adventures there that you are not likely to come across in this neighbourhood. I would give something myself to have six months of it."

"And is there no chance of your getting leave?" said Charlie. "It would make our journeying much more delightful if we could have you with us."

"Yes, indeed!" exclaimed Fred, "how I wish you could. Do Trevelyan, try."

"Thank you both for wishing it," said the aide-de-camp. "I would not ask for leave yet; but I think it very probable that in the early part of next year his Excellency will go to the frontier himself, when I may have a chance of meeting you again."

"Then it will be an understood thing between us," said Charley, "that we keep up a correspondence. We will undertake to keep you *au fait* as to our movements."

"I say, Dollie," said Marston, "what have you done with that pony? Have you hidden him in a cave?"

"No, no, Master; he's up there on the top of the krantz. He's tied to a tree, and got some nice grass

to eat ; Master can see his tail sometimes when he is driving away the flies."

"And have we to go up there, Trevelyan ? What a jolly climb," said Marston.

"Oh ! it's nothing," said Trevelyan. "There are plenty of boughs and stumps to help you, and it is but a short distance. But we must have lunch, and be getting on, or you will not see much of the hill. The man will carry back all those specimens, Dalrymple, that we have already collected, and we can pack the smaller ones carefully into the hamper ; or he can take the boards, if you prefer it. On the hill you will find some heaths perhaps also, some gladiolas, proteas, and things that will not injure by being carried in the hand as those ferns will."

"I shall be glad of his help," said Fred ; "for I have accumulated quite a large parcel, that will certainly be a burden to carry far."

All enjoyed their first African picnic exceedingly, their merry voices awakening the echoes in the rocks, the silvery tones of the falling water coming in as a flute-like accompaniment. Fred would fain have lingered in so lovely a spot, but that would not do. So they soon pulled themselves up the almost perpendicular pathway by the Baviaans touw or monkey rope, the branch of a climbing plant that grows in great profusion in many of the South African kloofs.

The boy having re-saddled the pony, a short walk brought them to a path on the ridge of the hill where Fred could ride again.

"You are safe enough here in riding," said Trevelyan, "because there is a good slope on each side ; but I once witnessed a most singular accident. We

were rather a large picnic party, and there were three or four ladies with us, and several servants ; in fact, I think nearly every one had a servant, as we were all on horseback. We had just ridden over a long sloping ridge of the mountain, when we came to a part which led round the head of one of these kloofs, the path was close to the edge of the steep cliff, and much overgrown by slippery grass ; altogether, it looked dangerous, and all dismounted, leaving the horses to be driven or led by the coloured servants at their discretion. One of them, a good strong mountain pony, was being led by the bridle, when he suddenly slipped on the grass. His hind feet were over the cliff in a second, his fore feet clinging to the rock ; the man caught hold of a bush the same moment and two or three of the party grasped his arm, fearing that he would have been dragged over. It was a moment of suspense, the man would not let go the bridle, although a dozen voices called out to him to do so, and the fear was that with the struggles of the horse to regain his foothold the shrubs might give way, and all be carried over together, when all at once the bridle broke, those who were holding fell back suddenly, and the poor horse went crash, crash, crash, through the shrubs and trees that grew half-way down the cliff. Two or three of us (his master among the number) ran down a similar little path to that near the waterfall, carrying a gun to put the poor thing out of his misery, should there be any life left in him. His own gun had been fastened to the saddle, and had gone down with the poor brute. When we reached him, which we did not do for about ten minutes, as we had to

go some way round before we found the path, he was actually standing in the centre of a beautiful green patch of grass, and feeding. The gun and the saddle were both smashed, and he still shaking, and one foot seemed sprained; but there he was. He looked up and neighed when he saw us, and then went on nibbling the grass again, as much as to say, you see I'm not dead *yet*. I can't tell you how thoroughly astonished we were; it seemed incredible. How he was to be got out was an after consideration. We bound up his sprained foot as well as we could, and left him there free. He had grass in abundance, and a beautiful spring of water at the foot of the cliff; and telling some of the men to come the following day and cut a way out for him through the dense jungle, we rejoined our party, with our astounding piece of news.*

"That is a most interesting story," exclaimed Charley; "what an adventure! You may well call it astounding. Did they get him down the next day, and did he really get over it all right?"

"They did not get him out for three or four days, because when the groom arrived at the spot next morning he found that the poor brute's foot was much swollen, and that he was rather stiff generally, so the man took up his abode there. He cut some of the nice long mountain grass for bedding, and with a little nursing and care the horse was soon as brisk and spirited as ever. I'll take you to pay him a visit when we pass that way, if you like."

"I should like, exceedingly," said Marston. "I

* A fact.

believe he must in some way be related to the cat, who has nine lives."

They found on the mountain a great variety of ever-lasting flowers; or, as Dollie called them, "seven years' bloemen."

"There are very many more than we should find just here," said Trevelyan; "the Western and Southern mountain ranges are, I believe, noted for them. There are some ladies who make a little money by arranging them with different grasses on cardboard, getting all the kinds together in a bunch."

"In the same manner as the seaweeds are sold at some sea-side places, I dare say," said Charley; "we must try and get some of them to send home."

"Yes," replied Trevelyan; "they make pretty little presents; I have sent several to my people, and they have been much liked. The leaves of the silver tree, too, as book-markers and trinkets, such as bracelets, crosses, &c., made of the straw-coloured seeds of musk melon, mixed with beads in some way: they have a pretty effect, looking like dead gold."

In this way they chatted, as they climbed the hill, stopping every now and then to gather a lovely wreath, or a flower of the beautiful protea, which Dollie called the sugar-bush, showing them some pure honey in the bottom of the flower cup, which at certain seasons is so plentiful that in the times when slaves were kept the young Dutch ladies used to go out with their slave girls, and an old woman as cook, and collecting it in great quantities, have it boiled into a sweetmeat at once.

The beautiful little honey birds were hovering in

numbers over those proteas, dipping their long tube-like bills into the flowers in search of the honey.

They passed a most delightful day, descending the mountain by a different route from that which they had taken in the morning; and as they came in sight of the bay, which lay beautifully calm in front of them, Trevelyan pointed out the different objects of interest.

In the far distance could just be seen Dassen Rock, a guano island, the abode of the penguin.

"I went out there once with a party," said Trevelyan, "it is really amusing to see the birds; they sit upright upon their tails, in rows, and when you go near them they waddle off in single file, looking like a number of poor old women all dressed alike; they have, instead of wings, short flappers, which they move up and down in the most ridiculous manner."

Nearer to the mainland lay Robben Island, where there is a large Lunatic Asylum, and also the Cape Convict Prison.

"Do all the convicts stay there?" said Fred. "One could scarcely imagine that they could find employment in such an isolated spot for those condemned to hard labour."

"I think they are perhaps more generally what we may term State prisoners," said Trevelyan, "for instance, the rebel Kafir chiefs have been placed there, allowed to have their wives and other members of their retinue with them, but such cases are now few and far between. The natives as they become civilized find it more to their own interest to keep up friendly relations with the Europeans, and become voluntarily amenable to the laws of the colony, but

you will learn much more about the Kafirs and Hottentots when you get up to the frontier. At one time the colony was never free from invasion, and the older settlers used to relate many a tale of horror connected with the Kafir wars. But here we are at Claremont, and must pass the little church built by the late good Bishop Gray ; he and Mrs. Gray lie buried in the churchyard in the shade of the pines and the silver trees. The kind Rector and his wife will be glad to see us for a few minutes, and then we will take the train into Cape Town."

At the rectory they felt themselves at once in an atmosphere of welcome ; and delicious cups of coffee, so refreshing after their long walk, were brought in by a neatly dressed young black girl. Fred went off with the clergyman to pay a visit to the church and churchyard, while the others remained chatting over their coffee, only too glad to rest.

Marston greatly admired the frames of some photographs of the mountain, the church, &c., formed of 'the leaves of the silver tree.

"Are they not pretty?" said the Rector's wife, "the soft silvery satin-like leaves are so lovely. We use a great many in decorating our church for the different festivals."

"Yes, indeed," said Marston, "they are ; I have admired the trees ever since we landed, but I have not before been able to give the leaves so close an inspection."

"I will get you some," said the lady, "I have a few by me that are already pressed, and you shall have them to send home to your friends."

"Oh ! thank you very much," said Marston, "our

Captain is going to take a little parcel for us, and we had been very anxious to get some of these leaves. I know that my sister and Miss Vyvyan will both be charmed with them. My uncle who was quartered at the Cape for some time, has two or three, but I never could appreciate his calling them *silver* leaves for they are quite brown and shrivelled up."

"Ah! they were probably not well prepared," said she. "You will find that these will keep beautifully white for a long time. The young ladies here often bind them with narrow ribbon, and sometimes paint upon them, for they take the colours well. I do not like the binding at all, and even the painting, although I have seen some well done, I think rather objectionable. I am so fond of the natural leaves that I prefer them untouched."

"You think it a libel upon nature to deface such rare beauty," said Vyvyan, "'tis a case of 'beauty unadorned, &c.' This particular kind of protea seems abundant at the foot of the mountains?"

"It is, and I have heard it said that it has not been met with in any other part of the world, but I do not know how true that is."

"I have, I know, met with the same remark," said Trevelyan. "I think it is either in Thunberg's or Barrow's travels."

Just then they were rejoined by the Rector and Fred, and after a mutual interchange of thanks and good wishes for a pleasant trip, the young men took leave, and were soon comfortably seated in the railway carriage en route for Cape Town.

They passed through the very pretty suburban villages of Rondebosch, Rosebank, and Mowbray.

Trevelyan pointed out the observatory, where Herschel and other famous astronomers had worked.

"I dare say you have noticed," said he, "how exquisitely clear the nights are. We often sit out of doors and read by the light of the moon; and the reflection of a planet in the sea is as brilliant as the long stream of moonbeams across the bay."

Once more the luxury of a dinner on shore, and that after such a day. Notwithstanding their good lunch they were all as hungry as hunters; how they did enjoy the fresh fish; and at dessert, the delicious oranges just gathered from the trees.

"We have always fruits of some kind at the Cape," said Trevelyan; "it is not now the fruit season. When that comes, you will be astonished at the quantity about; it seems to an Englishman wasteful, indeed, to see barrows full of peaches wheeled off upon some of the farms to the pigsties; and in many more cases, where, perhaps, labour is too scarce, or the people are too indolent to have them picked up, the pigs are turned into the orchard to forage for themselves; or else the peaches, apricots, and figs lie and rot on the ground. But the wastefulness is only a seeming one; for the peaches that fall have always a disagreeable little worm in them, which, of course, renders them unfit for use. In some seasons the worm is very detrimental to the stone fruit. I have frequently gathered more than a dozen good-looking peaches and nectarines without finding one entirely free."

After dinner, according to an old Dutch custom at the Cape, they adjourned to the "stoep," a kind of raised verandah without a balcony; there they

had coffee brought to them, and as they were lazily enjoying it, the pleasant sound of voices singing came from the open windows of an old-fashioned many-gabled house opposite. The young Dutch ladies of Capetown are fond of music, and many of them have sweet and true voices.

The following day Trevelyan had determined should be an easy one. They all drove out to the famous wine farms of Constantia, the several properties of Messrs. van Reenen and Cloete. The drive lay past Wynberg, and round the base of the mountain at the back.

"That Malay is a capital whip," said Vyvyan; "how beautifully he brought his four horses round that sharp turn just now without slackening their speed in the least!"

"They make the best coachmen we have," said Trevelyan, "as well as the best boatmen. They pride themselves upon their skill in driving, as also do many of the young Dutch boers. I saw a Malay the other day showing off six horses that were for sale, with the waggonette, to which they were attached. He took them round a large open space three or four times, each time narrowing his circle, and then all at once drove them through the figure of eight; this was done several times, seemingly with the greatest ease. The horses here are good as well as enduring. There is a great deal of the Arab in the breed; but they are not generally so well trained as our English horses, and need to be kept in constant fear of the long whip."

They were received at Constantia with much kindness and hospitality. They visited the vine-

yards containing some hundred thousands of vines, all standard and planted in rows, each row being in a trench, for the purpose of irrigation. The grapes principally used are the Muscatel, and are allowed to remain on the vines until very ripe, and almost beginning to shrivel.

They were next shown the "Kelder," as it is called, where the pressing is done; and after that taken to the house again, where they were served with the most delicious wine, a rich, luscious, pure, fruity liqueur—"a nectar fit for the gods," as Marston said.

Upon their return to town, they found that an invitation had been left at the hotel for them to dine at Government House. So they had but just time to dress and go up; Trevelyan having to precede them in order to go to his own quarters for the like purpose. The weather was charming, and they enjoyed the evening thoroughly—their last at Cape Town for the present, the Captain of the *American* having met them at the hotel, with the intelligence that he should be ready to start at noon the next day.

"We have to thank your Excellency very much," said Charley, "for the exceedingly pleasant time we have passed during our stay in Cape Town. Your having given us such a companion as Mr. Trevelyan was an unexpected boon."

"A boon conferred upon me," said Trevelyan. "I, too, have to thank his Excellency; he could not have done me a greater kindness; I seem to have passed the last two or three days among my old school and college friends, knowing so many in common."

“I am glad to find that I was right in thinking it would be a pleasure to you all,” said Sir George.

The next morning was spent in packing up all the curiosities and photographs they had collected, and leaving the parcel, not a very large one, at the agents until the Captain’s return from the Eastern province on his way home, they all went on board.

“How I wish I were going with you,” said Trevelyan. “I shall feel a peg lower when you are gone; it has been a pleasant break in my rather monotonous existence, being with you.”

“You will count us among your friends, will you not?” said Fred. “We must try and meet again before we leave South Africa.”

Regrets at parting were felt and expressed by all; but the time for starting came, the mail was put on board, the anchor weighed, the gun fired, all visitors took their leave, and their pleasant sojourn at Cape Town was at an end.





CHAPTER II.

PORT ELIZABETH AND MORE NEW FRIENDS.

“**T**HAT Trevelyan is a nice fellow,” said Fred to Charley, as they stood on the deck watching him wave his last adieus from the boat that was to take him ashore ; “we must try and renew the acquaintance some day. That fine old Table Mountain ; I shall often think of our few days under its shadow. I am very glad that that heavy mist did not come down the day we were wandering about up there.”

Marston had gone to look at some horses which were being taken up to the frontier from Cape Town, and to see some other pets which had been with them the whole voyage.

Fred sat down and leaned back in his deck chair, and Charley, who continued standing and gazing with admiration at the receding mountain as he talked to some of the passengers, was, upon turning round a few minutes after, alarmed to see Dalrymple looking very pale.

"Fred! what is the matter?" said he, "are you going to have another dose of sea-sickness?"

"No, I think not," replied Fred, "but my head feels so queer and weak, and as if everything were going from me. Oh, Charley, I thought I was so well, and now I feel just as I did at Fairlands."

"Don't think so, old fellow, it will soon pass off. I fear we have been doing too much in a short time. I ought to have been more careful, and not have had your head whirled about in that way. I thought you were well enough to stand anything."

Vyvyan went immediately to the medical officer of the ship, and obtained from him a reviving draught. Meanwhile, he carried up some rugs, and made Fred lie down on one of the benches, knowing that the open air would be better for him than the close cabin. After the draught he slept, and awoke slightly refreshed; but for the remainder of the voyage, which lasted two days, he was listless and unfit for exertion.

It was, as Charley had at once surmised, the great excitement of the two or three days on shore that had been too much for him in his weak state of health. Fred was not one of those who, as General Rawlinson once said of some travellers, go about with their eyes in their pockets. Nothing seemed to escape his notice. He looked at everything that came in his way with a critical eye, and for a youth of his age he had a very fair amount of scientific knowledge. So that he really had been doing what the medical man had forbidden. However, it has been truly said by one of the popular lecturers of the day, that more people die of mental idleness than from what is often understood as over brain work.

“If you take my advice, Mr. Vyvyan,” said one of the passengers the following morning to Charley, “you will travel up country by bullock waggon. It is very seldom done now-a-days ; we prefer the rail or horses, using the bullocks still for the transport of produce and heavy goods where there are no railroads. But if you can get up in some farmer’s return wool-waggon, that slow old-fashioned mode of travelling would be the very thing as a thorough rest for your friend. My own waggons were to have been in Port Elizabeth about this time, but I am afraid they will have left, or you would have been most welcome to the use of the covered one as far as my farm, and I should, no doubt, have been able to forward you on your way from there.”

The speaker was a Mr. Carlton, a pleasant gentlemanly man to whom the Captain had introduced Vyvyan the day before, that he might obtain some information about the country beyond Port Elizabeth. He was a wealthy sheep and ostrich farmer, and was now on his way home from Cape Town, where he had been as representative in Parliament of the district in which he resided.

“I have often heard of waggon travelling and its picnic-like bivouacs, and I think with you, Mr. Carlton, that it would be a very pleasant lazy way of progression. I suppose one may hunt or shoot on the road as opportunity offers.”

“I think you must take out a licence, and one also to provide yourself with gunpowder ; that you can do at Port Elizabeth. I will go with you to the Magistrate’s office and see that all right if you like.”

“Thank you very much ; and now as to the hotel to go to, the Captain tells me that there is a pleasant one on the hill.”

“Yes, there is. I stay at George’s myself, it is in the main street where there is nothing to see, but it is convenient for me in more ways than one, just for the few days I stay in the town. As a place of residence the hill is far preferable, although it is very fatiguing for strangers who have anything to do in the business part of the place, as you will say when you see the steepness of the roads that lead to the houses up there.”

“I think we should all like to go where you do, if they can take us in.”

“I go there because I see the farmers as they come down with their wool ; it is a place of resort for them, and of course I have many friends among them. I will send a note on shore by the first boat to engage rooms for you.”

The next morning they arrived in Algoa Bay. Fred was very much better again, and quite ready to take an interest in everything in this new world.

There were about thirty or forty vessels of all sorts lying at anchor in the open bay—unloading or taking in cargo, which was principally done by means of surf boats. A long cable from the shore is attached to the ships, this is passed through a sort of loop on the boat, and the boatmen, several in a row, work the great unwieldy looking barge hand over hand along the rope. The surf is very high, and at times no small boat could live in it ; and when the cargo boats are through the worst of the waves, they are immediately surrounded by gangs of Fingo and

Kafir coolies, great stalwart naked figures, who, with an immense amount of screaming and shouting, shoulder the different packages, no matter how large, and transport them to the sandy beach. It is most amusing to see forty or fifty bags of sugar on the backs of as many Fingoes from one surf boat, while from another, perhaps, great cases of merchandise are being landed. Such monster cases too, many of them, but a black man never runs the risk that some of our railway porters at home do, of over-straining by carrying weights too heavy for him, and Marston was much amused by seeing ten men go to take possession of one case that they thought heavy, but it proved to be all bulk and no weight, for it contained a basket pony and carriage, but with an ugh! ugh! of astonishment, away they all danced with their light freight. The next case six men went up to, but that contained a grand piano, so waiting for more help and receiving sundry cautions from the landing agent to be sure not to let that box fall into the water, off they went in their turn with the inevitable ugh! ugh! on account of its weight.

These coolies come down from Kaffraria in parties, making certain arrangements among themselves to work for so many weeks or until they have been able to save such and such an amount of money, with which to buy cows. The cows are again exchanged for wives. A Kafir does not sell his daughter for *money*, but he sets her value at so many *cows*. In this way the father of many daughters will become a rich man, and with some of these very cows himself be able to purchase another wife to add to those already in his kraal, as the old wives become incapa-

citated from labouring with the hoe in the maize lands.

“What is the difference,” said an old Kafir to a missionary who had been vainly trying to persuade him of the enormity of the system, “our young men must work hard to get the cows that they give for their wives ; while you too often encourage your young men in extravagance and idleness by paying them to marry your daughters ?”—meaning the dowry. However, very much of this is altered now in those parts under British rule, and much good has been effected throughout the land by the influence of the missionaries—those pioneers of civilization.

Our party were soon comfortably enough settled at “George’s.” Mr. Carlton had gone on first, and had met them as they drove up to the door, his kind face beaming with a pleasant welcome that he hastened to give them in words also. He was accompanied by a tall, handsome young man, whom he introduced as his son.

George Carlton was indeed a fine specimen of humanity, looking, as do many of the Cape-born colonists at his age, at least five years older than he really was.

He had come down with the covered buggy to meet his father, and at the same time to look after the bullock-waggons that had been dispatched a fortnight before with the produce of the farm, consisting of wool, goats’ hair, and ostrich feathers.

“I am happy to say,” said Mr. Carlton, “that for once the carelessness of my servants has done me good service ; for, by allowing some of the cattle to

stray away, the waggons have been detained some distance out of town, and will only be in to-morrow, thus enabling me to offer you the use of one of them for your journey. I have told my son of your object in travelling in that manner, and that you hope to have some sport by the way. You must talk to him ; for George is one of our best sportsmen, and we always say has such a keen scent for game of all kinds that he can even find it without the dogs."

"There is no keener sportsman than my father, if he chooses," said the young man ; "but he has never been so fond of it as my grandfather was, and I think my love of it comes from hearing his old wild tales of hunting days, when elephants, lions, and buffaloes were among the game he sometimes bagged. We cannot find you such noble game now, especially in the neighbourhood of a much frequented waggon road ; but if you accept my father's offer I will also travel with the waggons, and, no doubt, we shall find our guns of some use—maybe the dogs, too, for there are two or three with the men."

"I thank your father, and you too, very much," said Vyvyan ; "it is most kind of you, Mr. Carlton. I am a bad hand at expressing thanks, but I feel sure that you would not have offered us your waggon so freely if you had not meant us to accept it. We do so, therefore, without hesitation."

"I am glad to have it in my power to place one at your disposal ; and now I see by the clock over the way that it is getting on for dinner time. I suppose that active young fellow, Marston, has got all your portmanteaus into your separate bedrooms by

this time. What a fine colonist he would make!—so brimful of energy.”

“That he certainly is,” said Fred; “and as he has a happy knack of making friends everywhere, he can generally find some one to help or something to do.”

“There, now,” said the object of these observations, joining them, “I am feeling virtuously hungry!”

“What sort of hunger is that, Mars?” said Fred.

“Well! don’t you know? When a fellow has been doing all the work by himself, or, at all events, only helped by a bit of double distilled essence of musk-cat—and then afterwards when a delicious smell of dinner comes up from the nether regions, he can’t help thinking that he really has a perfect right to feel hungry, and enjoy that dinner; so here I am ready for mine, whether you lazy fellows are or no. There’s a woman upstairs waiting to show you your rooms. She is as black as a coal, but she’s dressed like an Englishwoman, barring the cap—but she wears a sort of turban instead.”

After dinner, as Mr. Carlton, the Captain, and one or two others had to call at the club, they proposed that the young men should join them in their walk up the hill. They passed a stone pyramid, erected between fifty and sixty years ago to the memory of Lady Elizabeth Donkin, after whom the town below has been named. This has been for many years a noticeable landmark for sailors, and now the Harbour Lighthouse has been built close to it. A time-ball here falls every day at 1 o’clock,



LADY DONKIN'S MEMORIAL AT PORT ELIZABETH.

Cape Town Observatory time ; 1.33 Port Elizabeth time.

“What a large place this is up here,” said Charley. “From what I had read of it, I fancied when we were lying in the bay we could see the whole of the town.”

“Yes,” said Marston; “and don’t you remember uncle Sinclair said that Port Elizabeth consisted of one street three miles long, when his regiment landed here, and that they camped on the hill ?”

“Yes, they did always,” said one of the gentlemen ; “the camp was near the old fort, which still remains, though not used now. Your uncle was correct about the town, too, for until quite within the last few years there were comparatively few houses on the hill, but gradually all the residences have been built here, while the limited space in the town is given up to business purposes. So that now this has become what Clifton is to Bristol. The air up here is very delightful, while down below the heat is at times almost insupportable.”

Here they were interrupted by Marston’s rushing off to help some “small boys” as he called them to disentangle their miniature ships that they were sailing upon a large pond.

“You remember,” said Mr. Carlton to Fred, “my telling you that we colonists had adopted many Dutch and native words into our everyday language ? This pond, or as you would call it ‘tarn,’ is in colonial parlance a ‘vley’ (pronounced ‘flay’)—but here we are at our club, and you will be glad to rest. I dare say Marston will find amusement with those

youngsters—and they know where to find us. By-the-by, I must take him with me to the market to-morrow morning, it is an old Dutch survival, and probably altogether different from anything of the kind he has ever seen.”





CHAPTER III.

A TALE OF A TIGER.



EARLY the next morning, according to colonial custom, a black boy brought each of our young travellers a cup of coffee to his bedroom. After this they all accompanied Mr. Carlton to see the sale of produce on "the market," which takes place every morning at a certain hour, fixed by the Municipality of the town, so as to suit the convenience of the generality of purchasers.

In the laying out of every town or village in the colony, a large space is reserved for this purpose ; and hither the Dutch and English farmers bring certain kinds of produce. It is the small farmers who make most use of the markets ; and, after them, the coloured people are the most frequent visitors, with their waggon loads of firewood, their small "clips" of wool, the skins and tallow of the goats they have slaughtered since their last visit, and very often a few bottles full of wild honey, and the bees-wax melted into cakes. Now and then a traveller

may here offer for sale the produce of the chase, or maybe the trader—"Smous," as he is called—brings here his store of ivory curiosities. Skins of wild animals or karosses made from them, and various other things obtained from the natives in the interior he exchanges for blankets, slop clothing, the ever requisite beads, buttons, and looking glasses, that they are so fond of.

In most of the colonial towns the waggons are brought on to the market-places the day before the cattle are taken out of the yoke and driven away to graze ; but in Port Elizabeth, for obvious reasons, it would not be safe to allow loose cattle, in charge of a mere boy, to go through the main street, a distance of perhaps, three or four miles, before they could get to any grazing ground. So an order has been issued that the cattle shall not be "out-spanned" or taken from the yoke. This added much to the novelty of the scene. Poor, patient brutes ! some of them tired from having been driven all night long, with here and there one moaning under the weight of the heavy wooden yoke ; or, perhaps, because, unlike his more fortunate neighbour, he had no cud to chew during his time of rest. Each team or "span" of oxen had a Hottentot or Fingo leader, who, in the present instance, was generally to be seen squatting on his haunches before the two front oxen of from eight to fourteen pairs, smoking his wooden pipe.

The Market-Master holds a kind of Dutch auction, disposing of the various contents of each wagon ; and when our friends arrived, he was perched up near some fine long white-tented waggons, which Mr.

Carlton said belonged to Dutch boers of the Cape districts. They contained a curious medley of articles, the principal of which seemed to be Cape brandy distilled on the Boers' own farms from the grape; then there were bamboos for whip-sticks, each from twelve to fifteen feet long, bundles of reins, the oxhide thongs that are used for attaching the cattle to the yoke, a few of the much-prized "rumpy" skins, which are generally goat or some wild deer skin, prepared and softened by much manipulation for cutting into narrow thongs to be used as whip-lashes or "voerslaags;" dried fruits of different kinds—figs, peaches, apricots, quinces, and raisins. The bags that these fruits were in amused our friends very much. They were skins of animals—goat, sheep, or kid drawn off whole from the neck, then prepared and tanned with an extract of mimosa bark. The appearance of a number of these round brown bodies, with all the little legs sticking out, was very comical; but there were some that Marston said really did look like so many decapitated sheep. The skin, after being drawn off in the same manner as the others, had immediately been turned right side out again, and filled to the very neck with hot melted tallow, which, of course, hardened in the exact shape of the animal; the wool being left on added to the delusion.

In the interior of one very comfortable waggon sat the wife of the farmer, with her three little children, a fine comely Dutch Vrouw, with a pair of large brown eyes looking out from under a huge sun-bonnet or kapje, while she composedly watched the people about the market. Little Karl, her eldest,

a boy of four, was standing on the box in front, dressed in a thick moleskin suit, cut after the exact pattern of his father's.

On one side of the market stood the Town Hall, a really commodious and respectable building. Our young friends entered it in order to see a large quantity of diamonds, which had just been brought down from the Griqualand diamond fields, and consigned to one of the merchants for shipment to England.

They were astonished to see so many of the precious stones together on one table, most of them arranged in packages according to the number of carats in weight, or the purity of water. There were also saucers full of stones of the size of large peas, and others yet smaller ; these, too, were very attractive, although not individually so beautiful as the larger ones.

"I had no idea," said Fred, "that they were even as brilliant as they are in the uncut state. Can you tell me how much a diamond is supposed to lose in the cutting and polishing?"

"It depends very much upon the shape of the stone and freedom from flaw," replied the young man in charge. "We generally reckon that it takes one-half ; but, of course, no cutting or polishing is done here. The greater part of our stones, I believe, still go to Amsterdam to be cut, though there are now places in England, and also in America, where it can be done. If you have not before had rough diamonds in your hands, you will, perhaps, like to experience that sensation." So saying he handed each of them a good sized one.

"I can quite perceive that feeling of soapiness so

often mentioned in describing them ;” said Marston, “What do you suppose to be the value of this stone that I hold in my hand ?”

“Oh! not more than a thousand pounds, but about that.”

“Only fancy my allowing such a sum as that to slip through my fingers so easily!” said Marston, laughing, as he handed it back to him.

It was now time to get back to breakfast. They found that George Carlton had had his, although he had been out on horseback to meet the waggons, and was only waiting to speak to his father before going to superintend the unloading of the wool, &c., and to see that none of the numerous packages which had to be put up for the return were forgotten.

“I think you said you had obtained nearly everything mentioned in the lists, George?” said Mr. Carlton.

“My mother’s lists are all right, I think. Here is the house one, and I left a copy of the other at the Drapery Stores, only she said I was to get you to go and look at the dresses for herself and the girls, because she liked your choice of patterns.”

“But I have brought her some pretty things I took a fancy to from Cape Town. However, I will go ; though I dare say it is all right, for they know her taste pretty well by this time. Anything else ?”

“Yes! I have not half of old Derry’s seed list ; but I have only been to one man ; and Mr. Vane’s list of school books for the boys is not yet complete, but Juta has a copy of that, as well as a list of music for the mother.”

"That's sure to be all right," said his father ; "give me the different lists, and I will get them all ready while you are engaged with the waggons."

"May I ask," said Vyvyan, who was astonished when he saw Mr. Carlton looking over the long lists of things to be purchased, which had been handed to him by George, "what is your object in laying in such a stock of things?"

"Well! you see," said Mr. Carlton, "my place is fifty miles from the nearest town ; we do not often go there, for there is not much inducement, and when we go, we should not care to have any shopping to do. So when the waggons come down with the farm produce we take advantage of their returning empty, to buy the various articles required for the whole year, or at all events until the next visit."

By this time they had all finished breakfast. George went off to the waggons, and it was arranged that Charley should go with Mr. Carlton for the purpose of buying some bedding and other articles necessary for their comfort in travelling. The landlady, who had herself been an old traveller, promised to have a good basket full of provisions ready by the time the waggon called for the portmanteaus, while Fred and Marston determined to utilize the morning by exploring a little.

"Now which way do you want to go, Fred?" said Marston, "because I should so much like to get some shells."

"I should like that very much if you will first go to that pretty looking valley, we noticed yesterday from the vessel. I think we might take a cab there and then walk along the beach."

“Oh, yes! that will be very jolly! I will go and ask that beautiful black angel upstairs for a couple of little bags for the shells.”

“And I will ask Mrs. George for some biscuits, for I don't suppose we shall be back in time for lunch.”

The landlady insisted upon putting them up some sandwiches, &c., and sending for a Malay, who had a cab of his own, gave him directions, advising them to retain the cab after their drive in the valley, as the best place for collecting shells was in a cove on the other side of the Lighthouse, at Point Recife, and if they drove there, they might then walk back along the sands. They were soon on the way, passed the Market Place, some very good merchants' stores and offices, and crossing the bridge that spanned the Baakens river not far from the mouth, found themselves almost at once close to the Malay burial ground. They were astonished to see the graves here so short. The whole place was filled with flowers, and on each grave was erected a small raised dais on which were placed lamps, and in some cases offerings of food.

“How is it,” said Fred to a gentleman who, like themselves, was wandering about admiring the numerous miniature gardens, and little temple-like erections in them, “that all these graves give you the idea of having been those of children?”

“I am not sure about it,” said the gentleman, “but have heard that Malays bury their dead in a sitting posture, and therefore they do not require so long a space for their *last home*.”

The scenery here and as they drove up the valley

was very striking. The river below looked pretty, but often, like the renowned "*Kelvin of the Grove*," was too impure to be pleasant. On the opposite side, on the overhanging brow of the hill, stood the old Block House, built at the time when Algoa Bay was first used as a landing place for military stores.

Both sides of the hills were clothed with rich evergreen shrubs, on the left especially were a great number of aloes, with here and there a cactus.

Many of the shrubs were flowering ones, the plumbago grew in great profusion, the white stars of the jasmine mingling with its delicate greyish blue clusters, while here and there, as if planted for effect, the rich scarlet of the geranium, or the orange of the gladiolus, formed a picture which would have gladdened a flower painter's heart.

They passed the wool-washing establishment, which of course they found was the cause of the impurity of the water, and then as they came to a fordable place up the stream, a "drift," as it is termed, Marston, who had already been in and out of the carriage many times to pluck some lovely heath or curious plant, called to the coachman to stop.

"Did you ever see anything so beautiful?" exclaimed he. The sight was indeed lovely. In a little nook among the rocks, part of the river formed a pool which was covered by lotus lilies, beautiful blue goblets with their canary coloured centres, each one looking, as it rested on the very edge of one of the large round glossy leaves that floated so lazily on the water, as though it were being held in the palm of some water sprite from below to tempt

mortal man to drink delusive draughts of the waters of oblivion.

"It seems almost a sin to disturb them," said Fred, "but I really should like to have one to examine. I have never seen any in the water-lily houses at home half the size of those."

"Well! I think," said Marston, "that they look as if they were actually inviting one to take them. So here goes!" Saying which he pulled away at a beautiful lotus which the man had brought within reach by means of his whip. "How uncommonly tough the stalks are, I should have thought it would come off directly." As he was speaking, away it came, with such a jerk as almost to cause both Marston and the Malay to slip into the water. "By jove! here's a stalk for you. No wonder it wanted a long pull, when the holdfast point was at least four feet off! too long altogether to be pretty. But that mass of maiden-hair fern! Oh dear, we shall never get to the shells at this rate!"

"I suppose," said Fred, "that they have not any hunting or shooting about here?"

"Oh, yes, sir," said the man, "they find steinbocks sometimes, and they shoot partridges, and out towards Kragga-Kama quails, and in the forest large wood-pigeons. But I can remember once the gentlemen having a tiger-hunt here."

"What! so near to the town. How was that? Do tell us all about it," said both the friends.

"I don't suppose they would have such a thing now, sir. It was twenty years ago or more a trader brought down a large and very savage tiger from up-country, and he tried to sell it on the

market, but people didn't fancy having such a pet as that, and nobody seemed to care to buy it on spec' to send to England, where, I hear, they keep all sorts of beasts to look at—having none of their own. The poor man had had a lot of trouble with the brute, and, of course, he was awfully disappointed at not selling it, and he didn't want to take it into Kaffirland again. So some of the hunting gentlemen, partly because they were sorry for the trader, and partly because they thought that a tiger hunt would be a thing to talk about, proposed to buy the tiger and take him out a good way, let him loose, and have a regular good run. Well, they bought him, sir; and a fine big animal he was—with eyes just for all the world like two coals of fire. I mind the time well, for my father had to help with the thing. There was a deal of excitement to be sure in the place; all the ladies went to see him, and lots of people that had only heard tell of such an animal. They kept him for a week, so that everyone got a chance of seeing him, and then when all their preparations were finished they took him a good way out from the town and let him loose. Well, sir, sure enough, he gave them a fine chase: but after a bit they found out that he was determined-like to come this way again, and at last he made for it hard and fast. Well, that put some of them into a funk, for you see it wouldn't never do to go chasing a wild beast like that down the streets of Port Elizabeth: so they rode and rode, and halloed to the dogs, and at last, just when they'd got to the head of this very valley, he gets into a corner with some big rocks behind him and some thick bushes in

front, and there he stood at bay. He was quite hidden by the bush and kept very quiet, as both he and the dogs had had a good run ; but they knew he was there."

"And how did they manage ? Did they let him get into the town ? He was precious near it here," said Marston.

"There's the very spot," said the man. "Just behind that clump was the tiger with all the dogs round him, and just over by that stone was a big Irishman, who was overcome by the heat, and, perhaps, by the drink, having taken a little more than was good for him, and was sleeping it off. The baying of the dogs woke him up, and he began swearing at them for a set of noisy brutes, and then, all of a sudden, up he jumped and staggered towards the bush to see what they had got there. The dogs were sensible enough to try and keep him off, and some of the gentlemen who were just coming down to the spot as fast as their horses could bring them over those big stones called out as loudly as ever they could to him to keep away ; but it was all of no use. He just put his two hands together into the bush and then spread them out as far as they would go, and there he was face to face with the angry creature."

"Small blame to his highness for being angry, I think," said Marston, "having his place of refuge so rudely invaded ; but go on, it is very interesting."

"Yes, sir. No doubt he thought his time was come for revenge, for he just up with his big paw and with a terrific growl put it on the face of the Irishman, and, as if it were a cat scratching, scooped

his eye clean out, and then seized him with his teeth, and would soon have made short work of him if it hadn't been for two of the gentlemen who had seen the whole affair, and had ridden down that steep place as no one had ever done before to try and save the man's life. They all carried guns, though they hadn't meant to use them if they could help it, but, of course, no time was to be lost now. So they both fired, and both shots struck—one entered the head, and the other just under the shoulder. Man and beast rolled over together, and for a moment they feared that the man was dead as well as the tiger, but he wasn't, and they soon had him up. He had been a bit startled like, but the tussle had made him as sober as a judge. They very soon bandaged up his wounds; his face was in a dreadful state, and one of his arms was awfully mauled, besides his shoulder being hurt."

"Where did they get the bandages?" asked Fred.

"Oh, sir," said the man, "some of the gentlemen just tore strips off the tails of their shirts. The poor fellow lost a good deal of blood, and of course they had a long way before they could get him to the hospital; but they managed to put him on one of the horses, and then with one on each side to hold him on they walked there in that way. But that hunt must have cost them a pretty penny altogether; for they had to keep the Irishman at the hospital for a long while, and there was a wife came forward for her support, and when he left the hospital they got up a subscription amongst themselves for him; but they never tried anything of that sort

again. For there was a lot of talk about it ; everybody saying that they hadn't no right to let a wild beast like that loose so close on to the town."

"Well," said Fred, "it was a fortunate thing for them that the man was not killed."

"That's what the newspaper people would call a 'thrilling incident !'" said Marston. "We must tell that to Charley, and it will do for my next letter to uncle Sinclair. It's quite sensational."

"A very good story, indeed," said Fred. "And what are we to do now, coachman?" as the man drew up his horses. "What beautiful flowers there are about here. I must pick some of them."





CHAPTER IV.

AN ADVENTURE WITH A DEVIL FISH.

“**T**HAT’S what I was going to say, sir, I’ve often brought people here that want to get wild flowers, and I thought you might like to walk across to the other road. It’s not far, sir, but I shall have to go a good bit round with the horses.”

“A capital idea; that will just suit us,” said Fred.

“Isn’t this wonderful? I say, Fred, look at that splendid patch of blue flowers, pure ultramarine! What are they?”

“Lobelias, but how fine! I never saw any of such a blue as that. Here’s a heath like a scarlet star.”

“Yes, but look at this little creeping plant. I have never seen anything like it; what a beauty! a perfect little coral-coloured wax-like star, with these long slender leaves, dark and glossy. I wonder what its name is?”

“I don’t know at all, but we will hunt it out in Dr. Harvey’s book when we get home.”

They had soon collected a number of specimens,

and were again on their way to Cape Recife. They passed the light-house and went on to the little bay or cove that they had been told about, and well they were rewarded ; perfect shells in immense variety lay thick upon the beach.

The two stood for a moment bewildered, with such an *embarras de richesse*, they hardly knew where to begin.

" I'll tell you what we will do," said Fred, " we will fill up that curious Kafir basket that Mrs. George had our lunch put into, and send it back by the man. We can put them in at random, sort them out afterwards, and throw away those we don't want to keep."

" A jolly idea," said Marston, " but I am afraid these small shells won't stay in a basket."

" Oh, no fear ! If you fetch it you will see. Why, it is one of those made by the natives to hold liquids."

" Are the young masters still going to walk back ?" said the man, who had taken his horses from the carriage and fastened them to a bush, where they were comfortably feeding upon a couple of bundles of oat hay that he had spread down on the ground before them. " It is a long way, sir, and you won't find any place so good as this."

" I don't suppose we shall," said Fred, " but still we want our ramble ; however, I think we will go with you as far as the light-house and then walk to Port Elizabeth, and that will give us plenty of time here."

" Look here, Fred," exclaimed Marston, " at this curious little round ball of a sea porcupine moving about on its quills. I suppose it *is* an echinus ? and there are hundreds of their shells here without the spikes

looking like so many beads ; they remind one of those Chinese balls that have dots and circles carved upon them. But what are these flat round white things ? everyone you see is marked like a shell in a circling groove from the centre, but there is no place for the fish. They are solid, with the exception of these excrescences on the back ; I wonder what they are?"

"I can tell the young master that," said the man, picking up a couple of large univalves* that were lying near. "A few years ago, some one in Port Elizabeth wanted as many of these shells as he could get, so the men and boys collected them by sacksfull ; there were plenty of them on the sand hills quite clean and dry, but sometimes we found one with the fish in it, and then there was one of those round things sticking to it which used to shut it tight into its shell like the lid of a box."

"Oh, I know," said Fred to Marston, "it is what is called the *operculum* ; you see it in the periwinkle or whelk, a horny covering as thin as paper. But what did they want all those shells for?" he asked of the man.

"I was told, sir, that they were all sent to where they make trays and things of paper, and these shells, being very bright, were cut up and put in among the flowers that were painted on them."

They spent two or three hours in this interesting spot, the man apparently enjoying the time as much as did Fred and Marston. His quick eyes discovered, at some distance, that something had been washed up on the beach. When they came near it they found it was a hammer-headed shark, a singular

* "Turbo setosus."

looking creature, with a head like a carpenter's hammer, having an eye at the extremity of each end.

"I do wish Charley had come with us," said Marston, "he would have liked this queer thing, I'm sure."

"It's not so very big, sir," said the man, "I'll put it into the carriage and take it back with me. I think very likely that young Mr. Carlton has never seen one either, for they are very scarce, and I dare say afterwards some of the other people might like the thing to look at. There's a doctor who collects all sorts of queer things, perhaps he would like to have it."

"I mean to go and look among those rocks for sea anemones," said Marston, "but I don't want to get my boots wet, so I shall go in bare-footed."

"Master must look where he steps, for there's all sorts of sharp things in those holes."

"Oh, but how lovely! Fred, you must come here; this is the most beautiful natural aquarium you ever saw. Actinea of every conceivable tint, and such sea weeds, and coralines of brilliant scarlet, gold, and white; I must see that one out there, but you needn't take off your boots for this one."

He was not, however, destined to reach the object he coveted without an adventure, for as he was treading gingerly along among the water-covered rocks, all at once he jumped back with a shout, almost knocking Fred down.

"Good gracious! If that is not enough to shock a fellow I don't know what is. I must have trodden on a torpedo—an electrifying machine and no mistake;

but, goodness, Fred, what are you going to do?" said he, as he saw Dalrymple about to put his hand into the hole where the electric fish lay *perdu*.

"I want to examine the fellow," said Fred, "although I have often read of them, I have never before seen one alive."

"But, my dear fellow, I tell you he stings, I feel it still, it's awfully sharp; can't you profit by my experience?"

"He won't sting me," said Fred, "he knows better. Look here!" holding up a fish as round and flat as a plate, with the exception of a short tail on one side.

"But I can't understand that," said Marston, "how could you take hold of it?"

"I told you that I had read of them, you know. Well, one peculiarity they have is that they use such an amount of force in giving out a shock that for, say, the space of ten minutes they are powerless to perform the same operation again, but if we put it in this hole of water and come back to it by-and-by, you will find that if you place your other foot upon it, upon the principle of 'If one smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also,' you will have another sharp experience."

"Thank you, I'll leave that to you; I couldn't think of monopolizing all the poor thing's attention; but look, what has that man got hold of now? Doesn't it remind you of the manner in which Birnam Wood came to Dunsinane? only this is not green. What a splendid colour!"

Here the man came up with some branches of a bright scarlet coraline, they were three and four feet

long, and branched widely in proportion, and were beautiful specimens.

“There are some more pieces down there, sir ; I think we might as well take them all home, Mr. Carlton will like to have some to take up country with him.”

“I will go and fetch them,” said Fred, “while you put the horses to again, for I suppose we ought to be moving.”

They were soon on their way ; and, with all their treasures about them, and the dead shark fastened to the back of the carriage, they passed the light-house, and the old whale fishery. Many years ago the fishermen were often able, after a long chase, to tow a whale there, cut up the blubber and melt it down for sale. The establishment was a very simple one, consisting principally of a few large boilers, built in over some fire-places in the open air, and a few shovels, ladles, &c. One or two of the old fire-places remained, but the fishery is now quite a thing of the past, as the whales have forsaken that coast. At “the Point,” the South-western extremity of Algoa Bay, there is a fine rock called the Roman, which was literally crowded with sea-water fowl. Some were most actively engaged in eating their fish dinner, while others were still hovering over the sea, each of them with the eye of an epicure, making his choice before diving for it.

“What fish have they there ?” inquired Fred ; “the sea looks quite rose colour.”

“They are called Romans, sir, those that are so pink ; but there are often other kinds among them. There are always fish in large shoals to be had just

about here, especially off the Romans. I suppose the rock is called after the fish."

Soon after this they passed a rivulet, which was called Shark's River, and then, taking their little bags, which they had retained for the purpose, started off for their walk back, by way of the beach.

They had not gone far when they saw something which they at first thought was a dead bird being washed up, but which proved to be a lovely paper nautilus.*

"That is the sailor-shell," said Fred ; "Pliny says it was to be seen in the Mediterranean Sea, floating with ease and grace. You must remember Pope's verse :"—

Learn of the little nautilus to sail,
Spread the thin oar and catch the driving gale.

"It has always been a favourite, and I am glad we have found one, such a perfect one, too ; for, being so fragile, it is seldom they come ashore whole."

"We shall have enough shells to stock a cabinet," said Marston ; "pretty well for one morning's excursion, but we must look up our conchology, for I am sure I don't know the names of half, or even a quarter, of those which we have found. Look there, I wonder what those fellows are doing among the rocks, they seem to be very busy about something ?"

They soon came up to a Malay and his son, who were detaching a number of the large rough haliotis from the rocks—the power of adhesion possessed by this fish is so very great that they were obliged to use tools to loosen them by force.

* Argonauta Pteropoda.

"What do you do with those fish?" our friends asked.

"People eat them, sir," said the man. "They are considered a delicacy by some, though they require a great deal of preparation, and would be just like leather if they were not beaten for a long time, and then boiled to a jelly."

While thus talking they were startled by a scream.

"That is a child," said Fred. "What can be the matter, and who can it be in this out of the way place?"

"The lady and the little girl that we saw on the rocks," the Malay said to the boy, as they all hurried along in the direction of the cries.

There was a small headland running out into the bay, and after a sharp run they rounded it and could then see the poor child evidently in an agony of fear, and the lady battling with something at her feet.

Marston, who outstripped the others in running, was first by her side, and found her literally chained to the rock like Andromeda, while a frightful monster glared at her from his cranny, the chains that bound her being the tentacles of the horrid thing itself. Sinclair at once began endeavouring to disengage the arms of the creature from her legs, calling out "It is an octopus, Victor Hugo's devil fish!" While he spoke, another tentacle was rapidly shot out and passed round his own leg holding him firmly as in a vice. With an amused expression the lad looked up, and lifting his hat to the captive fair one, said, "I thought too much of my own powers, therefore am I now your fellow prisoner."

"I am so thankful to have a companion," said she, "that I cannot even afford to commiserate with you. I have already, as you see, torn away a good deal of my dress in the endeavour to loosen myself, but the creature immediately tightened its grip in another place."

Here the Malay brought into use a short hatchet which he had brought with him for the purpose of loosening the shellfish from the rocks, and set to work chopping up the katfish as he called it.

"I am obliged to kill it while it is on the Missis," he said, "I cannot get it away unless I do, it is very strong. A fine large fellow, he will be enough for all the bait I want for my fishing."

"How very fortunate it was," said Fred, "that we happened to be within hearing of your little girl's cry for help; it would have been extremely unpleasant had you been here much longer alone."

They had been obliged to sever the arms of the octopus from the body, and so great was the muscular power of this singular animal, with its numerous suckers, that the lady was only freed from its unwelcome embrace with some difficulty.

"Yes," said she, "it was indeed fortunate, for this is in ordinary times a very lonely part of the beach; I shall always think with thankfulness of you and your party, as much on my little girl's account as my own, for she would soon have been quite ill with the fright, though she looks happy enough now with your young friend, my 'fellow prisoner.' I shall never forget the brave, impetuous manner in which he endeavoured to free me from the monster, and then his comical look when he found himself also tied fast!"

“He is a brave lad,” said Fred, “always ready. I see they are collecting together the beautiful little specimens of coralines which he threw down in his hurry to join you. We were deep in a perfect parterre of sea anemones when we first heard your call.”

“That reminds me,” said the lady, “that I was collecting some for my aquarium. Are they not lovely? I have a jar somewhere which had a few in it, but I fear it has been upset.”

“We will get you some more,” said Fred; “we are merely walking into the town this way for the sake of collecting a few of the shells, and we have already sent back more I dare say than we shall make use of.”

The Malay and his boy had gone on their way well pleased with their morning's work, while Fred and Marston lingered awhile to help in the actinea and sea-weed gathering, just now so rudely interrupted. However, all pleasant mornings have an end, and soon they found themselves at the foot of White's Road, one of the very steep approaches to the upper town on the hill, where they parted, not without mutual congratulations at having met, and hopes of some day renewing the acquaintance.





CHAPTER V.

DRINK AND DISHONESTY.



ON reaching the hotel they found Charley Vyvyan and George Carlton engaged in packing up the branches of scarlet coraline, together with some of the shells, ready to put into the waggon, which was waiting in the street, at the side of the house.

“You are just in time,” said Charley, “to see the waggon off. We have got the portmanteau in; and Mrs. George, who seems to know all about it, says she has put up all she thinks we shall need in the way of provisions for the journey.”

“What have you done with the shark, Charley?” said Marston; “isn’t he a queer fellow?”

“Yes, indeed! I never saw anything like it, and George Carlton has cut off the head and put it into an enormous glass jar full of white brandy. He seems delighted to have such a curiosity to carry home to the younger children, who have never seen the sea. He was wishing he had the torpedo the man has

been telling us of. What a jolly time you fellows seem to have had."

"You would say so if you knew all. We have met with wonderful adventures, and look," said he, taking one of the long feelers of the octopus from his bag, "I brought this home as a trophy of victory gained over a dreadful sea monster, with whom we had to do battle on behalf of a fair lady. I shall go and give it to George, to put with his shark; I know you are dying to hear all about our adventure, but it will keep. What a famous large waggon. Are we going to start now directly, because I should like some dinner first?"

"No; Mr. Carlton has to go round by a town with a Dutch name. He has offered to take two of us with him in his waggonette, and the other will go with George by rail, so that we shall remain here to-night, and to-morrow evening join the waggons."

"I say, Charley, how wonderfully kind Mr. Carlton is. If he had known us all our lives he could not be more so."

"True; and really at first I hardly knew whether we ought to accept such great kindness, but Mrs. George tells me that he is noted for his hospitality, and that all colonists are especially kind to strangers, and indeed I can well believe it, for in going about the town to-day I have met three or four of my fellow-passengers, and I have invitations from all to visit them at their places in different parts of the country. I have the names in my pocket-book."

"Well," said Marston, "you know Fred used to talk of our coming to a strange land and having no friends; he will never be able to say that now,

will he? What is that great shelf in the waggon for?"

"George calls that the *cartel*; it is a kind of swinging bed to be slept on by night, and sat on, if you like, by day. You see all the bedding is spread upon it."

"The waggon looks awfully comfortable. How long shall we be on the journey?"

"Oh, from five or six to ten days; they don't seem to be at all particular as to time in the colony—not of much value, I suppose."

"But is Mr. Carlton's place so very far up country? Had we not better stop at some of the intermediate towns?"

"There are none after the one we pass to-morrow, and it is not more than one hundred and fifty miles beyond that."

"But, Charley, you must be joking. We could not surely take so long a time over that distance; one could walk it," said Marston.

"I don't doubt it. I know George and I walked a great deal faster than the oxen coming down the street; and I dare say we *shall* walk a considerable distance. But he says there are long stretches of country, great plains, for instance, that we shall not care to walk across in the hot sun, and then we shall be glad enough to take our ease in the waggon. We have plenty of books to read if we want them."

"I see you have a couple of guns tied up in the tent. What a capital idea that of putting up our cabin bags there. Was that yours?"

"No; George's. He happened to see them in

my room and carried them off at once ; he says his mother always uses them. And the guns belong to the two drivers—mine is in the waggon, but not put together yet, and George will leave his in the cart till we overtake the waggon.”

Mr. Carlton at this moment came out to see that all was complete and to dismiss the waggon, but just then George came up looking very hot and worried.

“That stupid ass, Piet, is off, after all his promises,” he exclaimed, angrily.

“Drunk? How tiresome to be sure. I was afraid of it this morning. But where did he get the money? I bought all the things he wanted for his wife myself, because I didn’t like to trust him,” said Mr. Carlton.

“Did you? He did not tell me that ; and I gave him some, but not much. I wish we knew where to find him. Poor Sarty will be in a sad way if he does not come back with the waggon.”

“Oh, we won’t leave the little wretch. I dare say we shall soon find him. Come along. Where was he missed?”

“May I go with you?” said Vyvyan.

Marston looked at Charley, but the latter said, “I think you may as well go and stay with Fred, and tell him where we are off to.”

“I am rather glad you didn’t bring the boy,” said Mr. Carlton, as they all moved on, “for these canteens in the back slums are horrid dens.”

They came to the one nearest to the place where the waggon had been standing, but passed it without entering, Mr. Carlton saying, “he would not go in one so near for fear of being seen.” They went to

several without success. But how disgraceful were the scenes which met their eyes! Men—white, black, and brown—drinking, smoking, and swearing, sitting and lying about in dreadful confusion; while the Hottentot women, more horrible even than the men, were dancing, singing, and shouting. The faces of most of them were already bruised and bleeding from fighting with each other, or with their drunken husbands. It seemed impossible to reach a lower stage of degradation than that to which the people who frequented these canteens had descended, and yet each of these filthy dens belonged to one or, in some cases, two *civilized* white men; sober themselves, but revelling in the helpless inebriety of the wretched semi-savages at whose expense they were enriching themselves by the sale of the noxious “Cape Smoke” (uncoloured brandy from the farm stills).

They had just looked into one canteen, and were about to leave when Charley exclaimed, “Look at that curious skin-bag that those two women have. I am sure I saw that slung across the shoulders of one of your men this morning.”

“Yes, that’s Piet’s bag,” said George in a whisper, “I think we’ve trapped him; but where is he? bah! the smoke and stench in this disgusting place are enough to sicken one.”

Still he could nowhere see the Hottentot. However, he touched his father on the arm and pointed to the bag, and Mr. Carlton immediately called out in a voice of command, “Piet!”

“Ya, sieur,” came from a corner, the drunken servant unconsciously responding to the voice to

which he was in the habit of yielding obedience, although he was evidently hiding or being hidden.

"Come here," said Mr. Carlton, but no Piet answered now or moved. Meanwhile, George had walked up to the spot from whence the voice had come, and then, after some little delay while pushing several of the poor wretched creatures out of the way, he found Piet huddled up on the floor.

Lifting him up as a dog would a kitten, he said, still holding him firmly, "Why don't you come when you are called?"

"Oh! please my dear young master, I will go, indeed I will," said he, "only don't put me in prison."

"Put you in prison! I don't want to, but if you leave the waggon again after I get you there, I'll punish you somehow."

While George was securing Piet, Charley had rescued the monkey-skin bag which had led to the recapture, and they all hastened away in the direction of the waggon, George still holding Piet, well-knowing that if he loosened his hold the deserter would again give him the slip. Charley walked on the other side, for without his occasional help, George would have had some trouble in getting Piet along. He was very much intoxicated, and the rapid motion through the air did not tend to sober him.

"I am sorry," said Mr. Carlton to Charley, "that your early experience of our Hottentots should be such a disagreeable one, but the little fellow is really a valuable servant, and you see this sort of thing can only occur when we bring him into a town, for he can't get drink at the farm. We have had him a great

many years, and his wife is one of Mrs. Carlton's most efficient servants ; we should not like to part with them, and I believe they are both attached to us."

"They are not pleasant animals to have to do with," said Charley, "I am glad we have not Hottentot servants in Devonshire. Do you suppose he will stay with the waggon now you have got him here?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Carlton, "I think if we put him up into the back part of the waggon he will go to sleep and not wake until the morning, when they will be a long way on the road, and he will be all right then, for he would not like to be left behind ; besides which the other servants will look after him sharp enough."



BOOK III.

ON TREK.





A SALT PAN.



CHAPTER I.

SNAKES AND SALT PANS.

THE following morning, after an early breakfast, our party left Port Elizabeth for their journey inland. It had been arranged that George and Fred should proceed by rail to Uitenhage, to join the waggons, and that Charley and Marston should accompany Mr. Carlton in his covered *cart*—a vehicle commonly used by colonists in travelling about the country.

“What a long, straggling place this Port Elizabeth is!” said Charley to Mr. Carlton, when they had been driving some time, and were not yet clear of the houses.

“Yes, the place has had a wonderfully rapid growth. My father can remember the time when there were but the Dutch farm-house and two or three small thatched cottages for Government stores. This place has been used as the port for the Eastern Province ever since, though I have heard people say, it was a pity that a site on the coast,

more under the lee of St. Croix Island, was not chosen for the town. It was on that island that the Portuguese planted a cross when they first rounded the Cape of Good Hope, as they named it."

"There is a good deal of brick and mortar work going on at this end of the town," said Charley.

"Yes, more than ever now that there is a railway station here. The Port Elizabeth people are very proud of being the most go-a-head community in the colony, but, of course, everything is subservient to business. When that phase in their existence has passed, and they can afford to have railways to pretty suburban places of residence, as our busy cities at home have, and learn to appreciate a beautiful surrounding, there will be less of that business element, and more of the refinement which the cultivation of the innate love of fine scenery seldom fails to develop."

"But are there any suitable localities here? This country seems very bare in comparison with that about Cape Town, where the suburbs are really beautiful."

"Within twenty miles of Port Elizabeth, in a westerly direction, there are some lovely spots; and, on the northern coast of the bay there are places which might be made so. But we are now approaching a spot where I once found some very lovely water-lilies. If we get out, and walk across to that place, I dare say we shall find some."

When they reached the water, there they were in abundance. Delicately beautiful, white-tipped, and streaked with different tints of rose colour; but, as Marston said, the most exquisite bits of colouring

in the whole flower were the bractæ, which in other plants are usually dry, withered, and unsightly.

"These lilies (*crinum aquaticum*) are not very often met with in this part of the colony," said Mr. Carlton, "and that is why I brought you out of the way to see them, but now we must hasten on. For I know you will like to pay a visit to the 'salt pans' which lie between this and Uitenhage."

They soon came in sight of these salt lakes which looked like vast sheets of snow-covered ice. The crystalline particles, pure and white, glistening in the brilliant sunshine were being gathered or rather raked into heaps by a number of coloured people who were working and chatting here and there on the margin of the "pan," altogether presenting a singular and striking picture.

These "pans" or lakes of salt are a curious feature in the physical geography of South Africa. Several of them are found in different parts of the country, and they are mentioned by every traveller—various theories having been mooted as to their probable origin. One very intelligent man, Mr. George Thompson, when writing fifty years ago of one situated far in the interior, says:—

"This valley, from what I could guess and learn from my guides, can scarcely be less than forty miles in circumference. It was now covered with fine dry salt of a brilliant whiteness. When the occasional torrents of rain fall, it must be one vast sheet of water: and there can be no question, I apprehend, that this and similar collections of salt in South Africa are occasioned by the sudden and heavy rains washing off from the surface of the adjoining country the in-

numerable saline particles, with which the earth is everywhere impregnated, into these natural reservoirs."

This theory of Mr. Thompson's is not the one now accepted by geologists and others as regards the washing of the surface. In the large Karoo plains where there are saline particles everywhere oozing from the earth after a shower of rain, and where nearly every shrub or plant, such as the mysembrianthemum and the "ganna" bush contain salt in great quantities, we do *not* find that every collection of rain water even with the washings of a vast area of such saline impregnated soil, leaves a "salt pan" or "*collection of salt*" in evaporating; on the contrary, the rain water in these "vleys," thick as it is with the *washings* of the surrounding country, is particularly fresh and sweet, while the springs that feed the mimosa-bordered river-beds are almost always brackish. This proves that the salt source is deep seated, the salt pans being in fact extinct seas as instanced by the Dead Sea, where at the present time a salt lake is in process of formation.

On the plains or level ground in the immediate vicinity the country was very barren, the bushes brown and stunted; but on the northern side of the pans a low hillside was covered with beautiful shrubs interspersed here and there with a towering aloe euphorbia or cactus forming a pleasing back ground to the view.

"Those people seem very busy," said Charley, "do they gain much by gathering the salt in heaps in that way?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Carlton, "these salt pans supply

most of the up-country towns and farms with that very essential article. Most of these people belong to a missionary village in the neighbourhood, which village, I believe, receives a certain royalty from the salt *sold*, a mere trifle upon each bag or load—but yet leaving a sufficient margin to recompense those who work it—added to which many of the men have waggons of their own, and so make it profitable to convey it to the distant markets. We farmers after taking our produce to Port Elizabeth always make a point of calling here for one waggon load of salt on our return.”

“What can farmers require a whole waggon load of salt for?” asked Marston, “unless it is for manure.”

“Oh, no!” said Mr. Carlton, “our ground is too salt already sometimes, but still so rich that without any manuring at all it always yields two crops of anything in the year and sometimes three. No. We use some of it, of course, in the kitchen, also in our soap making, but the greater portion by far goes in preserving the hides and skins of all the animals slaughtered on the place for food. Goat skins form a considerable item in our farm produce, and yield a return that nearly covers the whole expense of breeding and rearing the goats. Our people live upon goat flesh, which is extremely good. So you see the meat not costing much we can afford to give them and their families as much as they can possibly wish for.”

“This salt has a very pungent flavour,” said Charley, who had picked up some of the large crystals and was tasting one.

“It has,” said Mr. Carlton, “and therefore is some-

times disliked for table use. We generally import table salt from England or elsewhere, though of course this could be purified of the nitre or whatever is the cause of the peculiar taste."

They now went on their way, stopping for a time as they crossed the Bushman's River to admire the quantities of enormous lotus lilies growing in it.

Uitenhage was not reached till quite the afternoon, and driving up to the long homely Dutch house kept by Linger Velders, where Mr. Carlton was in the habit of staying, they found George and Fred taking a siesta after their early dinner.

"I hope you don't want any dinner," said the latter, "because everybody in the house is asleep. It seems that it is the fashion here to darken the houses at this time of the day and go in for a nap."

"Oh, no," replied Charley; "we had a jolly good lunch on the road, and can afford to wait till dinner time."

"Which is past," laughed George. "However, I hear them getting the tea ready, and the supper at seven is just like dinner, so that will do instead."

"I suppose you have been here a long time, as you started at eight o'clock and came by rail?"

"Oh, yes. We have been out to the waggons and all about this very pretty village, but the railway journey took a good while. We were an hour and three quarters coming eighteen miles, so we had plenty of time to look about us. At Zwaartkops River we saw a number of beautiful flamingoes, looking so brilliantly scarlet in the sun. There is some beautiful scenery along the line, and the mountain range in the distance is quite grand. We passed

some lovely flowers, though, of course, I could not tell what they were as to species, &c. ; but near Uitenhage were whole fields of the 'Arum Ethiopica,' or, as George calls it, the pig-lily."

As soon as they had taken their afternoon tea, they all sallied forth to see what they could of Uitenhage.

This place offers a striking contrast to Port Elizabeth. Nearly every house in it is surrounded by a garden, well stocked with fruit and ornamental trees. Even the streets are lined with the sweetly-scented syringa, oaks, and other umbrageous trees, whilst in the gardens, the rich, glossy leaves of the loquat and the orange, the magnolia and the guava, mingling with the handsome broad leaf of the fig, and here and there a date-palm, give to the whole a sub-tropical appearance, which is charming after such a small wilderness of bricks and mortar as Port Elizabeth had appeared to them.

Mr. Carlton took them to one very beautiful garden, called Brehm's Garden, where they found camelias, myrtles, and many exotics growing in the open air to a great height and in profusion. This garden is quite an institution in Uitenhage, having been kept up by the Brehms, father and son, at a great expense, and with much trouble. Uitenhage is well supplied with water. It is running in channels on both sides of every street. You find plenty of water everywhere. No wonder the place is so beautifully green.

In the evening, after the early supper, George Carlton and Charley Vyvyan went out to sleep in the waggons ; for George thought it better, after

Piet's late escapade, not to allow them to stay too near the town, and Charley wished to remain with him.

"We shall get on as far as the first outspan, father, and wait there till you come in the morning, which will, I suppose, be in time for breakfast?"

"Yes, we shall join you about eight o'clock if we can start in good time. You will have your first experience in bed-making and that sort of thing," said he to Charley; "but George is an old traveller."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you," said George, "that old Kaatje Zwaart is with the waggons; she joined them from Bethelsdorp, and asked me this morning if she might go on to see her daughter. Of course I said yes. I knew we should be glad to have the good old soul."

"Well, that is capital news," said Mr. Carlton; "you will be so comfortable with Kaatje to look after you that you will not want your journey to be over."

"I told her that I should be out to-night," said George; "so she expects me."

The two young men were soon seated by the camp fire, with old Kaatje, who chatted away to her young master, while she served them both with coffee and biscuit preparatory to their turning in for the night.

It was a clear, starlight night; there was no moon, and the air was calm and still. The "outspan" was a singular-looking sight to Charles Vyvyan; the waggons were drawn up on a large grassy piece of ground by the road side; the oxen, which had been feeding the greater part of the day, were now tied to

the waggon wheels, and while here and there one was standing with his head down, and apparently, like his companions, fast asleep, the others were lying down in the most contented manner.

The Hottentots had bivouacked under the shelter of some "bush," and their fire being quite on the other side of the camping ground to that on which was the one made for George, their figures, as they sat round it talking of the events of their visit to the sea-port, looked weird and uncanny to a stranger's eye, but the merry laughter that rang out after the narration of each fresh incident showed that, though dark in colour, they were by no means gloomy by nature.

Presently the principal driver, the one who was supposed to have the direction of the party, came forward.

"Well, Hendrick," said George, "I suppose you are rather in a hurry to get on now?"

"Ya, sieur: I thought we could have 'inspanned' when the moon rose, and have had a good long trek in the night; but I see master has not got all his friends here yet."

"My father will bring them with him, Hendrick, and I told him you would be at the next outspan place before breakfast to-morrow morning; so I think your time for trekking will be the best; we will be ready. And now I suppose old Kaatje has put our beds all right?"

"Ya, sieur," said Hendrick. "Has the young gentleman ever slept out of doors before? because the old master told me once that people never did so in England."

"No, Hendrick," said Charley, to whom George had interpreted the man's question; "but I shall be very pleased to have the opportunity of doing so now."

But he soon found that the sleeping out of doors was not anything very formidable in the present instance, for Kaatje had made one large bed on the "cartel" inside and another on the ground underneath the waggon. This was made very cozy by the canvas and Kafir matting put up on the side from which the wind blew. George when travelling with the waggons always took the latter place, and Charley also chose the same, preferring to leave the inside one for Fred and Marston.

Both of the young men had had a full share of excitement, and were soon fast asleep, notwithstanding the novelty of the situation to Vyvyan. It had been a curious experience to find, on first lying down, that he was actually inhaling the sweet scented breath of an ox tethered on the other side of the matting, as he breathed out his long drawn sigh of restfulness, or chewed the cud in a moment of contented wakefulness.

"Sieur George! (Jorje)" in a soft low tone from Hendrick, roused them about half-past one.

"Are you ready, Hendrick, so soon?"

"Yes, master, I am waiting to put the oxen to this waggon; the others are inspanned. Kaatje has some coffee for master."

The mattress and karosses or large skin rugs were soon thrown up into the waggon, and they seated on the front box each drinking a hot cup of coffee, without which the Hottentots would have thought it a great hardship to move on. Even Vyvyan, to whom

coffee seemed an unnecessary thing in the middle of the night, found it not unwelcome, for the air felt very chilly after the heat of the past day. Indeed, they soon learned that one of the characteristics of the Cape climate is that, however intense the heat may be during the day, the night is sure to be cool, if not actually cold.

They journeyed on, watching the moon as it rose clear and bright above the trees. The oxen, after the first few minutes, settled down into the very slowest pace that it was possible to maintain, compatible with their making even the smallest advance. The Hottentot "leaders" headed each team, walking along mechanically at a snail's pace, while Hendrick and the other drivers sat on their respective waggon boxes, silent, with the exception of occasionally speaking by name to any ox that seemed more than ordinarily lazy.

"You had better do as I do, Vyvyan," said George, stretching himself on the cartel bed and drawing a large rug of lynx skins over him. "We shall enjoy to-morrow more, if we sleep to-night."

"I was just wondering," said Charley, "whether it would be possible to do so over this jolting road."

"Come and try," said George, "you know that the cartel is swung hammock fashion, and therefore does not jolt you as the waggon itself would."

Charley followed his advice, and they were soon so fast asleep, that the night journey was over and the oxen had been loosened from the yoke and were away feeding before they awoke.

Coffee again! George and Charles went off to find a place where they might have their dip: after which

they sauntered round to see the cattle, and then stayed near the "outspan" place to await the coming of Mr. Carlton.

"The master is coming," said Yongy, a Bushman Hottentot boy, who had been sleeping snugly rolled up in his sheepskin since the "outspan," "I can hear Wittlefoot and Blinker trotting on fast."

"There's some coffee for you in the kettle," said Hendrick. "Drink it quickly and go to the oxen that Willem may get a little sleep."

"Do you think he could hear your father's horses," asked Charley, "I see nothing of them yet, and we have a good bit of the road in view?"

"Oh yes! I have no doubt he heard them, though they must be the other side of that hill, but the sense of hearing in the native is very acute, besides which he was lying down, and the ground is a good conductor, and sure enough there they come."

"Kaatje, will the breakfast be ready soon?"

"Yes, Master George, just putting the chops on the gridiron, but I can't find no teapot nowhere, and I know the master won't drink coffee."

"Never mind, a kettle will do, Hendrick did not think we were going to travel with him, so I do not suppose there is one."

"Well, George," said Mr. Carlton, as he drove up, "you have got on well; how long have you been here?"

"Two hours more or less, father," said George, "for I was asleep when we arrived, and did not wake at once."

"And how do you like sleeping out at night?" said he to Charley.

“ Oh ! I dreamt that I was on board ship, and was sleeping on deck. I had a sort of idea that the vessel was knocking about on a coral reef, and that at one time the vessel bumped so frightfully on the rocks, that we thought she would go to pieces.”

“ Ah !” laughed Mr. Carlton, “ nightmare, induced by our corduroy roads and rocky drifts in crossing the river. Well, Kaatje, and so you found out the waggons were down ?”

“ Piet let me know, master, and I am glad I came, for Mr. George is sure to want me.”

“ I dare say all the young masters will want looking after, Kaatje, and you'll have enough to do. But how about Piet ? Is he all right ?”

“ Yes, master, but rather sulky still. He lost all his money, and he hasn't got a thing for his wife ! She's a good wife to him, and he knows he's behaved badly in not taking what he promised to her.”

“ Tell him to come to me, Kaatje.”

Presently Piet made his appearance.

When he came his master bade him fetch the cart cushions, and spread them on the ground, and while he was in the cart getting them, Mr. Carlton said :—

“ There's a parcel tied up in a red handkerchief just inside the box. Bring it with you.”

“ So I hear you have been robbed,” Piet's master went on, while he was placing the cushions close to where Kaatje was laying the breakfast. “ How much money had you ?”

“ Mr. George gave me fifteen shillings, master, and I know I didn't spend that ; but it's all gone. The thieves took it out of my bag.”

"Well, you have to thank Mr. Vyvyan for getting your bag again. Two women had it, and had turned everything out ; but he saw that it was your's, and made them put the things back and give it to him."

"The young master is very good," said Piet ; "I suppose those women took my little money bag ?"

"What did you want the money for?" said his master.

"For Sartje's things, master. It was her money, and now she'll be so vexed with me. I promised not to touch the drink, but I think Old Satan himself gets into me sometimes."

"That's it, Piet," said his master. "You would rather please Satan than Sartje at those times, I think."

"If you please, master, don't say that."

"Well, it's hard that Sartje should be punished. Open that bundle," said his master.

When Piet had done so, and found that all Sartje's things had been bought by his master, and, moreover, that his little money bag was also safe in the parcel, he knew not how to express his thanks.

"You see," said Mr. Carlton, "I promised to buy Sartje's things, so you ought not to have asked Master George for money."

Piet directly looked to see how much money was still remaining, and taking it over to George, said to him—

"Master must please take it back. I don't want to be bad again now that the master is so good to me ;" and then poor childlike Piet, ever too ready to

yield to temptation and get into trouble, but, the trouble once removed, as merry and as light-hearted as a cricket, took up the bundle and said, "Oh, my dear master! Thank you! thank you, 'toch'! What will Mrs. Sartje say? She said she was sure I shouldn't bring the things all right; and here they are—everything she wanted. Ya! ya! She will see that I do bring home things when I say I will; and I didn't get anything for myself except one shirt in the bundle."

Thus he went on talking to himself, till Mr. Carlton and the young men burst out into a chorus of laughter at the ludicrousness of the scene.

All at once—Charley and Fred thought the man had taken leave of his senses—the precious bundle was thrown down, and hastily picking up a great stone, he ran towards Mr. Carlton, calling out in Dutch:—

"Take care, master! take care! There's a big rascal of a yellow snake!"

George had already sprung to the side of the waggon and armed himself with the "achter os sjambok," or whip made of thick rhinoceros hide, the rest, like Piet, taking up the first missiles that came to hand. As they turned, upon the cry of alarm, the snake was seen rearing its head just behind Mr. Carlton, but on being threatened by Piet's big stone, followed by a shower of others, it turned tail and endeavoured to get away. However, this could not be allowed for a moment; so at once there was a chase, and as it was a cobra, Mr. Carlton's voice was heard calling out—

"Boys, be careful! Here, Charley, take my stick."

All at once a stone from Marston hit the creature, and it suddenly turned again and came towards him, with its large hood spread out, and hissing violently. As quick as lightning the boy sprang on one side, while George's sjambok came down with such force upon its tail as to cause it to fall suddenly; but it was only for a moment. The attack was renewed. Charley tried to rush in with the stick, but it was too short to do any damage until another stone, this time from Piet, broke its back. Then it lay writhing and hissing, but incapable of mischief, and was quickly dispatched by a shot from Mr. Carlton, to whom one of the men had handed his gun from the waggon.

"I wonder what that fellow was after when he came up behind my father in that way," said George.

"What is there in that parcel on the bush?" said Mr. Carlton.

"Oh, those are some sausages I got in Uitenhage for the young master's supper to-night," said Kaatje.

"Well, Mr. Copper-colour thought they would make him a good breakfast," said George. "You had better let us have them for lunch, Kaatje, or we shall have another visitor of the same sort after them."

"And now," said Mr. Carlton, "I must be moving on, or I shall not get home comfortably to-morrow night, as I have promised to pay a long visit at Heathdale on my road home. If either of you now begin to fight shy of this waggon-journey, and would rather go with me, there is room. What do you say, Vyvyan?"

"Thank you, Mr. Carlton. The waggon-journey is what I particularly wished for, and the disappointment would have been great if I could not have had it."

"And I know," said Fred, "that I shall enjoy it exceedingly."

"Especially if George is with us," added Marston. "I am positively sure that the waggon will be awfully jolly, but there should be no deserters. Let us 'stick to the ship.'"

"I am afraid, father," said George, "that you will have to be content with Abram's society, and leave us to our own devices."

"I think you are right," said Mr. Carlton, "and I hope you may all enjoy the journey. I am afraid that you are not likely to have much adventure by the way, as the day for that kind of thing has gone by. However, should you, on any account, wish to lengthen your travel, do not limit yourself to time, George, but send the two buck-waggon home, and follow at your leisure."

"Thank you, father," said George, "we might be glad to do so, although I do not think it likely we shall consider a five days' journey too short."

Charley and his friends thanked Mr. Carlton for his kindness, and, when they had seen him off, prepared for their own start.





CHAPTER II.

AN ELEPHANT HUNT AND WHAT HAPPENED AT IT.

NOW then," said Marston, as he seated himself in the waggon, "I shall be able to realize some of uncle Sinclair's stories about the Cape, which used to delight me so, when I was a little chap. I remember so well his making me a little model waggon, and then getting a dozen Noah's Ark cows—I suppose the toyshop woman let him have them—and then he showed me how they were fastened together, and gave each one a name."

"Very likely you will be able to recognize some of the names," said George, "when Hendrick begins to call out to the oxen, for several of them are in common use. For instance, in most spans of mixed colours you will find a Blauwberg, a Swaartberg, a Bandtoom, and so on."

"Those are all names, I am sure, that uncle gave my little cows," said Marston; "they sound so familiar to me."

"We have to-day to pass through what is termed

a long 'bush path,' which is a road cut through a dense jungle. There are still elephants in it, and plenty of wild pigs, besides other game; but it is not a nice place to get into, for the bush is so very thick, there's no getting through it."

"Elephants!" exclaimed Charley; "I hope we shall see some. I should like that of all things."

"Please, master, mustn't say that," said Hendrick. "If the elephants come down upon us we shall have the waggon turned over and trampled upon, and they would kill us all if they got the chance, for they are sometimes very vicious, and they don't like the white waggon tents. But we are sure to see traces of them. I almost always do when I come this way, and I have seen the animals themselves more than once, and one time I had to hide from them for some hours."

"How was that? Tell us, Hendrick," said Marston, who was always ready for a story.

"Well, sir, it was a long while ago, when I was living with a Dutch boer. The farm was a very good one, I believe, for horses, cattle, and goats, for there was a good mountain at the back, and we were never quite without water for the 'lands' in the driest of times. He took a great deal of trouble with them, and used to grow lots of corn and mealies (maize). We had plenty of fruit too, and a large vineyard; for it was a brandy farm. However, down below the lands there was a long thick 'bush,' just like this we are coming to, and you'll see, sir, that when any animals take possession of that bush, there isn't much chance of getting them out again. The place was full of wild pigs. Now and then they

would come and trouble us in the garden after the pumpkins and water melons ; but generally they had plenty of bulbs and the roots of the Kippersoll trees to eat. We knew there were a good many elephants in the 'bush,' because we used to hear them crashing about among the trees, and now and then we could see them, and, of course, the Boers used to shoot them for their ivory. Well, one year an old bull elephant led his party several times right into the garden, trampling down the vines and doing no end of damage. They spoilt whole fields of mealies, and the worst of it is that when once they get a taste for the sweet mealies' tronks (maize stalks), there's no keeping them away from them. So the old baas and his sons determined to go out and shoot the old fellow. And one morning, long before daylight, we were all ready, the baas and his two sons and Baas Willem, the master's brother, and his son and me and another Hottentot, in case we was wanted, as of course we should be, to look after the horses when they got to places where they couldn't take them into.

"Well, sir, the big mealie lands were more than a mile from the house; and when we got as far as that and found that the old fellow had been in there only the very night before, with a lot of cows, tearing up by the roots or trampling down whole acres of mealies, the old master was awfully savage. I think I see him now handling his long elephant roer (gun) as if the animals were already within shot. We followed along on their spoor and came up to them just as they were all getting up after their night's rest. They had chosen one of those open grass places, like a clearing

that you sometimes meet with in the bush. I was the one who saw them first, because I was reckoned the best hand at tracing the spoor ; then I crept back to the others and I found that the horses had given them notice that the elephants were not far off, for they were trembling with fright ; we could scarcely keep them from bolting off. Andries and I were to stay and mind them ; but just after we had heard the first shot fired and the noise made by the elephants, one of our men came up and took my place, and off I ran as fast as I could. I remembered there was a great rock on one side of the open space with another leaning against it, which would form a sort of shelter, so as I had no gun I made for that. What a sight it was, the old baas had fired at the bull and wounded him ; one of the cows was lying down apparently dead ; another was on her knees with one leg broken, while two others and a young one were rushing about furiously together with the old father screaming with rage and trampling over the brush-wood round the open space, and every other minute a shot from one of the Boers' guns seemed to strike on their hides with no other effect than that of making them more outrageous. I could not see either of the masters, for they were all concealed behind different trees, but I found out where they were by their shots, and then all at once I got a great fright for I found that only four were firing instead of five. I moved about as far as my hiding place would let me, but could neither see nor hear anything of the fifth, when all at once I thought I heard a groan close to me. Of course, I could not be sure because of the fearful noise that was going on. I listened. Yes!

I heard it again, and it seemed as if it came out of the rock itself. I could not make it out. I knew that I was in the only place of shelter that there was. I called but could hear no answer. I went as far as I could venture looking round the rock, and there I saw lying on the ground a gun which I knew belonged to one of the young masters. I watched my opportunity and soon managed to get hold of it. I looked up to see where it had fallen from; there was a tree which had been almost broken to pieces by the elephant—certainly there was no one in that. I was in between the rocks again just creeping in on my hands and knees when I heard another groan louder than ever. Now I made sure it was on the top of the rock, but how to get there I did not know, for it was three times as high as a hut; and, as far as I could remember, quite smooth all round. If I had attempted to climb the side, the elephant would have had his tusks through me and smashed me to a jelly in no time. I called up through the crevice the name of the young master whose gun I had found.

“ ‘Who is there?’ inquired a voice from above.

“I told him how I had found his gun. It was very troublesome to make each other hear, but I found out that he had broken his leg, and couldn't move, and I learnt afterwards that he got up into a tree and fired his first shot. It was not a wise thing to do, but he was a young sportsman. The big elephant saw him, and rushed at the tree with such great force that the young Dutchman was sent flying.

“That moment he gave himself up for lost, when, instead of finding himself on the ground and under

the huge feet of his enemy, he found himself lodged in a narrow groove between the upper parts of the two rocks, but the violence of the fall had broken his leg, besides which he was quite stunned. When he came to himself, and found it impossible to move, he said he felt awful. He knew that in another hour the sun would be pouring down its heat upon his head, for he had lost his hat in his flight. He thought of the times without number he had seen vultures hovering round a dying animal, scarcely waiting till the breath was out of its body before they commenced the process of devouring by picking out its eyes, and then he groaned; and the good God had surely sent me there to hear him. Well, I couldn't get up to him just then; it was rather a curious feeling. The elephants were still rampaging about in furious style; all the hurt that they had sustained had, as far as I could judge, been done by the first volley.

"The old bull was hurt, I thought, by the way in which he kept tossing up his trunk; very likely he would have led them all off at once into the jungle, but for the two he did not like to leave behind. And there they were, screaming, snorting, rushing, and trampling about close to us, falling against the great rock, shaking the whole place as if there was an earthquake, and yet we knew that while we kept where we were we were safe.

"I couldn't think how it was that neither of the old Boers, who had noted 'oliphant roers' with them, hadn't been able to kill the old fellow; but I soon found out the reason. He faced his enemies, the balls seeming to strike his head and back and make

no impression whatever, often falling off like hailstones. Now I had often heard the old master at home say (that was the grandfather) you should never shoot till you got round nearly behind an elephant, and then get a good aim at one particular spot under his shoulder. Well, I felt sure that I could cover that spot if I had a gun and bullets, &c. But then I thought if I did have the luck to kill it, perhaps my master might be angry. However, I must try for something ; so I went to the hole just under the young master, which I had made by scraping away a lot of sand that had lodged between the rocks, and called out, 'Master Hans, can you look over the rock and see the big bull elephant?' He soon answered, 'No, Hendrick, and I don't want to see the brute ; I wish they would shoot him. I shall die if they don't get me down soon.' Then I told him that they had been trying, but he wouldn't be shot, but that he had the best chance from where he was if I could but get his gun up to him. 'No use, Hendrick,' he said ; 'I could not raise myself so high, and I don't believe I could load the gun if I had it.' 'Then, master, dear,' I said, 'send me down some cartridges through the hole, and let me try ; we shall not get away from here till midnight.' Well, he managed to do this, and gave me a good many instructions about the gun ; but I knew more about guns than he thought I did. Well, I had got in a tremendous charge ; it had been sewn up in a little bit of old rag. I rammed it down all right, and then I looked down my chink in the rock.

"There he stood, the fine old fellow, with his trunk erect, and bellowing out a defiance to his unseen foe,

kneading the ground with his big foot. Just as I was all ready—I had taken such good aim that I knew I should shoot ‘raak.’—young Hans calls out—

“‘Hendrick! You mustn’t shoot. The oude baas will be angry if I let you waste all those cartridges.’

“‘Very well, Master Hans,’ I said. ‘But I believe the oude baas has shot all his away, and the elephant is preparing to charge right down among them. I shall lose my chance directly.’

“I still kept my aim, for I knew that he’d like his gun to have a shot anyhow. I was right, for he called out: ‘Schiet mar Hendrick! Shoot away!’ Bang! ‘Alamagtig Baasy! Dat’s raak!’

“‘He’s dead,’ was all the answer I gave. Not that he was dead directly, but I saw that the ball had hit the very spot, and the old fellow staggered, which I thought was a sure sign that he would be soon.

“And so he was. The three rushed off into the jungle, but there lay the other three. Altogether we had done good work. I went off to call up the other two men and the horses, for, of course, our first concern was to get poor young Hans down out of his lofty bed, where his broken limb was beginning to swell and give him much pain.”

“I can’t think how you got him down,” said Marston, who had followed with breathless interest Hendrick’s narrative, given in half Dutch, half English, with a running interpretation from George.

“Well, sir, we fastened all the saddle-girths together,” said Hendrick, “making two slings of them, and so let him down carefully. But after all, the

break wasn't much. It was only the small bone below the knee. I've seen men lots of times since then, fighting with one leg hanging quite loose, or using a knife with one hand when the other had been crunched to atoms by a wild beast. But he was young, and not used to pain, and was always his mother's pet; and when he got home how he did brag that it was *his* gun that shot the elephant—never telling any of the other Dutchmen that it was I who shot it. His father and the others with us knew, but they never let out that he was only telling part of the truth, for it wouldn't have done to let the neighbours know that the only black man in the party had the luck to kill the biggest elephant."

"Shabby lot!" said George. "It wouldn't have hurt them."

"Awfully mean, I call it," said Marston.

"Well, we carried off what we could," said Hendrick, "of the best bits of the meat, and the two tusks, that were very fine. The master was very kind; he let me and the other 'boys' have all the meat we liked, and as many soopies of brandy as we would drink that night for carrying the young master home.

"The next morning was a Sunday, and some of us came over to see the carcasses, but they were regularly covered with 'aas vogels' (vultures) of all sorts."

Just then Yongy, the leader, called out something to Hendrick, who said:—

"That is funny, Mr. George,—just as the story's finished that we should come upon the traces of where some elephants have been last night. I must just run back and caution the men against stopping



THE OLD ELEPHANT.



the waggons or making any noise with the whip. I shan't feel safe till we are out of the bush."

All the young men were by this time on foot, and sure enough, a party of the bush monsters had passed the night in the place. The ground, the plants and grass on which each had been lying, were still quite warm to the hand, and small saplings which had been trodden down by their soft but unwieldy feet, were only just recovering their elasticity, and again starting up into an erect position.

"This is most tantalizing to be so close to the animals and not to be able to see them," said Charley. "Can't we try and stalk them a bit?"

"It would be of no use," said George, "we are not equipped for an encounter, and by provoking one we should risk the lives of all, oxen included."

Fred and Marston had mounted on the waggon box, standing up and holding on by the waggon tent. They fancied they saw one great brownish back, but they could not be sure, and they were soon past the spot where it was likely that they might see them, and thus missed their only opportunity of being in the vicinity of elephants.





CHAPTER III.

A BIVOUAC AND A NIGHT ATTACK.



WE do not intend to accompany our friends through every step of their journey up country. That would be much too tedious ; although it is but just to say that what with the novelty of the travelling, the very slowness of the progress made by the oxen enabling them to walk as they liked, botanizing and gathering together all sorts of curiosities by the way, the scenery, so different from what they had been accustomed to, and the outspannings which were great fun, they never found the way tedious nor the time hang heavily on their hands. We may, however, give a few incidents as they occurred.

They had passed through the long stretch of "bush" without seeing anything more of the elephants or their traces, but just before they were clear of it they saw a wild pig run right across the road a little ahead of the waggon, then another ; they had two or three dogs with them, and immediately gave chase. Just then, as if running from something behind her, a sow with

a litter of six or seven young ones followed in the wake of the others.

A fine commotion ensued, the dogs not being used to the dense under brushwood of the bush had hesitated to follow the two foremost pigs into the jungle. While they were still disappointed and yet eager for the fray, up came the mother and her young ones ; these, before they could reach the shelter, were seized upon by the dogs. The sow ran at them and tore one, making a frightful gash in its side, and would have killed another had it not been for George, who by sheer strength pulled her off, at which she was so astonished that as fast as she could she made off into the bush leaving behind her the two that had been bitten, and which were subsequently caught by Marston and Hendrick.

"These pigs didn't all run this way for nothing, master ; I wonder what was hunting them," said Hendrick.

"Whatever it was, it is very evident that our large party, and especially the dogs, have frightened them into keeping at a respectful distance," said George. "Put the dogs up into the waggon, we must get Kaatje's needle and cotton and sew up their wounds as soon as we outspan and can get a little warm water."

In about half an hour's time they had come to the end of their morning's journey, and it was interesting to see George sitting on the ground with the three dogs lying about him, Kaatje with a pan of warm water helping to wash the wounds of the poor patient animals who, when George hurt them by pressing together and tying up the open places,

turned round and licked his hand in the most grateful manner with a look as much as to say—

“We know you are doing it all for our good!”

He had been talking to them all the time, and when he had dressed the two which had been so sorely injured, he turned to the third, saying—

“Well, old fellow! I don’t think there’s much the matter with you.”

Whereupon the dog immediately placed his paw upon George’s knee for inspection.

“There,” said he, wiping it; “I don’t see anything. I believe you’re only jealous.”

Poor Ponto, with the most ridiculously injured and reproachful look in his face, went limping off about half a dozen steps, then stood looking at George, all but saying—

“You wrong me—I am not shamming.”

The boys burst out laughing, and Charley said—

“Poor fellow! I am sure he’s telling the truth.”

“Come, then,” said George, “let me look again.”

Ponto came back faster than he went, and on making a closer inspection, George at length found quite embedded in the soft part of his paw, a large thorn, which he soon extracted with the help of one or two of the instruments from Marston’s wonderful knife.

After this incident they travelled for a long time within sight of the beautiful outlined Cockscomb Mountains, and at night bivouacked in a very wild, out interesting spot, at the foot of one of these



THE OUTSPAN.

mountains. The vegetation was very luxuriant, and they noticed particularly great numbers of the pure white cluster lily growing in every direction in the little open space they had chosen for their outspan. The two open waggons, and all the coloured people were with their large fire on the other side of the road, whilst our party, with the covered waggon drawn up on the grass, a few thick shrubs behind them and the usual fire in front, had enjoyed the supper Kaatje had prepared for them, consisting of portions of the young wild pigs caught in the morning. There was a general savoury smell pervading the atmosphere, for the Hottentots love to linger over their evening meal, especially when they have anything good. They place a piece of meat upon the hot embers, each one cooking for himself, unless they have their women with them, and when one little bit looks done they cut it off, putting the rest back to broil longer, and so on, as long as there is a piece of meat to broil, and any coffee to drink.

Our young English friends were charmed with the spot. In front of them rose the mountain, densely wooded with evergreen trees and shrubs, interspersed with gigantic calceolaria, euphorbia plants, tree aloes, and zamias down to the grassy lily-bespeckled spot upon which they had pitched their tent for the night. The short twilight with the delicious soft air brought out myriads of fireflies, and as the veil of darkness stole quickly up the mountain-side, hiding the varied beauties of the wood, the mountain stream, which had passed unnoticed by the eye, which had had so much to occupy it, now struck on the ear with a wonder-

fully weird sound as it came tumbling, leaping and splashing by turns, till at last it ran murmuring softly through the fern brakes past them across the plain to join the river they had crossed a short time before.

“ I like this sort of place for resting at,” said Fred. “ Shall we have many such ?”

“ I hope not,” said George ; “ I don’t quite like it myself ; we are rather too close to the wood. I hoped we should have been able to get to the other side, which is more open ; but the pigs and the dogs hindered us a little.”

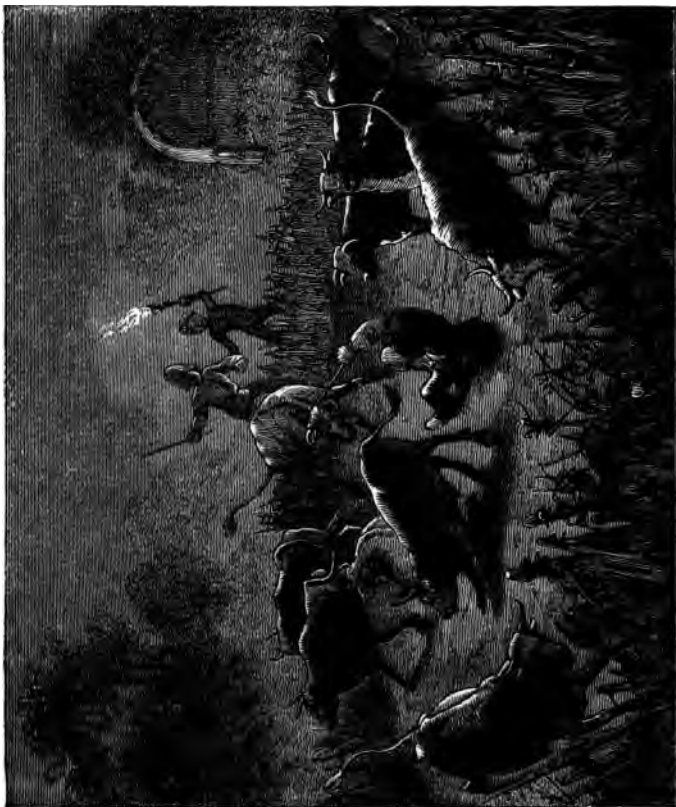
“ Look at those fireflies,” said Marston ; “ can you not imagine any number of fairies dancing in and about those white lily bells. Titania and Puck are holding a grand court to-night. Fred, don’t you remember that thing about Fairy Elves ? Do sing it ; I will join in, and it will just suit those fairy lights.”

Fred sang as requested :—

“ Come follow me, follow me, ye fairy elves that be—”

Charley Vyvyan, George, and Marston all joining their clear voices, harmonizing in different parts to the accompaniment of the rushing water, sounded very sweetly in the stillness of the summer night.

All at once Fred, who had been looking at the fireflies flitting here and there, saw two very large ones as he thought. He watched them intently for some time as they moved slowly and always in concert. Now they seemed to grow larger, and, as it were to advance upon them. All at once it struck him that they were no fireflies, but the eyes of some wild beast.



A NIGHT ATTACK.

They were all sitting or lying on the grass, and the fire had died out, merely leaving some smouldering logs of wood. Fred was leaning against Charley's shoulder, while George was resting on his elbow, just between him and the remains of the fire. Fred did not alter his position, but, placing his hand upon George's arm, said quietly—

“Look! straight before us. Are those fireflies?”

“No,” said George as quietly, and reaching out his hand he hurled with immense force one of the half-dead fire-brands in the direction of the eyes. A rushing sound was heard; the slumbering fire of the log, as it went whirring through the air, blazed out and quickly sent the astonished and affrighted animal flying into the wood. At the same moment the cattle, which had been quietly grazing round the out-span, became sensible of the presence of some wild beast. They quickly rushed up to the waggons in a regular stampede, with that sense of protection which the presence of man always gives to domesticated animals, while all the men of the party, whether white or black, were in a second prepared to act on the offensive or defensive, as circumstances might require.

Dogs howling, cattle bellowing, Hottentots and Bushmen yelling, guns clicking, and Kaatje, who had with most wonderful activity jumped into the waggon, shrieking at the top of her voice, made altogether not the most harmonious finale to the concert which had been going on, just before the unwelcome intruder had chosen to overlook the scene.

“Hallo! Kaatje! Have you got the tiger up there all to yourself?” said George.

"Oh, my young master, thank the Lord! thank the Lord! I thought he would kill us all."

"You would have been quite enough for him, Kaatje! He wouldn't care for us when you were by," said George.

"Oh, Mr. George, please don't joke so; I am trembling all over. Are you sure he's gone?" asked the old woman, peering into the darkness in every direction.

"It's all right, my old ayah," said George, in quite another tone, and helping his good old nurse to the ground. "The fellow only wanted some of the young pig; he didn't want any of us. The boys must keep up good fires through the night, for if he's very hungry, and I think he must be or he wouldn't have ventured so near, he might come on another foraging expedition when he has got over his fright."

"Oh, master! if he comes again I shall 'go dead,' I am so frightened," said Kaatje.

"Oh no, you won't," said her young master. "I'll take care of that. You'll get up into the back of the waggon, and I'll tie the sail down tight. I suppose you have made the beds already."

Fred and Marston were drafted off to the cartel, and after they were gone George confided to Charley that he meant to take his watch with the men in keeping up the fire and being ready for action in case of need."

"Then I shall do so too," said Charley. "Shall we take it in turns?"

"I really think you had better go to bed," said George. "You are not used to that sort of thing, you know; there's no danger, except that the cattle

become rather unmanageable: but I always like my men to see that I can take my share of extra work."

"Well, I have the same sort of feeling, and so I shall have my first experience of a night-watch to-night," said Vyvyan.

"Then we will stay up together. When the men have built up a couple of good fires, we can keep them going while they all get their first sleep."

However, they soon found that Hendrick had also made up his mind to bear his young master company. Kaatje had left them a large kettle of coffee on the embers, a cup of which every now and then effectually kept them both warm and wakeful.

They whiled away the time telling stories about tigers (or rather leopards and panthers, which are called tigers in South Africa), wolves and other wild animals.

"That log blazed out well when the master threw it," said Hendrick. "It looked like the big star with a tail to it that we had last year."

"Yes, it was Jack Smith put me up to that dodge," said George. "He was a young fellow my father employed to look after the flocks at a distant station," he explained to Charley. "Jack was a careful sort of chap, and used to move about now and then with a flock if necessary. One night he was sleeping out with a lot of ewes and lambs. He had bushed up all snug in a kraal of mimosa thorn branches. He had made a good fire, had his supper, and gone to sleep, wrapping himself up in his blanket, and lying down close to the fire. He might have been

asleep about a couple of hours when he became conscious of a heavy breathing and a sensation of warmth on his face, and then he felt something begin to lick his temple. He did not move further than to open an eye, when he found it was a large wolf, who, disappointed at not being able to get into the kraal for a lamb, had determined to begin upon him. His fire had nearly died out, but close to his right hand lay the end of one of the burnt stumps. This he suddenly flung round upon the wolf. The motion through the air caused it to blaze up; and, as luck would have it, the brand rested on the thing's back. Of course, it soon fell off, but he went howling away, and Jack saw no more of him. It was a narrow escape, though. Wolves never attack people by choice if they can get anything else to eat."

"I can remember the time when the wolves used to go about in packs," said Hendrick. "Many and many's the time when we have had to keep fires burning round the backs of the kraals. That's why the old Dutch Boers used to have their kraals so near to the houses, because they could keep the wolves and the jackals away better."

"Those creatures are not so troublesome now, I suppose," said Charley; "what has caused the difference?"

"The English farmers use too much strychnine," said George; "indeed, it becomes quite one of our farming duties; if we did not keep the wolves or hyenas and jackals under by poison, the country would be overrun by them, and the flocks would suffer fearfully."

"But," said Charley, "how do you manage to

poison them without endangering the lives of stray passers by, or even the dogs?"

"It requires great care," said George. "My father and I prepare it all ourselves, never allowing any one else to meddle with the poison. In former days they used the nux vomica bean itself, grating it up like nutmeg, and it took a great deal to kill a wolf. They also used the seed vessels of a species of euphorbia, ground in the same manner. They put the poison into the carcase of any kid or lamb that might have died or been torn by wolf or wild dog. Sometimes the wolves were cunning enough to shake out the objectionable powder and take the meat, and, sometimes too, I have heard that the vultures, who are our best scavengers, would get the carcase and the poison instead of the wolves, but that was all before my time. Now we use strychnine. We take a number of small pieces of fat about the size of a large walnut from a freshly slaughtered animal. With a sharp penknife we make an incision inserting as much of the white powder as will cover the point of the knife; then we carefully with needle and cotton sew up the opening. Sometimes we slightly scorch the fat to increase the scent; afterwards in the evening when all the flocks are kraaled, I ride round in the paths they have taken, or to spots I think likely to be visited by them, and place the bits of fat temptingly on a stone, often rubbing it first with a piece of broiled fat which I carry for the purpose. Of course I am careful on these occasions to have no dogs with me. At sunrise the next morning before the dogs are out with the people, I ride round again to the same spots; if a piece has

been taken, I am sure of finding an animal dead within a dozen or twenty yards, those which have not been taken I bring away with me, and repeat the process in a night or two."

"Master was speaking of wild dogs, but I don't suppose he can remember much about them," said Hendrick.

"No, I cannot," answered George. "Were there many in the country when you first came to live at our place?"

"Quite enough of them, sir, to be very troublesome. They used to hunt in packs of about twenty or thirty, sometimes not so many, but I don't think any other beast could do so much cruel mischief in the same time. A tiger or a wolf will kill what he wants to eat, but those wretches would come suddenly in the middle of the day, and, running in among a flock of sheep, would go as fast as they could from one to another, biting the poor animals underneath, tearing the entrails down, and there leave them still living. It was a horrible sight. I have known upwards of fifty sheep worried in this way in less than ten minutes, when the dogs would run off, with their nasty, short, yelping bark, as suddenly as they came."*

In this way they talked and watched through the first part of the night, when Piet and another Hot-

* Burchell has ranked the African wild dog as a species of hyena under the name of *Hyæna Venatica*. Other naturalists class it as a new genus. It forms in fact, the connecting link between the wolf and hyena tribes; and in its habits and physical conformation partakes of the character of both.—*Travels in South Africa*. G. Thompson. Vol. I. p. 408.

tentot came quietly up and squatted down by the fire.

“You had better make yourselves a fresh kettle of coffee,” said George to Piet. “We shall be glad to turn in.” So saying, he and the other young fellows retired to rest.

Hendrick also went off to his kaross, after giving strict injunctions that the oxen should be loosened as soon as day dawned, in order that they might feed for an hour or two before breakfast time.





CHAPTER IV.

A FOREST AND ITS POPULATION.

HENDRICK had said that he should not proceed before eight o'clock ; so George and Charley were content to take their sleep out.

“ I suppose you will be able to get to Heathdale, Hendrick, some time to-night,” said George ; “ to-morrow is Sunday, and I should like to be there if possible.”

“ I mean to try for it, sir. I think if the oxen have a good rest at midday, we can travel till late, and outspan at the drift so as not to disturb the household. Master George hasn't got to ask permission *there*,” said the man, with a smile.

“ It is customary in the country,” said George, in explanation, “ when travellers wish to outspan upon a farm to ask the farmer's permission to do so. This is generally on account of water, and in some places farmers construct dams on the roadside to store the rain water and then make a certain small charge for each team of oxen as they stop. Heathdale is the

property of a Major Harding, an old friend of my father's ; of course, it is not a regular outspanning place, but at the same time, it is quite a second home to me." As George spoke to Charley of Heathdale a manly blush suffused his face. "I have," he continued, "as Hendrick truly says, no need to ask permission. Indeed, they would feel hurt did we not try to get there for our Sunday rest, it being another of our customs never to travel on that day nor allow our people to do so."

Fred and Marston had been up early, and had gone with one of the men to trace the footsteps or "follow the spoor" of the animal which had alarmed them all so much the night before. There was no doubt as to its having been a tiger. They had brought in from the wood some branches of a beautiful scarlet flowering shrub which George called the Cape Honeysuckle, also a small branch of a singularly thorny bush from which the Hottentot gathered a delicious berry, calling it Mum-mum, a name which they subsequently found was given by the coloured people to more than one edible berry. This one was a species of "ardwirea."

While they were both busy sketching and colouring their sketches of these specimens, they heard one shot after another, and running to see what it was found that Hendrick had killed four large wood pigeons, beautiful birds with silvery-speckled plumage, which were found to be very good eating.

That morning's journey was to be rather a circuitous one in order to get round to the other side of the mountain by the waggon road, but as they were such a large party George thought it would be most pleasant to take their guns and as far as possible track

the mountain streamlet through the densely-wooded kloof, and thus climb up the "nek" of the mountain over which the waggon must pass a couple of hours later.

"Master must take one of the men with him," said Hendrick.

"Can you spare one of them, because I think we can do without."

"Yes, Master, I can manage very well just here without Yonge."

George and Charley got their guns in order and carried them in case of finding game. Neither Fred nor Marston possessed a gun, and therefore each cut a good stick in the wood. Yonge carried a haversack and a small tin bucket.

"I suppose that is a game bag," said Fred; "but what does he mean to do with that tin can?"

"Most likely he thought we should require something to drink out of," said Marston; "but a small cup would have answered the purpose."

"My dear fellow," said George, "we never trouble ourselves to carry any drinking vessels. Look here, I make a very decent cup with the palm of my hand when I want a draught of this beautiful water. No, I fancy Yongy has an idea that possibly some little bird may tell us where some honey is to be found."

The first thing shot was a hoopoo. The kloof seemed full of them; they heard "Hoo-poo, Hoo-poo," on every side. It was a pretty, pert-looking bird, with an orange-tinted top-knot.

"Look to your feet, Marston," said George, as the former rushed through a quantity of dry leaves to

pick up the dead bird ; “ that is just the place for snakes.”

They heard a rustling in the leaves directly after he spoke, but could see no sign of any such reptile.

“ He must have been close to us,” said George ; “ it’s a good thing that they generally get out of the way of human beings as fast as they can.”

“ That cobra came to us the other morning,” said Marston.

“ Ah, but he came for the sausages, not for us, you know,” said Fred.

“ Yes, just as the tiger last night was attracted by the savoury smell of roast pig,” said George.

“ What a number of gaily-feathered birds there are in this kloof,” remarked Charley ; “ but I do not hear such sweet songsters as those we have in our woods at home. There ! Look at that flight of dark-coloured birds ; as they flew just now across that gleam of sunshine they showed every tint of green, blue, and purple.”

“ Oh, these are sprews—‘ fig-eaters’ some call them,” said George. “ They are very busy eating the berries of that large yellow wood tree ; they are common here, and very troublesome among the fruit trees. But look quickly ! there flies one of our most beautiful birds—the ‘ golden cuckoo.’ If I have an opportunity I will shoot one. They are very shy, but I think it would puzzle you to say what tint is not to be seen in its plumage, and over all is thrown that golden burnishing which makes it so much coveted and prized by ornithologists.”

"I have been admiring that large tree," said Fred. "Why do you call it yellow wood? Is it not a kind of pine?"

"I believe it is," said George. "We have large forests of it in different parts of the colony, and our principal timber for common purposes is obtained from it. The wood is very yellow, hence the name given to it by the Dutch when they first occupied the country. They generally named both plants and animals that happened to be new to them after some peculiarity noticed by them when they first discovered it. Another most valuable colonial timber is in like manner called 'stink-wood,' because of a peculiar odour which it gives forth when first cut."

"And you English keep up those names," said Charley, laughing.

"Oh, yes," answered he; "they do very well. In fact, neither should we nor the people know them by any other. I hear a good deal of chattering going on; there are monkeys."

"What a number of them. How jolly," said Marston; "just look how they run along from bough to bough."

"We have disturbed them," said George. "They are amused at such an invasion. I suppose they don't think we look like woodcutters. Poor little things. You need not be so frightened. I would not shoot one of you for anything. When people have wounded them, it is pitiable to see their looks of reproach. They will put their little hands to the wound, look at the blood and cry, and then hold it up to the one who hurt them, looking like miniature

human beings. I heard one gentleman say, that having shot and only wounded one, the poor thing cried and seemed to talk to him in such a way that he could not find it in his heart to kill it, although he knew it ought to be put out of its misery. So he went on, and left his servant to do the deed ; but he said nothing should induce him to wantonly shoot at another."

"I wonder where Yonge has gone," said Marston "he was here a little while ago."

"Perhaps he has heard a honey-bird," said George. "He fully expected to do so when we came away. But here he comes flying. What has he found?"

"Oh, my liebe Baasy! schiet one—schiet one!" said Yonge ; "he will spit his poison at us all."

George saw immediately that one of the few snakes that attack travellers was chasing the boy. He shot it at once before it had time to do any damage. It was of the kind called by the coloured people, "Sping Slang" (Spitting Snake), which, when it is angered, raises itself and runs at its enemy ; and the natives say that directly it gets the opportunity, it ejects a quantity of poison right into the eye of the being who has irritated it. The ejection of venom is, I think, a fact. There are other animals which have the same power as a means of attack.

"And now, Yonge, how came you to go and fetch that snake here?"

"Oh, master, it was all that wicked bird, with his 'Chirr, chirr, chirr!' I thought, of course, he was calling me to a bee's nest, and it was that nasty snake after all."

"I think very likely the honey is there," said

George. "If you go now, perhaps you will get it without meeting with snakes again."

"Will master go too, if we can only get the 'Hony Vyzer' to show us again?"

"Perhaps he heard you call him wicked," said George; "but, there, is not that the Chirr, chirr? Come, let us follow, and see where it will lead us. We have to go very quietly, and not too many together. So, if you three would like to witness the honey-taking, it will be better that you just keep in sight at a little distance, and then, when we are sure of the place, you can come as near as you like."

The honey-bird, or bee-cuckoo, here gave a sharp call, "chirr, chirr, chirr!"—"Come, come quickly!"

"He's angry with me for turning back," said Yonge.

They followed gently and without noise, excepting now and then an answering note from Yonge, just to let the bird know they were coming.

"Chirr, chirr, chirr!" and then he flew to a distant tree.

"It is a good way from here, that bee's nest," said George.

"How can you tell?" asked Fred, who had kept up for the first few steps with George.

"When we are getting near to it he will take shorter flights, and you will hear the cry more frequently. Do not come too close up till I call you. The bees may be savage, though Yonge won't trouble himself about that."

"Chirr, chirr!" said the bird, fortunately taking a route partly in the direction they all wished to go; its cries becoming more frequent as they proceeded,

the bird getting quite impatient; and once, when they were hindered by a dense brushwood of bramble and thorn, even coming back towards them, and actually seeming to scold them for being so long on the road.

The little bird went on thus, always keeping in advance, and with its "chirr, chirr" lured them to the foot of a short, craggy precipice, where it stopped and hovered over one particular spot, until it perceived they were aware of the bees' presence.

George and Yonge soon found where they were going in and out of a fissure in the rock.

The latter had brought with him a small piece of rag, which he set fire to and thrust into the lower part of the nest, to make a little smoke, and thus stupefy the bees. He was then able to rob them of as many cakes of honey as the party could consume or take with them, being careful to leave a good-sized piece of the comb, full of honey, and another with the larvæ, or young bees, in it for their clever little conductor, who, by his "chirr, chirr, chirr" had thus induced some one to take for him a food of which he was excessively fond, but to which he was unable to help himself.

"Well, that is a sagacious bird," said Charley, as they were all enjoying the pure white pieces of honey-comb full of the delicious wild honey; "but what would he do should he not happen to meet with any human being to help him?"

"He entices the woodpecker to do so in some cases; for instance, when the bee's nest is an old tree. If it is in the ground, as it often is, he will call a kind of badger which is very fond of honey.

He likes the morning and evening the best, and then there is not the need for smoking the bees. We never destroy them in this country. They soon recover from their slight stupefaction, and go about their work again all right."

"Do the monkeys eat honey?" inquired Marston.

"I have not a doubt they would eat it if they could get it," said George, "for they eat everything that is good. They like the larvæ of ants, so I suppose they would those of bees. They rob the birds' nests of eggs, and I have seen parties of them, on the side of the small hills or 'kopy's,' as they are called, diligently turning over good-sized stones for the sake of catching and eating the scorpions."

"Don't they get stung?" asked Marston.

"I suppose they take the tails off," said George: "at all events they seem very fond of them; but I think we must be getting on now towards the waggons, or we shall be keeping them waiting."

They walked on quickly, Yonge trudging behind, not only with his tin can full of honey in the comb, but also a large red handkerchief, he had worn tied round his waist for the last month, being filled with the same delicacy, which was oozing from it.

"He is determined to give them all a treat," said George. "The Hottentots are extravagantly fond of sweets. I have known a man buy a couple of pounds of brown sugar, and deliberately sit down just outside the shop door and eat up every morsel of it, and as to honey—they will go through more risk, and take more trouble to get that, than anything else, except brandy."

"Do they make mead?" said Fred.

“Oh, yes. Honey-beer they call it. Some of the larvæ are used in the fermentation, and also the root of a curious little plant which possesses the fermenting property in a wonderful degree.”

Bang! went Charley's gun at that moment. Three beautiful light red Rehbock's (a species of wild antelope) darted past, but one was left dead on the field.

“What a lovely creature!” said Marston. “But why did not you shoot, George?”

“Why should I?” said he. “I saw at once that one was hit, and we could not carry two; but I am glad we have that. If you will carry my gun, I will shoulder the buck. Kaatje will be glad to see some game for our supper.”

“No, no! let me carry it. I should like to do so very much,” said Marston. “The first wild buck that I have ever had the chance of carrying; it is not so large as a full sized doe at Winter Court, is it, Charley?”

“Oh, no,” replied Vyvyan, “and it's so very slender that it can't be half the weight. When you are tired of it I will take it, for I should like George to have his hand free to shoot me one of those golden cuckoos he spoke of, or any other bird.”

“All right,” said George, “I dare say I shall soon have the opportunity,” and he had scarcely spoken before they heard a quick, rushing sound among the boughs overhead.

“That is a lory, I know. Where did he settle?”

The bird was soon discovered and brought down, the fine shot used scarcely injuring the bright green and crimson plumage.

"The lory is, I think, the only parrot we have in these woods," said George; "though I dare say there are others to be found in different parts of the continent."

"It seems a pity," said Fred, "to shoot these beautiful creatures only to look at. I wish we could get them stuffed, or their skins preserved in some way so that we could take them home."

"Well," said George, "so you can, easily enough, for I have some arsenical soap in the waggon, and can show you how to skin them carefully and stuff them, too. I have stuffed several. I knew a boy who shot and stuffed such a variety that he was able to sell them to a collector, and obtained sufficient money to purchase a beautiful gun. The family lived in the neighbourhood of a forest like this, and he was a persevering fellow."

"It was a nice reward for his trouble," said Marston. "A really good gun must be worth having in a country like this."

"Another bird to stuff," said Fred, as George soon after this shot the longed-for "golden cuckoo."

It was, indeed, a marvel of beauty, and they all clustered round George to admire it.

"We were fortunate in meeting with it, for they are generally difficult to get. I hope we may find another, as it will be nice for you to have a pair, but I think, instead of stuffing them, you will do better to take merely skins well preserved. They will pack better for travelling, and a taxidermist in England will stuff and set them up properly."

"That's a first-rate idea," said Charley, "Here give me that buck, Marston. You're getting tired."

They had a stiff bit of climbing to do, and he knew they would need to use their hands.

“What a lovely little waterfall! How I should like to stand under it and have a shower-bath,” said Marston. “Shall we have time?”

“We are very late,” said George; “besides which, these mountain streams are too cold to be made use of in that way after getting as warm with walking as we are now.”

They soon scrambled up the side of the kranz, or precipice, which brought them on to a grassy slope, where they were quite clear of the forest at once. The stream, which had been but a moment before so noisily tumbling down in a cataract over the mountain side, could now only be traced in the rich, rank grass by a tuft of wild mint, or a yellow flowering plant which lined its banks.

Then they came to the table-land, and some thousands of pasture acres, with scarcely a tree in sight.

“What a sudden change!” said Fred. “It is quite another country. The clearness of the atmosphere is wonderful to me.”

“You see our waggons, do you not?” said George. “Hendrick evidently thought we should come up there, and is waiting for us. Will you fire a couple of shots, rather sharp, Vyvyan, to let him know where we are? They must come in this direction.”

This was done, and they saw the white-tented waggon, gleaming in the sunshine, move on at once, followed by the other two.

They walked across the country to the nearest point of the road, and were not at all sorry when the

waggons came up, to get in and rest themselves after their long morning's walk.

Kaatje brought them about a dozen oranges, most deliciously ripe.

"Why, where did you get these, Kaatje?" said George. "From some Boer's waggon? I see they are Boven Land oranges."

"Yes, master; and the man will be at the outspan soon after us. I told him master would take a hundred or two. He was selling them when we passed to some woodcutters and sawyers. There's quite a village of them down there, and they were glad enough to get the fruit."

"Oh, well. We shall be glad of some, too, I think."

"This is luxury, indeed," said Fred; "lying on this swinging bed and eating oranges, while the waggon is going on all the while."

Thus journeying, they soon arrived at a large vley of water, where it had been arranged they should take their mid-day-rest.





CHAPTER V.

SUNDAY AT HEATHDALE.

THE men while coming up the hill-sides skirting the forest had gathered plenty of wood, and before the oxen were all out of the yoke there was a fine fire blazing ; and some flat stones having been made perfectly hot—so hot, indeed, that some of them were cracking—slices of liver of the wild buck they had shot were baked upon them, and served up well peppered to the English visitors as a hunter's delicacy.

They enjoyed their lunch with its second course of biscuits and wild honey, Kaatje taking good care that their share should come out of the tin and not from Yonge's red handkerchief. Just as the coffee was being poured out the Boer with the orange waggons drove up, and George at once invited him to join them, a cup of coffee never being unacceptable to a traveller just off a journey, especially if he be a Dutchman.

“ Have you come far with your oranges ? ” inquired George.

"Yes, from the other side of Gamtoos," said the Dutchman, "but I had a fine crop this year and so I thought I had better take both the waggons and go on 'Toch,'* and I have sold them very well. What is your name? Where are you going to? and are any of those young fellows your brothers?"

These and several other questions George answered kindly in the same spirit in which they were asked, knowing well that no impertinence was intended; strangers sometimes feel annoyed at such seeming inquisitiveness, but to a colonist it is only traveller's etiquette. Well would it be for us all on our way through life could we do likewise and not take offence where no offence is meant.

"Well! now we will go in for some of your oranges," said George.

They bought a couple of hundred; Charley good-naturedly making a present of the same number to the coloured people.

After lunch they unspanned once more, and travelled until late that night, when they all turned in and slept soundly; and, on waking up next morning, were pleased to find Frank Harding already waiting for them.

"Well, Frank, old fellow, this is jolly," said George, throwing off a great skin kaross and seizing his friend by the hand; "how long have you been here?"

"Oh, not very long, but I knew you would try and get as near as you could, so I told them all last night that I thought I should breakfast with you this morning, and here I am. Your father left us before

* To go on "Toch"—to go a journey.

daylight yesterday, so I suppose he got home last night."

Charley, Fred and Marston were soon introduced to the new comer, who welcomed them to Heathdale, and said his mother would have much pleasure in seeing them at dinner. Then they all adjourned to a deep hole of water in the otherwise almost dry river bed, for the enjoyment of a swimming bath.

These deep places in the rivers here and there are called by the Dutch and other colonists, "Zee Koe gaten"—hippopotamus holes—because when the huge river horses were still inhabitants of the country they lived and bred in these holes, where they continually rolled and plashed about in order to prevent the sand from accumulating in them. In those days these monsters were often very dangerous, as they are still in some parts of the far interior.

"I told Mary that we should go through the garden," said Frank Harding, when they had finished their breakfast, "so I dare say she will come as far as the orange grove to meet us. You know we generally take a walk in the garden between breakfast and service-time on Sunday, if it is not too warm. Father reads prayers at half-past eleven."

By half-past nine they had all started off on their way to the house. Frank proposing that they should go round by a large new dam that his father had just had made—

"Charley," said George, "you won't mind my going straight across to the garden, will you? I have a message for Miss Harding from an old schoolfellow of hers I saw in Port Elizabeth, and I have seen this dam already."

"Oh, go by all means," said Charley, adding in an undertone, so as not to be overheard by their new host, "that young Harding seems a nice gentlemanly fellow ; we shall enjoy going round the place with him."

They soon reached a beautiful little bend of the river, and here Frank led them down into the dry part of the river bed, the stream itself being here confined within quite a narrow channel, and its banks lined with willows and mimosas, from the branches of which hung a great number of the nests of the golden oriole or loxia.

"How curious those nests look," said Fred ; "one might imagine them some Brobdignagian kind of fruit !"

"Or like so many chemists' retorts covered with grass," added Marston. "I wonder why they all seem to build over the water, with the mouths of the nests hanging down ? I should think the little ones often get drowned when they are beginning to fly."

"They do now and then," rejoined Frank, "but they have a wonderful power of clinging to the grass, and the old birds are very careful ; the nests are built as they are and where they are, so as to be out of the reach of monkeys and snakes, which are the greatest enemies of the wild birds. When the dam above here was being made, I used to come nearly every day, and I watched that pair of birds at the end there building their nest, and was much amused at the fastidiousness of the female. Both birds flew from one hanging branch to another trying the strength and elasticity of each in turn. The cock bird would go and settle on one and chirp and chatter



THE LOXIA'S NEST.

away, touching it caressingly with his beak ; but if it did not suit the hen she would have nothing to do with it. This went on for some time ; at last they singled out a branch they could both swing on beautifully, and the cock began to build most industriously, the hen bird seemingly taking no more trouble in the affair. He had got on a good way and made a good skeleton nest, when she came back and deliberately pulled it all to pieces, taking out separately every blade of grass which he had interwoven with so much care. This she did either because the chamber of the nest was not large enough or perhaps too large, or the passage was not at the right angle ; at all events, the nest evidently did not please her. Her mate chirped at her and scolded a little, no doubt, but soon began building again with exactly the same result. He had put it in quite another position as to aspect, and she allowed him to do a good deal, and then recommenced her work of demolition. This time he did a little more than scold. He tried to get her away from the nest at which he had really worked very hard all day, and it was rather too bad that all his labour should go for nought. However, I suppose he came to the conclusion that the nest would be of no use if she had made up her mind not to lay her eggs in it ; so all at once he began helping her to pull it to pieces. When they had pulled the nest to pieces it was too late to make much progress with another that day, and so they and I went to roost ; of course, I had been home two or three times in the course of the day or else I should have been famished. Next morning I came down directly after breakfast, and the new nest was already in an

advanced state of progress ; both birds working at it vigorously, and then I saw what had been the cause of the little hen's objection. The cock bird had hung his nest so near the end of the long thin switch-like bough as to render it unsafe in her opinion for herself and her young brood. She had at last made him understand that it must be nine or ten inches higher up on the branch."

After Frank's interesting little story they all went on to see the fine sheet of water held back by the large dam of earth and stone work thrown across the river.

"We require these dams partly for the use of the stock," said Frank, in answer to a question from Charley, "but one great reason for my father having it here is that this small plain, the soil of which is rich and good, can be entirely laid under water and cultivated, thus giving us 50 or 60 more acres of arable land."

Meanwhile George had traversed the short piece of stony ground which separated him from the garden, leapt over the low stone wall, and had soon found Mary Harding.

"Oh, George! how good of you to manage to come first," said she; "now I shall have all your news to myself. Did you see Fanny? And will they let her come and stay a nice long time with me?"

"Two questions at once, and both about Fanny. I must be satisfied with the praise given first," said George, taking Mary's hand and quietly placing it on his arm in an old-fashioned sort of way, where it was as quietly allowed to remain for some time. "Yes! I saw Miss Travers and gave her your letter,

and all the messages, and I have a letter for you which I would have sent on by my father, only I was charged to give it to you myself."

"Perhaps she thought you might pass the place without calling," said Mary.

"Would you have cared, Mary?"

"My father would, George," said the girl, blushing; "he has so many things to talk to you about. I knew if I did not see you now, I should not have an opportunity of telling you what I wanted about Frank. Your father asked him to go with you, and he wishes it so much; but papa has not given his consent. Mamma and I want him to go; it will do him good. So we wish you to ask papa as a personal favour. You know you can do anything with him. He is always saying he wishes Frank were more like you. Frank will never make a farmer; he sits poring over those mathematical problems till he can think of nothing else."

"I shall do my best," said George, "for he and Fred Dalrymple will just suit each other; it will be nice for both. Dalrymple is not very strong; in fact, it is on his account that they are travelling."

"They are capital young fellows all of them, and I hope they will stay a little while with us. I think I like Vyvyan the best; but I don't know, they are all different. My father has taken a wonderful liking to them all, and as to young Marston, I expect he will try to make a colonist of him, for he's a lad after his own heart, brimful of energy and not afraid of doing anything."

Here their conversation was interrupted by the

approach of Major Harding, as he was still called, though he had retired from the army and taken to sheep farming many years before.

"I am very glad to see you, my boy," said he to George; "always welcome to Heathdale. Where are all your young friends?"

"There they come, sir, with Frank. I knew this was Mary's time for being in the garden, so excused myself while they all went round to look at the new dam. I see the stone wall is nearly finished. Do you intend to do anything with the new ground this season?"

"Well, what do you think?" said the Major; "Is it not rather late?"

"I notice that the willows in the river are changing the shade of the leaf," said George, "and that is a very good time to sow for a late crop of 'mealies.' I think the ground might have been turned up before this. At the rate the men have been working at that wall since I went away, it is sure to be quite finished before the blade is up."

"I wish I had asked you, then," said the Major; "but I will have the oxen got up to-morrow, and set the ploughs going on Tuesday. And now here are your friends, and a nice-looking lot of young fellows they are."

After the customary introductions had been gone through, he said—

"Well, young men, and so you have come to see a little of our South African country and life. I hope you will like it. We are all very pleased to see you, and Mrs. Harding, whose heart is still very much in the old home of her young days, is quite

looking forward to a chat with you, who are just fresh from it."

"You are all so kind in this country, Major Harding," said Charley, "we can scarcely realize that we have left home even now."

They soon arrived at the house, where they received another welcome.

Mrs. Harding was a sweet, gentle little woman, dressed in some thin soft material of a delicate grey tint, with a great deal of white lace about her. She involuntarily gave one the idea of a valuable little piece of china, which required great care on account of its fragility.

"I suppose it's time for our service," said Major Harding. "You see," said he to Charley and Fred, "we are fifty miles from any church, but for all that we don't wish to be quite like heathens. So on Sunday I always read prayers and a short sermon, as I used to do to my men when we had no chaplain in fort. 'Mamma' plays the hymns, unless she can get some one else to do it, and sometimes a chant, if she can get any one to sing it. She is very fond of having the English Service as near as possible to what it ought to be."

"We are enough to form a good choir to-day," said George, "for we all sing."

"And if Mrs. Harding would prefer not to play the hymns and chants?" said Charley, "I am quite sure my friend Dalrymple will rather enjoy having to do it. He often plays on the old organ at home."

"It will indeed be a treat to me to sit quietly and listen," said the lady.

“ Well, then, Frank, let the people come in, and we will have prayers read at once.”

The overseer and his family, the gardener and his, a few other white servants, and two or three of the coloured ones, who understood English sufficiently well to appreciate the service, now came in, and formed altogether a very respectable congregation. The handsome old Major read well, and Fred soon proved that, notwithstanding the last few weeks' want of practice, his “hand had not forgot its cunning.” The voices harmonized beautifully in the fine old *Te Deum* and *Fubilate*, and Charley could not help noticing that their sweet little hostess seemed to be far away in spirit. And he was right, for she was fancying herself in dear old England once more.

When it was all over, Mrs. Harding said, “ I can hardly tell you how much sometimes I long for an English Sunday. For years after I came out here I used to think I should be happy if I could hear the church bells chime out on Sunday morning. It is eighteen years since I heard any, and yet I dream of them, and wake disappointed to find that the sound is not a reality.”

“ I can quite enter into your feeling,” said Charley, “ I remember I had been yachting with my uncle and cousin from Torbay, right round Land's End to Ilfracombe ; on the Saturday afternoon, a strong wind sprang up, so the captain ran into Mount's Bay for shelter ; and on Sunday, about nine o'clock, the bells of the Penzance church pealed out. I thought there never had been anything so sweet as that music over the water. Fred, play that imitation of the Madres-

field bells you got up when you went to Malvern."

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" said Mrs. Harding, when Fred had finished playing. "That is so like my remembrance of the 'bells.' You have given me a great pleasure, and now let us go to our early dinner. You will then have a long afternoon, to employ yourselves as you please."

After dinner, Major Harding invited Charley to a stroll. Frank and Fred preferred remaining with Mrs. Harding, but Marston joined Charley and the Major.

When they had gone a little way from the house, they heard the voices of the coloured people singing their hymns, taking up the different parts, which in the distance sounded very pretty.

"Have you another service?" said Charles to the Major.

"Oh yes! every now and then all the coloured people hold meetings in the shearing house. Your Hendrick happens to be a shining light among them, and can preach a good sermon, so they have one to-day. Let's go and look at them; we shan't want to stay long. If you were to sit there five minutes, you would quickly comprehend why all that Exeter Hall talk, about amalgamation and treating the natives as equals and brothers, does not go down with us, and yet my people are a nice clean, well dressed lot to what some are."

They went in and found between fifty and sixty comfortably dressed Hottentots, the men sitting on low forms, but most of the women squatting down in their usual mode of resting on the ground,

while Hendrick, got up, as Marston said afterwards, like the very embodiment of one of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's camp meeting negro parsons, long black coat and white choker included, was reading to them out of an enormous Dutch bible.

They stood just within the door for a short time. Hendrick commenced his exposition, and seemed to be both impressive and eloquent. At all events his pulpit oratory seemed to have a great effect upon some of the old women ; one especially who was near them, moaned and groaned either for her own sins or for those of others, every now and then bringing out an Ah ! Ya ! as if it came from the bottomless depths. But it was a decorous congregation nevertheless, and if some of the members did give vent to their feelings more than is customary amongst white people, it was because they had not yet been tutored to keep them under control.

As the major had predicted, they did not want to stay long, not only because they could not understand a word, but also because the peculiar scent was unbearable to English olfactory nerves.

As they were walking away, he asked Charley : " what did you say is your young friend's name ? "

" Sinclair Marston," answered he. " He is a nephew of a Colonel Sinclair whose regiment served out here in one of the Kafir wars."

" Why, can it really be my good old comrade Major Sinclair ? Well, now I come to look at the lad I really think there is a likeness."

Charley called to Marston and told him of the discovery.

"My uncle could not have known of your being here," he said to the Major.

"No, I don't think he did, for when he left we were going to Natal, but this place turned up, and I was induced to buy it."

"I remember hearing him say he had friends in Natal," said Marston.

"I am very pleased you should have happened to come here," said the Major; "and if you make any stay in the colony remember that you have a home at Heathdale whenever you like."

"Thank you very much, sir!" said Marston. "My uncle will thank you himself if he comes to join us for a few months, as he seemed inclined to do."

"Should he do so I hope he will make this his head-quarters. I should indeed be glad to see him. We had two or three hair-breadth escapes together in the Kafir war. Did he ever tell you of the assegai which went through his jacket, and then, in an extraordinary manner, passed between my arm and side, cutting the sleeves, and grazing the bridle-arm sufficiently to make me loosen the bridle for a moment? But, by Jove! your uncle was quick; he potted the black who threw it, without giving the rascal time to hide himself behind the rock again. However, before you could say 'Jack Robinson' a second black fellow jumped out of the bush on the other side and seized my horse's bridle, thinking, no doubt, to shake me off, for they had evidently intended to steal our two horses after having dispatched us. This was not so easy as they had anticipated, for, although we were rather taken by surprise, we were quite a match for them, and my

revolver soon gave the second fellow his quietus, just as another assegai from a third assailant came whirring in between us. Your uncle fired, and believes he winged this new adversary, but we didn't wait to verify his belief as we heard the whistles and yells of a number of them around us ; so we pushed through and got clear of the bush, and were soon safe in camp."

"My uncle has that jacket now," said Marston. "What fearful stories he used to tell us about those Kafirs."

"Yes ; they are treacherous devils in war, but a fine race all the same ; splendid in physique, and no fools."

"Here comes George," said the Major, "I suppose to tell us that tea is ready. Ah ! Jones—that's my gardener—has stopped him. My men all think so much of George."

"I don't wonder at anyone's thinking much of him," said Charles Vyvyan. "He's a splendid fellow all round."

"I wish Frank were like him in the farming way. George knows exactly when and how everything should be done, and sees that it is done. Frank is a good lad, and tries to do it ; but you can see that his heart is not in the work."

"The fact is," said Charley, "it is not his vocation any more than it would be Fred Dalrymple's."

"Well, I suppose I shall have to view the matter in that light. But you see, I have some cause for dissatisfaction in finding that after I have invested so much in purchasing this place my only son won't

take to it. I am speaking of Frank," said he to George, who approached them.

"As far as the investment goes, sir," said George, "whether Frank takes to farming or no, the value of this place has nearly doubled since you bought it. I suppose there are few investments so good as that ; it would let now for a good rental. But I came to ask you if you will spare Frank to go back with me for a week or so. I hope to persuade Mr. Vyvyan and his friends to let us show them a little of our country life ; and I think we shall be too much sometimes for Fred, but if Frank is with us the two can go mooning about, botanizing, and that sort of thing, to their heart's content."

"Frank will enjoy it much, and I shall be pleased for him to go," said the Major ; "and now, I suppose, it is past four, and Mrs. Harding will expect us in to tea."

The tea over, they walked or sat under the fine trees in the garden until supper time, and then all walked back to the waggon, having enjoyed their first Sunday in South Africa exceedingly.





CHAPTER VI.

CURICSITIES, OLD AND NEW.

NOW then," said Marston, "there are quite enough of us to carry a whole village by storm. I wonder what will turn up this morning?"

Then, seeing George naturally give some assistance in putting the oxen into the yoke, he said, "I say, old fellow, let me do that."

"All right," said George, adding, when Marston had satisfactorily accomplished his self-imposed task, "you would soon make a capital farmer; I think we had better make you change places with Frank."

"I only wish my father would let me go home for two or three years' study," said Frank.

"Never mind, old boy," said George, "perhaps we shall manage it some day."

They had all slept at the waggon, the Hottentots keeping up a continual succession of hymns till a late hour, after which Hendrick reverently closed the Sabbath day with prayer. Now it was early morning,

for they were all up long before daylight determined to do a good spell of the journey ere the sun was risen. They had to pass through a defile, or as it is called in the colony, a "poort." The mountain scenery here was very wild and grand, the strata in the rocky walls on either side of the pass so exactly corresponding with each other, as to give one the impression that the great cleft had been made by some sudden convulsion of nature ; whilst the echoes were so wonderful, when Hendrick and the other two waggon drivers cracked their long whips, the sound reverberating from rock to rock, that one could imagine the pass tenanted by nearly one hundred jolly waggons.

Marston proposed three cheers, and as soon as they were given, an unseen crowd seemed to take up the cheering, till it reminded one of the welcome given to the Queen by her loyal subjects when Her Majesty goes in state to open Parliament.

"Now, Marston," said Fred, "I will propose another effect. We will divide company and chant the *Te Deum* in alternate verses."

The effect was indeed magical. It was like the singing of the full choir of a cathedral, echoed and re-echoed from aisle to aisle, from gallery to gallery, and even from the nave to the outside cloisters. The coloured people entered thoroughly into the spirit of the thing ; the waggons were halted whilst the men and boys put in a tone here and there with wonderful precision.

"If we outspan at Van Royen's dam, Master George, all the young gentlemen would have time

to go up and see the pictures on the rocks that the old Bushmen left there," said Hendrick.

"That's an excellent idea, and I suppose it's as good a place as we can select."

"Well, sir, there's water enough now in the holes, but we must go quite to the end of the poort if we do not stop there."

Van Royen was a squatter, who had constructed a dam on the Government outspan ground, with permission to exact a toll for every team of oxen watered there. In dry times he made a good deal of money by it, but this was not his only means of support, as he owned several good flocks and herds.

"We will call at the house," said George, "and then you will see how strangely some of these people live, although they may really be possessed of much wealth in sheep and cattle."

"Where is the house?" asked Charley, when they were preparing to loosen the oxen from the yoke; "I don't see one."

"There it is," said George, pointing to a long, low, wattle and daub hut.

"The farmer's house, I mean," Charley added; "you don't mean to say that he lives in that place!"

"But he does though," replied George; "the land belongs to Government, and though he may have a long lease of it, he would think it a pity to build on land not his own. I have known some Dutchmen who have lived for years in waggons, and brought up families in them, too, residing all the while in the same place, cooking in a roughly built hut, sometimes

making another to sit in during the day ; but the principal apartments all those years were in the waggons ; no house, no garden, the family diet consisting of mutton and goat's flesh and the milk of the flock, sometimes having bread to eat, and sometimes none. So you see this place is quite grand to what some of them are."

Presently they encountered Van Royen on his way to ask them if they would "drink coffee at the house."

They accepted his invitation, as George told them it would be considered an insult to refuse the offered beverage.

They found the domicile already occupied by several people of both sexes, including children.

George and Frank shook hands with every one, babies and all. However, it was some time before our friends could distinguish anything, on account of the swarms of flies which infested the place.

When they were at length seated on a form at the farther end of the room, they found they were near the "Huis Vrouw," or hostess, who sat, with a table on her right hand, on which were placed the coffee kettle and a dozen small basins in lieu of coffee cups.

The buzz of the flies was incessant. There seemed to be scarcely a spot in the whole place which was not covered with them.

When they could manage to open their eyes well and look about, Charley asked George :—

"What is that great black thing in the corner?"

“Oh, the churn, you mean. Here comes a Kafir, bringing in the milk; so now you will be able to see what it really is.”

One of the women rose, and taking a piece of thin cloth, went towards the corner, and in a perfect cloud of flies, which two coloured girls vigorously endeavoured to keep off by fanning with bunches of ostrich feathers, opened the large upright churn, into which a stalwart naked Kafir poured the contents of the four large milk-pails which he and another man had just brought in from the cattle kraal. But still that curious black object that had attracted Charley's attention remained.

Just then the old coloured cook came in to ask the mistress for the meat to “stew” for dinner, and was told by the huis-vrouw to go and cut it off. She at once went to do as she had been told, and immediately the whole place was in darkness—a moving, animated darkness!

The “black object” now turned out to be the carcass of a sheep which had only been slaughtered that very morning, and having been hung up just inside the open door, had attracted a thick coating of myriads of flies!

Wishing the Boer-vrouw good morning, our friends made their escape as quickly as politeness permitted.

“What an illustration of one of the Plagues of Egypt,” said Fred. “Are there many of the Dutch people who live in this horribly dirty, stuffy fashion?”

“The better class of Dutch are noted for neatness

and cleanliness. Everything in the house is scoured and polished till it shines again, and they are always very nice in their cooking. But the people we have just seen are, as it were, nomads. They have been careless in having their house, such as it is, built so close to the kraals ; and that's the reason they are pestered with such quantities of flies."

"I wonder how any one can exist in such a place," remarked Fred.

"The veriest hind, working for one of our farmers at home, would not live like that," said Charley.

"Well, you see," said George, "climate has much to do with it. Those people do not stay much indoors, especially the men ; but it is a horrid lazy life, for the men sit or lounge about all day smoking and talking. They never read. Their only books are their old family Bibles and hymn books."

After breakfast at the waggon, they prepared for the walk to the cave.

"I found a beautiful little cyclamen growing here once," said Frank ; "I hope we may meet with one again, but they're very seldom seen. Ah ! there is a lovely cluster of them."

A long walk brought them at last to the cave, or series of small cavities in the mountain side, and here on the rocks had been painted by the Bushmen various figures of animals.

"Those fellows evinced a wonderful talent for drawing," exclaimed Marston. "Just look at that pig. I couldn't have sketched it better myself. A blue pig and a red hippopotamus. And what is this figure ? Something of the deer species."

"With only one horn!" said Fred. "It reminds one of the unicorn."

"I always thought that that fighting animal was a myth," rejoined Marston; "but there he is, sure enough."

"Yes; that figure has been often put forward as the original of the unicorn; but my father considers it is intended for a gemsbock, an animal which has very straight horns, and the Bushmen, taking merely the profile, have delineated but one," said George.

"What are they supposed to have used for paint?" asked Charley.

"For the red, no doubt they sometimes used the red clay which the Kafirs rub on their bodies and blankets; but they also used brown cubes of iron pyrites or peroxide of iron. I don't know what they made use of for the blue; probably copper ore."

"Look here!" exclaimed Marston. "What are these?"

"Those are arrow-heads," said Fred. "I am so glad you saw them. This has evidently been one of their workshops, for here they are in all stages of manufacture."

"And," exclaimed Frank, "just look at that great lump of black basaltic rock. It must have been brought from a long distance, for there are no rocks like it in this neighbourhood. I have often found these stone knives and arrow points on the plains, and have a few very good ones at home."

"I must take some of these with me," said Fred, putting several into his pocket. "May I have them?"

"Take as many as you like," George replied,

“for these things are not accounted treasures in this country. I took some down to Dr. Atherstone, of Grahamstown, who is a very great amateur of such things, and is also an excellent geologist, to whose opinion we always defer. When any stone or metal new to us is found we send it to him. It was he who pronounced a stone from the Transvaal to be a diamond, and thus opened up the diamond fields. Before that time the most brilliant stones had been passed by with perhaps a mere remark as to their being prettier crystals than those found in the old colony.”

“What crystals, then, do you find here?” said Marston.

“Common quartz, and sometimes jasper, I believe. My father once, while hunting on the banks of the Vaal River, picked up a gem that would have rivalled the ‘Star of South Africa.’ He thought it a piece of quartz of a very beautiful shape, and much more bright than usual, so he carried it in his waistcoat pocket for some days; but he also carried his gun-caps there, and whenever he put his fingers in for a cap the stone came in his way; so one day, as he was riding hard after a herd of gnooks, he was so annoyed by it that he threw it into a bush, not dreaming that his bright stone might be worth a king’s ransom.”

“What a go!” said Marston; “didn’t he ever try to find it again?”

“Yes, he did, for he thought he could remember the very spot; and some time after all the stir was made about the diamonds, he went up to see the diggings, and hunted about, but to no purpose.”

“How provoking!” said Marston. “It would have been glorious to find it after all that time.”

"Is not this a grinding apparatus?" inquired Charley; "I have seen round stones like it in collections of stone implements at home."

"A muller, so it is!" answered George; "and, you see, here is full evidence of what I told you, as to what the *little folk* used for paint. Cubes of peroxide of iron, some of them still whole, others broken and ground up. This rock seems to have been slightly hollowed, so as to hold water. Generally speaking, the grinding-stones are quite flat. The Hottentots still use them. They grind the coarse salt with them, also coffee, and even their snuff. No doubt Kaatje has one with her, upon which she grinds our coffee after having roasted it."

When they had fully examined all the rude sketches left by the Bushmen, they returned to the waggon. Close to Van Royen's hut, they found a Hottentot woman hanging strips of meat on the bushes to dry.

"What in the world is that for?" inquired Marston; "I should think it would soon turn bad when exposed in that way to the heat of the sun."

"On the contrary," rejoined Frank. "After the meat has been prepared, the sun dries it so thoroughly and so rapidly, that it will keep good for any length of time. We call it then 'Biltong,' and we colonists are very partial to it, especially when it is made of the meat of the 'spring-bock.'"

"How do you eat it? It must take a great deal of cooking."

"What! cook 'biltong'," cried Frank. "Oh, dear, no! It would be anything but palatable to us then, I assure you. It has been well baked by a scorching

sun, and we eat it dry as it is, merely rasping or shaving it very fine."

"And do you mean to say," exclaimed Marston, "that you eat it uncooked? I could imagine natives doing such a thing, but not white people."

"Indeed I do," replied Frank, "and I dare say you will do the same before you leave the colony."

"Well, I will give it a fair trial if I get the chance," said Marston, "for I don't see why I should not like what you and George do."

"There's Hendrick's signal," exclaimed George, as the loud report caused by the cracking of the long waggon whip echoed through the "poort." It was repeated twice, and the oxen with their leaders soon made their appearance.

"Master George," said Kaatje, "there's a woman taking some nice bread out of the oven. I should like to get some."

"All right, Kaatje, we won't go without you—and here's the money to pay for it."

Marston, who had been standing by, was astonished to see Kaatje go to the river-side, and sitting down there, begin talking to some invisible being. Then a large loaf was handed up, and then another. This was too much for Marston's curiosity. Loaves out of a river! Off he went, and there found that the oven from which a black Mozambique woman was shovelling the bread, was no other than a hole scooped in the mud or earth bank of the river. It is a common practice in the country, when people are remaining at a place only a short time, to excavate in this way an oven in any convenient mud bank or ant hill that may happen to be within reach,

using for a door a board, if procurable ; if not, taking a flat stone and plastering up the crevices with a composition of mud and cow-dung. At the next meal the bread was, by unanimous consent, pronounced to be of most excellent quality and sweetness, its mode of preparation not having given it the least unpleasant flavour.





CHAPTER VII.

THE MILK TREATMENT OF SNAKE-BITES.

THE next adventure of our travellers took place at an English farmhouse, at which they rested for a few hours one sultry afternoon.

About five o'clock, when the evening breeze had begun to cool the atmosphere, the young people, with the exception of Vyvyan, went out for a walk, some to gather fruit, and others to see the young ostriches.

But Charley, after walking with George all the morning, felt tired, and preferred remaining indoors, talking to their kind host and hostess, who enjoyed greatly the quietude of the time between the four-o'clock tea and the coming in of the different flocks and herds.

The room in which they were sitting had two doors, leading into the enclosure, or compound, both of which stood open to let in the cool afternoon breeze ; and while they were comfortably chatting, Mrs.

Smith thought she felt the kitten rub herself against her ankle, and moved her foot to drive it away.

A moment after, she again felt the same sensation, and then, for the first time, noticed that the kitten was at the other end of the room.

The thought at once flashed upon her mind that it must be a snake which had caused the sensation ; and, lifting up her dress carefully, she perceived to her dismay and horror a cobra coiling himself round her leg.

Luckily, she had sufficient presence of mind neither to move nor to drop her dress ; but, in a clear voice, the very emphasis of which, however, seemed to tell of danger, said to her husband :

“ John, look here !”

Knowing the deadly nature of the reptile, the sight was sufficient to blanch the cheek of any man.

He rose as noiselessly as possible, saying :

“ For God’s sake, my dear, keep perfectly still.”

Going first to the rack, he took down a loaded gun, and, handing it to Charley to hold for a moment, with an injunction not to move, he next took from the side-table, where the tea-things were still standing, a jug of milk ; and, pouring it into a saucer, placed it on the ground about three feet from the snake, and then went back to his gun.

The little kitten innocently ran to the milk, but a more precious life than that of the kitten was in danger, therefore he could not risk returning to take it out of its perilous position.

Snakes are fond of milk, and it may be that they have a like affection for kittens. At any rate, the cobra slowly uncoiled itself and went towards the

saucer ; but ere it could reach it a well-directed shot from Mr. Smith's gun had for ever rendered it powerless for mischief.

When the smoke cleared off, the little kitten was seen unhurt, arching its back in astonishment at the writhing body of the cobra, whose head had been shattered to pieces.

Poor Mrs. Smith, however, who had displayed such extraordinary courage and coolness during the terrible ordeal, was scarcely restrained from fainting by the encouraging voice and supporting arm of her husband.

Charley mechanically replaced the gun in the rack, and then put the snake outside the door, where, although they chopped it in two in the endeavour to kill it, the separated pieces retained their muscular motion until after the sun had set, giving the parties who returned soon after from the garden and ostrich camp time to examine the creature, while listening to Charley's account of this wonderful escape.

Before arriving at Mr. Carlton's, they called at one more place, a farm belonging to an old Dutch lady, a Juffrouw van der Meulen. She was pleased to see George, who was evidently a frequent visitor, and whom she addressed by different names of endearment, and he always called her "Tante" (Aunt).

"Welcome to you, my son George, and to all your friends. I hope you will all stay with me to-night, and to-morrow we can take the horse waggon and go over to my son's farm ; he would like to see your English friends."

"Thank you, Tante," said George ; "but we have

determined to sleep at the waggons, and I think our visit to the other farm must be deferred."

"As you will, my son; but now, while the maids are getting the supper, come and tell me all the news."

The old Juffrouw was pouring out some tea at a small side-table—"tea-water" she called it.

"Now, George, I am going to give you what you always used to like—tea-water, with thee-suiker, and some 'waffles'."

"I am very glad of that," said George; "it will be nice for the English visitors to drink tea in the old Dutch style."

The tea was handed round, and with it a small dish full of pieces of sugar-candy; there was no sugar in the cups, but each person placed one of the lumps of candy in his mouth, retaining it there while he drank his tea.

This mode of tea-drinking caused a great deal of merriment among our friends, who found it rather difficult to manage the sugar-candy.

The "waffles" were delicious. These are cakes made of batter poured into a mould cross-barred like the panes of a window-sash. After they had been baked over the fire, they were covered with a rich syrup, and served up quite hot.

When tea was over they started for a walk about the place.

"What in the world is that steaming away there?" asked Charley; "those curious vessels that look like the coppers in our English washhouses."

"They are soap-pots," said George. "All the soap required for home consumption is invariably

made on the farm. By burning a plant called Gemma an exceedingly good ash is obtained for the making of ley, and of course, as so many animals are slaughtered, there is always enough fat for the manufacture of both soap and candles."

"And here's another very strange-looking thing; what is it used for?" inquired Marston.

"That is a kind of tan-pit; it is made of a large bullock's hide, taken up at the four corners and fastened to a square framework of wood resting on four upright poles fixed into the ground. In that simple tannery all the leather required for use on the farm is prepared."

"It seems to me," said Charley, "that the South African farmer is a Jack of all trades. I suppose next we shall hear that he is his own tailor and shoemaker!"

"Well, so he is in a measure," replied George. "The Boers generally make their own shoes for using at home. Veldt schoens or fell schoens they call them, and very comfortable things they are for walking, though I think they spoil your foot for ever afterwards wearing a decently made boot. And as to tailoring, why, with the exception of the wedding suit and a suit of black kept for the purpose of doing duty at all funerals, a Boer's clothes are all made by his wife and her Hottentot sewing woman. Of course very many of the farmers, both Dutch and English, use tailor-made clothes now, but there are still those who adhere to the old system."

"And a good one it is too," said Fred. "How independent they must feel!"

"In old times they were obliged to do everything

for themselves ; for they seldom went to a town more than once or twice a year, and sometimes not so often when the distance was great."

"Growing everything you require and making everything you require. What a Robinson Crusoe sort of life it must be !" said Marston. "I am sure I should like it."

"Oh no ! you would not," said Frank Harding. "we do not live like that, and yet the wearisomeness of farm life to me is very great. Remember, they could not make books or papers ; could you live, now, without those ?"

"Well, no, perhaps not, but you have plenty. I am quite sure I should like your sort of farm life ; I don't see what you have to complain of."

"It is to me like being buried alive," said Frank, "I went to school after having had a tutor at home for some time. Many of my schoolfellows went to Oxford or Cambridge, or at all events to some higher class school, while I, when I had just learned sufficient to know how little I did know, was brought back to Heathdale. And books ? yes ! we have a few, but they are not the kind I want. A novel will not unravel a scientific mystery, nor a book of sermons solve a problem in mathematics."

"You are sore on that point, Frank, old boy," said George ; "but never despair. If I can work the oracle, you shall go to Oxford still."

"If any one can work it, you can," said Frank ; "my strongest hope is, that when you and Mary are married, you will manage between you to get my father's consent."

"Come, let us go back to the Juffrouw van der Meulen," said George.

Fred linked his arm in Frank's. "You must return with us," said he ; "I understand you exactly. I believe it would embitter the rest of my life if I had to leave off where I am now."

"Are you still going to the University then?" said Frank.

"Yes, indeed!" said Fred. "I cannot otherwise take Orders, which I particularly wish to do."

"I should not care to be a parson," said Frank ; "I only want to know more."

They went into the house, where the kind old Dutch lady was loud in expressing her fears that all her "children" must be "dying of hunger."

It was seven o'clock, and all the old lady's sons, nephews, and grandsons began to troop in to supper. Every one of them shook hands with each of the visitors in turn ; then came the "Meester" or tutor, an institution on all Dutch farms of any size. The Meester is, or was until lately, very often a man totally unfitted for the post of tutor to youth of any sort. Sometimes a discharged soldier, sometimes even a deserter, would find his way to one of these out-of-the-world places, glad enough to have a refuge and a home where, although he earned but little pay, he had but little work to do, and that little was often badly done, the education he undertook being either neglected or sadly perverted from the right course. But the "Meesters" are not all of this class. Sometimes they may be men who have had some education, but have not been trained for any trade or profession, and who, upon coming out to the

colony without friends, have perhaps been too readily led into bad company, and in a few months have squandered the little all that a widowed mother and sisters have been years in saving up for their old age, but have been induced to lend to the one "hopeful son." When all is gone, then comes a time of remorse, a bed of sickness among strangers, perhaps in a common infirmary, from which he goes forth to try and get work for his daily bread. But he soon finds that his character is known. He tries manual labour, but is not fit for that. At last some Boer picks him up, and having no energy to raise himself above it, he settles down into the position of the "Meester," teaches the Dutch boys and girls, smokes with the Boer, acts as his amanuensis upon the few occasions when he requires one, and drinks coffee with every one that comes to the house.

The Meester's salary is paid in sheep, which are allowed to run with the farm stock ; but as the payment is but a small one, the flock that he one day hopes to own is a long time in accumulating, and the money which took so short a time to spend takes years to repay.

The one who now joined the Juffrouw van der Meulen's supper party did not belong to either of these classes. He was a singular character. Having been sent to the Cape on account of his health, he found the simplicity of a farm life suited him, and that by a very small amount of exertion for a couple of hours every day he could secure all this and more. He never lived anywhere but where there was a regular post, or where he would be able to get a fresh parcel of books every now and then. He was

very contented in his present quarters, for he had a little cottage to himself on the homestead, and there he spent the greater part of his time in reading and writing. He taught the lads well and conscientiously all that they required to know, and though he certainly lived much to himself, was uniformly kind to all about him, never failing to bring out his own superior knowledge for their help and advancement, while they in their turn gave their "dear Meester" all due love and reverence. The old Juffrouw seemed even proud of his eccentricities, thinking nothing too good for him, and firmly believing that he could, if he chose, take the highest position in the Legislative Council itself, and put the whole Parliament right any day.

"George Carlton," said he, "I am very glad to see you. Are you going to Port Elizabeth?"

"I am returning from there, sir, and"—seeing a shade of disappointment come over his face—"I think I have brought something that you are expecting. For, happening to be in Juta's shop, and seeing there a case addressed to you, I offered to bring it; and then Juta told me he had also a parcel for you, and I volunteered to take them to you here. You will, I hope, forgive me for not calling on my way down."

"You are as kind and thoughtful as a son of your good father ought to be, George."

"Are all these your friends?" inquired the Meester.

And, leaving George to devote himself to the old lady, and Frank, who could also speak Dutch, to the young men of the household, he made himself perfectly charming to Charley, Fred, and Marston, who

found that he was well acquainted with all the latest news, even to the Club gossip in St. James's, the mail their vessel had brought having reached him three days before. They soon found out that he was an old college friend of Sir John Vyvyan and Mr. Dalrymple, and had hunted once for a short time in Kaffirland in company with Col. Sinclair; and it may well be imagined that the evening proved all too short for the numerous questions elicited by these reminiscences.

When the supper was over, they bid their kind hostess "good-by," and went to their waggons, which Kendrick had already "inspanned" for a night "trek." The atmosphere was beautifully clear, and they had before them a long stretch of flat country.

"This will be our last night on this journey," said George to Charley. "I dare say you will not be sorry to exchange the ground for a decent bedroom."

"Indeed, I am in no particular hurry to do so," replied Charley; "I can now quite understand the charm which so many have found in a wild life in the wilderness."

"A waggon journey is all very well for once in a way, if you have pleasant companions, and are passing through a country in which there is some variety; but, sometimes, farther inland you may travel for a month over long uninteresting 'flats,' with nothing to relieve the daily monotony of the scene but the different herds of game in the distance."

"Then, at all events, you would have the

opportunity and amusement of using your gun," suggested Charley.

"Not if you travelled, as we have, without horses. The immense Karoo plains are treeless and without cover. It is difficult to get within rifle-shot of a koodoo or a buffalo. The river-beds, which drain off the tremendous thunder-showers, have mimosa bushes growing on their banks, and, if your road passes near them, you may occasionally get a shot ; or, by watching near the holes of water, at which the herds come to drink in the evening ; but, for all that, going at the rate of twelve to fifteen miles a day, through such a country, is very tedious."

"I suppose there are plenty of snakes?" said Marston ; "there would be some fun in meeting with them."

"If you now and then found an ox swelling up in some part of its body and unable to proceed on the journey through the bite of a horned viper or a small venomous snake, which will often spring on to an animal in the dusk of the evening, or perhaps attacking yourself, you would soon wish to be free from the excitement of killing snakes."

"Ya, sir ; that's true," said Hendrick. "Those little hornsmansches and nacht slaangs are as bad as any, although they are so small. I remember once a gentleman I was travelling with bought a nice horse of a farmer on the road, giving the one he had been using in part payment. We hadn't got more than five minutes away from the house when the horse gave a little start ; soon after, his leg began to swell, and he could not get on, and then we found that he had been bitten just under the fore-leg by one of these

little wretches ; so we had to go back and get the old horse again, and leave the new one with the farmer."

"Did it ever get all right?" said Marston.

"Yes, sir ; they put herb poultices to it, and I went to fetch it again about three months afterwards, and it was all right then. A fine horse he was, too!"

"Well, I'll acknowledge it must be trying to both man and beast to be stopped on one's journey in that way," said Marston.

"Ya, sir ; and then there was poor May! One evening as he was walking in front of the oxen, all at once he felt something like a prick. He thought it was a thorn, but the pain and the swelling soon told him what it was. We were near a farm, and he got plenty of milk to drink, and they put all sorts of things to his foot ; but he hasn't got the use of it yet. It's all withered up like."

"What good was the milk to do?" said Marston.

"They think that when milk is drank freely immediately after the bite of a snake, it acts as an antidote to the venom," said George.

"Did master ever hear of that old Kaapsch farmer who came to Baas Lottering's one night with his wife? It was raining very hard ; so, as they were only travelling in a horse waggon, there was a bed made up for them on the floor in the 'Voorhuis.' In the middle of the night up jumps the farmer and screams out, 'A snake has bitten my nose! Oh, de duivel! he has bitten my nose!' His wife was in a terrible fright. They got the tinder-box and struck a light—people didn't all have lucifers then—and old

Lottering and his wife turned out, and almost every one in the place. There was a 'to do,' for the Kaapsch man was very handsome, and he didn't like the idea of losing his nose. Old Mrs. Lottering gave him milk, and he had to drink milk till he could drink no more. They say he drank two bucketsful! It is to be hoped they were not very big ones. At last he shouted out, 'I can no more! I am quite full! I shall burst if you give me another drop!' Then some one suggested they should catch this snake and kill him. Everybody thought they had him safe in the bed-clothes, for the farmer had got his hand on them and had been holding them fast all the time. Evidently the creature was under the blanket. Very carefully they searched for the reptile, the men standing round with knobkerries in their hands, ready to kill the snake as soon as found. The farmer loosened his hold, the blanket was unfolded, when, lo! and behold! out sprang a poor little mouse! and so all the good milk had been wasted."





CHAPTER VIII.

THE KAROO DESERT.



AFTER leaving the old Dutch lady's house, they at once entered the Karoo country, although it was not till the following morning they were able to appreciate the difference of vegetation.

In the language of the aboriginal Hottentots, the word "Karoo" signified a dry, barren desert; and after one of the periodical droughts to which the whole of Southern Africa is subject, but which are more particularly protracted in the Karoo, it well deserves the name.

But much alteration has taken place since the time when it was always looked upon as a desert. Its condition in those days is thus described by one of the old South African travellers, who wrote :

"With the exception of a few straggling spots around its skirts, supplied with permanent springs from the adjoining mountains, the Karoo is only fit for human residence during a few weeks in the year —after the fall of the periodical, or rather the occa-

sional, rains, for sometimes more than one season intervenes without them.

“ Its principal inhabitants are, therefore, the wild game, especially springbucks and the beasts of prey which accompany them, and which, as the water and pasturage fail in one quarter, emigrate to another.”*

But since the Karoo has been acknowledged to be the best pasturage for sheep, ostriches, and angora goats, immense tracts have been occupied as farms, many of which are watered, not only by the permanent springs spoken of by the traveller above quoted, but also by large dams or reservoirs, constructed by the farmers within the last quarter of a century ; and it has proved also to be a good wheat and maize growing country, and indeed suitable for any kind of cereal, vegetable, or fruit, so long as there is sufficient water for irrigation.

It is very evident that more rain falls in the Karoo at the present time than formerly, for travellers of sixty or one hundred years ago tell us of times when “ no rains had fallen for three years !”

This is doubtless caused by the greater amount of tree cultivation, limited though it is, and possibly also by the attraction that any collection of water would have for the passing clouds, which would otherwise be stayed only by a mountain.

These facts should encourage farmers to plant trees and make dams wherever it is practicable. If the eucalyptus (blue gum) and the Madeira pine were grown, not singly but in forests, so as to protect

* G. Thompson, vol. i. p. 270.

each other, as has been effectually done by one farmer near to Queenstown, great good would result ; also if every dam made out in the open "Veldt," instead of being exposed to rapid evaporation by the intense heat of the sun, as it generally now is, were surrounded by such trees as would best stand a time of drought.

But farmers may say that, as they have in dry times difficulty in finding sufficient water for their flocks, they would be able to find none for superfluous trees, and consequently those plantations would die. This hypothesis, however, is only partly correct, for the trees indigenous to the Karoo *do* live through the droughts. And, in the case of plantations, should some of the younger trees succumb, they would still be of use as firewood, the frequent scarcity of which is one of the great drawbacks to a farm in the Karoo Veldt. It would therefore be all the better worth while for that very reason to plant clumps or clusters of trees.

The "climatic value of trees" cannot be over-estimated. Dr. Croumbie Brown has published a most valuable book on "Forests and Moisture," embodying an article read by him before the British Association at Clifton in 1876, in connection with droughts in the Cape Colony, which it would be well for every legislator and farmer in the country to study.

There are at present two railways crossing the Karoo, and others in process of construction, and it will be interesting to notice whether railroads will have the same effect upon the rainfall as we are told they have had upon some of the wide, dry prairies of America. Those immense plains which, before the

construction of railways, were often many months without rain, and which produced nothing of value, are now subject to copious showers, and consequently can be cultivated to a considerable distance on both sides of the line.

"And is this what is called a Karoo desert?" said Fred to Frank Harding, as the two set out to walk on ahead of the waggons after breakfast, which had been eaten under a solitary white-barked tree.

"Yes," said Frank; "just now it seems to be a misnomer, but I have seen the whole face of the country turn from green to brown, and from brown to *black*, as black as though every Karoo plant had been scorched by fire!"

"Which of all these plants is the Karoo?" said Fred.

"The large plains or steppes are called the Karoo districts, and the two or three different kinds of aromatic heaths or other plants upon which the sheep live, are also all spoken of as Karoo. These are far from being all of the same species; one has very beautiful little purple white or mauve flowers delicately spotted with carmine, while another has a common-looking little composite flower somewhat like the centre of the chamomile."

"And those magnificent leaves covered with dew-drops; how curious that they should be so in this heat."

"It is not dew, those are ice-plants. Here are some in flower; they are of the most dazzlingly white kinds of mesembryanthemum, of which you will find a very great variety in the Karoo."

"These are certainly very beautiful, both leaf and flower glistening in the sun," observed Fred.

"The juice of the fleshy leaf was used by the Boers and Hottentots for cleansing their tanned jackets and trousers when they wore leather clothes."

"Leather clothes ; how very uncomfortable ! fancy being caught in a shower with leather trousers on."

"Yes, and then the hot sun coming out and drying them on you, causing them to crackle up in all sorts of sharp angles ; they might well call them crackers, which was the name they gave them."

"Here is another very curious plant, circle within circle of things like fingers."

"That is just what it is called," said Frank. "'Finger-pole' ; it has a very large white juicy root, which is one of the things we make use of in times of drought. We dig it up out of the earth, and the moment it is exposed the cattle and sheep eat it with avidity, running after the men who carry the spades and pickaxes from one spot to another, looking on during the process with great anxiety ; it is quite pitiable to see the poor creatures."

"This plain now looks like a flower garden," said Fred ; "every little plant and shrub seems to bear a blossom."

"Yes ; we have had splendid rains lately, and, in consequence, all the different varieties of mesembryanthemum are open, and that alone makes a great show."

"There's a pretty little red creature running along so quickly. What is it ? There's another !" said Fred.

"They are meerkats. Sharp little things they are, too. My sister had a tame one; they soon become domesticated."

Here they were overtaken by Marston, who came running up to them with a small tortoise in each hand.

"Look here!" said he; "I saved these poor little wretches from the jaws of a great snake. Aren't they pretty? I always thought tortoises were smooth, but these have little cones all over their backs."

"What made you think that the snake was going to make such an indigestible meal?" said Frank.

"The fellow was lying near a lot of holes, and these were outside, taking a little gentle exercise. I had no doubt he meant mischief, so I threw a big stone at him, and in he went, as sharp as possible, into one of the holes."

"Right among the mice that he was watching for," said Frank. "I don't think your tortoises were in any danger as far as the snake was concerned, but I have seen birds try to kill them by carrying them up in the air and allowing them to fall upon the stones and break their shells."

"What are you going to do with them now you have them?" inquired Fred.

"Oh, I think I shall keep them to send home."

"What, alive?" asked Fred.

"Oh, no; I only mean the shells," replied Marston.

"Then it seems," said Frank, laughing, "that you are the real snake in the grass, after all. But you need not carry them with you. You will find them everywhere in the Karoo."

"Then I restore them to liberty," shouted Marston, putting them down; "and there's the dearest little lizard scuttling away as fast as he can. There are plenty of living things about."

"Lizards in abundance, but no large game now. That has all gone farther north, driven back as the farmers have invaded their territory. In former times, I believe, the springbocks used to come down in hordes of thousands, eating all before them, and devastating the whole face of the country, cornlands included, as thoroughly as the swarms of locusts do; but unless they are preserved we seldom see any now."

"Did you ever find a tortoise larger than those I had just now?"

"Yes; large enough and strong enough to move with me on his back, but they are generally found on the low hills, and seldom on the plains. While you are with us, we must get up a cattle hunt among the hills that we passed this morning, and there, no doubt, we shall meet with one or two at least."

"What sort of cattle do you mean to hunt? wild cattle?" asked Charley.

"Yes, they are wild enough," replied George. "A great many of them have never been brought into a kraal since they were calved."

"And do you ever manage to tame them? I thought buffaloes were said to be untameable here?"

"Oh," said George, "you misunderstand me. I mean our own young cattle, which are allowed to run wild in the hills until they are old enough to be

branded, and then again until they are to be broken in, either for working oxen or milk cows."

"But, you said," interposed Marston, "they were on the hills behind us. Why should they be away from your own farm? I hope I shall be allowed to go too. It must be glorious fun hunting them up like the stock-men do in Australia."

"Those hills," said George, "are the outskirts of our place, though not called by the same name as the homestead—in fact, my father has four or five farms adjoining. We have been travelling upon our own land since about sunrise this morning."

"Is it possible that you require such enormous tracts of country?" asked Charley. "How will people manage when the country becomes more densely populated?"

"We never seem to have too much ground," said George, "and I think you will understand why when you see all the flocks. Indeed, in times of drought we have hard work to make it do; and farmers in the Karoo, who cannot allow themselves a great deal of spare land in reserve for such a contingency, often lose the greatest part of their stock."

Then turning to Marston, he said, "I hope you can stick on to a horse pretty tightly, for, if you can't, you won't like the cattle hunt."

"Well," said Marston, "I've never had a horse of my own like Charley and Fred. Charley rides like a centaur, and Fred too; but my uncle taught me to ride, and Charley often gives me a mount at Winter Court."

"Oh, he sticks like a leech," said Charley.

Just at that moment they came to the summit of one of the numerous ridges of quartz and sandstone that intersect the Karoo, and there before them lay Mr. Carlton's farm.



BOOK IV.

FARM LIFE.





CHAPTER I.

AT KAROOLANDS.

“**H**ERE we are at home,” said George ;
“and our journey is at an end.”

“Thank you for making it such
a pleasant one,” said Fred ; “it will
be a week to remember through
one’s life.”

“Here come father and little Jack to meet us!”
exclaimed George ; “they have soon seen us.”

“I saw old Grietjy run into the house as fast as her
fat old legs would carry her, the moment we got on
to the ridge,” said Frank. “She has got the kettle
on by this time, to give us some tea as soon as we
are in the house.”

“But it isn’t tea-time yet,” Marston observed.

“You’ll find it’s tea-time half a dozen times a
day at Karoolands,” rejoined Frank. “Whenever
any one arrives they make fresh tea, and every one
drinks a cup, even if the same thing has happened
just before.”

“Welcome, young men, to Karoolands,” said Mr.

Carlton, heartily, as he approached and shook hands with each of them.

As for little Jack, he was soon riding pickaback upon George's shoulders.

"Did you bring me the big ship, my George?"

"Yes, my Jack, I did; and some clothes, to make a Jack Tar of you."

"Me not Jack Tar; me Jack Tarleton."

"You are looking all the better for my prescription," said Mr. Carlton to Fred; "don't you think so?" he asked, turning to Charley.

"Yes, indeed, he is," replied Charley.

"And I feel so, too," assented Fred. "I have not had a headache all the time we have been travelling."

"And you, my boy?" inquired Mr. Carlton, turning to Marston; "what do you think of South Africa?"

"I think it's a glorious country, sir; I should like to stay in it altogether."

"Ah! wait a bit, wait a bit. You will soon find out that life is not all glorious fun here, any more than in other parts of the world. There's plenty of hard work to do, especially on a farm."

"I shouldn't care to be without it, sir. All play would be quite as irksome as all work."

"Well, I believe it would to you," said Mr. Carlton; "but I hope we shall be able to find you more play than work, just now, at all events."

Mrs. Carlton welcomed them all in a pleasant, motherly way, which at once put them at their ease. She had two little girls with her, Lily and Blanche, aged respectively twelve and eight; both as fair as

their names would indicate. Lily, the elder of the two, had delicate features, with a sweet expression, and a soft, quiet manner, altogether very like her mother; while Blanche, who was decidedly pretty, had eyes which brimmed over with fun and merriment, and was as fat and round as a little dumpling.

The tea proved very refreshing after the morning's walk, and before it was over the boys came in from their school-room; and Harry, a youth about Mars-ton's age, from the garden.

"Now we have all the Carlton family together," said their father; "quite enough to form a little colony of our own, are we not? Harry has but lately returned from a school in Graham's Town, Reginald and Teddy have a tutor at home, and Master Jack is baby in general."

"B'anchy baby now; me my George's Jack," said the little man referred to.

"Which means that my Jack wants his ship, does it not?" said George to the child, who had been sitting on his knee ever since he came into the house. "Come Blanchey, come boys, let's go and unpack Jack's big ship."

Every one knew that there was sure to be the very thing that he or she wanted most in that big box, for George never forgot any one.

For Lily there was a beautiful colour-box with drawing materials complete; Blanche found the very doll she had been dreaming about; the boys each the newest book of adventure out, or the most comprehensive thing in knives, according to taste.

But Jack's ship was the one great absorbing

attraction of the moment among the younger ones. With the exception of George and Harry, none of the Carlton children had ever seen a real ship, or even a boat; but from the time that little Johnnie had received his nickname of Jack Tar, on account of his love of all the pictures of ships, to have one of his own had been his longing.

George had really got a beauty; the best and largest he could find in Port Elizabeth.

"And now, I declare, I don't know how all this rigging is to be got up," said George.

"Why didn't you learn all about it, as you did when you brought mamma's sewing machine?" said Blanche.

"Ah! wise little woman, why didn't I, indeed; but I have no doubt we shall manage; go and get your pictures, Jack!"

Lily had delightedly carried her gifts in to show to her mother, and she was in the midst of having all the colours explained to her by Charley and Marston, when little Jack and Blanche came to her, asking breathlessly for "the book."

"I thought you were trying the new ship, Jack dear," said Lily; "what do you want the old ones for?"

"George forgot to learn how to put ships together," said Blanche.

"Oh! I know all about that," said Marston. "Why, I'm a regular shipbuilder. Come along, I'll soon put it all right. I've got a big one at home that I made all by myself."

In a short time it was all ship-shape, and the whole party had adjourned to the river to see the

launch. Little Jack's eager face was a sight to see ; but, alas ! there was no wind, and after the first "shove off shore," it remained stationary.

"Let's span in the ducks," said Ted, "and make them pull it."

Ted's speciality in the way of play was "spanning in" every available animal that came in his way.

"Not at all a bad idea," said Marston, "but we'll try raising the wind with the kitchen bellows first, and if that doesn't do why we can put a towing-rope on and go up river without the ducks, and it will come down all right with the stream."

"Too sheltered here by the mimosas," said Mr. Carlton, who came up at the moment the mimic vessel was making desperate plunges under the combined efforts of the bellows and the fanning of Blanche's pinafore, Jack ; with uplifted arms, urging it on with all his might, while Ted was shouting "Fred," and mechanically flourishing a short whip, which was his constant walking companion.

"Too sheltered here," said Mr. Carlton ; "take it up to the big dam, there's more chance of getting a breeze up there."

And so it proved ; for the *Sea Gull* sailed away right gloriously to the farther corner of the beautiful sheet of water, where she was met after her trial trip by the whole party, with a hip, hip, hurrah !

"How many saddles can you muster ?" asked Mr. Carlton of George, at dinner-time ; "Abram has brought up the troop of horses."

"Enough for all, father, I think."

"Well, then, I suppose you will go up the kraal this afternoon and have the riding-horses caught ?"

"Are there not some young cattle to be branded soon, father? I thought a cattle hunt would be rather exciting just now."

"Yes, there are; and I shall be glad to have it done; but I'll tell you what there is to do, of very great importance. Abram tells me that he saw an ox this morning evidently in an advanced stage of lung sickness."

"One of ours, father?" inquired George.

"No," replied Mr. Carlton, "one that some one has abandoned on the road. It is an abominable thing, and if I could find out who had done it I would prosecute him. Abram had no gun, or he would have shot it; but no time should be lost. Those among the young cattle that have not been inoculated for the disease must be operated upon at once."

"Are you up to that sort of thing, George?" asked Charley.

"Oh! certainly," answered the latter; "I should much like to see it done. I remember your telling me about it, when I remarked upon the short tails of the oxen."

"All right," assented George. "Then we'll be off to-morrow, father, if you can spare the men: and now for our ride this evening. Are mamma and Lily going?"

"Lily may go with you," said Mrs. Carlton; "but I am going with your father to see the flock of angora goats."

"I should so much like to see those," exclaimed Fred; "they must be very beautiful."

"Quite the prettiest part of the farming, I

think," remarked Mrs. Carlton; "and they are in their best coats just now."

"Well, we can all ride round that way first, and you will have quite time enough to go across to the top of 'Vee Kraal,' to see that flock of sheep afterwards," said Mr. Carlton.

There were always four or five horses kept in the stable at Karoolands, and fed upon "forage," as the oat-hay grown for them on the farm was called, but the remainder were allowed to run night and day in the hilly parts of the farm, and when they were required one of the Hottentots went off in the morning, carrying his saddle and bridle with him, and having caught one would mount it, and then ride about until he had collected thirty or forty together, and would then bring them up to the homestead, at a hand-gallop.

"Abram!" said George, in the kraal; "where's that mare's foal?"

"More'n I know, Master George; there's three mares can't give no 'count of their foals. There's that little Bles mare, I didn't bring her up—she's a'most mad, poor thing—it's her first, ye see. She goes galloping about, and calling it; but I 'spects the tiger's got it; I see his spoor to-day."

"We will set the traps when we go down tomorrow," said George; "we are going about the cattle."

"Yes, sir, they wants killing, them tigers do; I 'spects they've had some calves, too."

"I am very sorry about those foals, we must neglect the traps no longer."

Quite a cavalcade went for a ride that evening, Mr. and Mrs. Carlton, Lily, and the six young men.

The angoras quite justified the admiration that had been awarded them as to beauty, their long white silky hair shining in the sun with a resplendency which was really dazzling ; Mr. Carlton's flock, of about two thousand, was one of the finest and best bred in the country, and he naturally felt a good farmer's pride in showing them to the new comers.

"They are splendid," said Charley, "and quite a new thing in farming to me. We never see anything of this kind at home; sheep, of course, we have, but not such large flocks as here. On many estates or farms they are limited to hundreds, although in some parts of Scotland, and in such open counties as Wiltshire, thousands of sheep may be seen grazing on the plains."

"Well, I certainly agree with you," remarked Fred to Mrs. Carlton; "I never in my life saw such a lovely flock."

"They are valuable, too," replied she; "Mr. Carlton gives enormous prices for some of the best animals."

"Yes, but the hair brings a good return," rejoined her husband, "besides the profit on the stock that I sell to other farmers. And now we will ride round to one of the sheep stations. We make a point of visiting one or other of them generally every morning or evening, and to count the flocks by turns."

"I wonder how you can do it," said Marston, "for they seem to crowd in so with such a rush, and leap over one another in such an amusing manner."

"It's all use," answered Mr. Carlton. "I remember when I commenced sheep farming thinking just as you do. You see we take a number of small pebbles

in one hand, and as each hundredth sheep passes by, we pass one into the other hand."

"My father uses a string of beads for the purpose," remarked Frank.

"Yes, I know he does," said Mr. Carlton. "Another and important branch of our farming, the ostrich camp, you will have opportunities enough of seeing before you leave, for it is quite close to the house."

"I wish you would devise some excuse for Fred's not going with us," said Charley to George the next morning as they were returning from their early "dip."

"Don't you want him to go?" inquired George.

"I don't think he is quite equal to it, and I am afraid of undoing the improvement in his health which has resulted from the journey," replied Charley.

"Frank has been grumbling about having to go," said George, "he has taken such a wonderful fancy to Fred, and he says he thought he was going to have a few delightful days here with him, by which I know he means thoroughly lazy days, a little reading, ditto music, some quiet talk with my mother, of whom he is very fond, and perhaps a botanizing or sketching ramble."

"Not so bad for an idler. I rather admire Mr. Frank's taste; and he thinks there will be too much exertion in what we mean to go in for to-day, I suppose?" asked Charley.

"Just so," replied George, "he can't see the fun of rushing about after a parcel of wild beasts; if it had not been for all of you he would have stayed behind. So if Fred does not go you can imagine how delighted he will be."

“That’s capital,” said Charley, “the pair can go mooning about to their hearts’ content.”

And very happy the pair seemed to be with the arrangement, and Mrs. Carlton no less so.

After breakfast, George and Charley, Marston and Harry, with Hendrick, Abram, and two other men, set off on their expedition.

“When we come to where you saw the ox dying, Abram, we will go and collect some matter that we shall want for the inoculation.”

They were soon directed to the spot by seeing the vultures in great numbers wheeling overhead, although the poor animal was not yet cold, having evidently but just died.

“How is it that these birds are here already?” asked Charley; “I thought they came when decomposition had set in, in fact that they were guided to their prey by their acute sense of smell.”

“It is wonderful,” said George; “I have often seen them congregated about an animal *before* it was dead; indeed, you may see that this has been the case here. Their sight must be very keen, sometimes their nearest habitation may be from thirty to fifty miles distant; but I dare say you have noticed that eagles and vultures always gyrate when about to settle upon their prey. One in his flight will have noticed a poor animal, either fallen or staggering, he immediately begins to gyrate; his motions are observed by others farther off, they hasten towards him and join in his gyrations, and thus a flock of these birds is soon attracted to the spot. They are ugly and greedy creatures, at least the vultures are, but they are capital scavengers, and we never shoot them.”


Hendrick and Abram, no doubt to the intense disgust of those birds who were just hopping up to their meal, approached and opened the dead animal, extracted the diseased lung in which the matter was contained, and carrying it off with them, left the remainder of the carcass to be devoured by the ravenous birds of prey, who soon made bare bones of it.





CHAPTER II.

A WILD CATTLE HUNT.

“E have an old Scotchman living at this hill station,” said George. “He and his wife seem to like being among the cattle ; she makes all the butter we use at Karoolands.”

“I suppose he is reminded of his own Highlands at home,” suggested Charley, “Scotland being so famed for its breed of little, rough Highland cattle.”

“Well, Mrs. McAlpine,” said George, as they rode up to the house, “I hope Allan is at home.”

“Weel, he’s na exactly in the hoose, Maister George, but he’s awa doon the glen to get his horse, for ane of the black men telled him the noo that you and your freends were a’ coomin’ to hoont oop the beasts. Ye’ll coom ben, gentlemen, and tak’ a tass o’ tay?”

All expressed themselves glad of the refreshing beverage after their long, hot ride.

“You will be able to give each of us a shake-down to-night, Mrs. McAlpine, I suppose?”

"'Deed wull I, Mr. George ; I'll aye do my best, but ye'll no want rocking after huntin' thae wild cattle."

"Has Allan set his trap lately?" said George.

"He did, sir, for the leopards ha' been very busy amang the wee calvies, but a thievin' brute o' a wolf ran awa wi' the thing, and Allan couldna find it for days."

"Well, at least, you caught the wolf?" said Charley.

"Na, sir, 'deed we didna. He just left the skin o' his fut in it ; but he tuk' hissel' aff."

"We will try again to-night," said George. "Here comes Allan, and if we want to get any of the cattle to-night we must be off."

They divided their party, and proceeded by different routes to the summit of the hilly range, noting the exact whereabouts of every group of cattle they met, so that they might bring them down with the herd on their return.

"I cannot imagine how you will remember these particular spots," said Charley.

"If *we* don't," said George, "the Hottentots will not only remember the place, but even every beast by some peculiar mark or another."

The wild scenery of the kloofs and hill-side struck them as very grand. Evergreens, many of them bearing delicious berries, such as the arduina, or "mum-num," the "prim," the "guarrie," the "wild apricot," &c. &c., grew everywhere in profusion. The zamias and aloes were very ornamental, while the "elephant's foot," wonderfully like a huge tortoise which had been fantastically decorated with the most

delicate wreaths of pale-green leaves, added not a little to the novelty of the scene.

But it was not all beauty. They passed through a large tract where the principal growth was a most uninteresting-looking euphorbia, called by the Dutch *noorse doorn*, or "spiteful thorn;" and here they found the benefit of the leathern leggings which George had made them put on, for thorns were ubiquitous—there was no escape for thin trousers or the flesh itself where the "noorse doorn" abounded. Nevertheless, amongst all the ugliness they found some delicate little creeping plants flourishing beautifully as they clung to their thorny supports.

"Hoot! young gentleman, dinna taste it!" said Allan McAlpine, as he saw Marston about to put a piece of broken euphorbia to his mouth. "Ye'll no be rid o' the stuff for a month or mair."

"Is it poisonous?" said Marston.

"I dinna ken," said the Scotchman, "but it's vera onpleasant. Dutchmen formerly used the seed-vessels o' ane kind to poison wolves. So I winna say it's no poisonous."

"Here they come!" said George, as after an hour's scrambling up the hill-sides they came to a small park-like level spot with a pond in the middle of it, towards which a number of cattle were being driven by Abram and another Hottentot down the next slope. They skirted the bush and soon found another clump, and then another.

"This is evidently a favourite spot," said Charley.

"Good grass and watter, young sir," said Allan; "I can always make sure o' finding some here—the

trouble is to get them doon, but we must have all the cattle we are wanting in a kraal."

Then began the work of collecting the different "clumps" together in good earnest. The young, untrained animals did not understand being driven at all, and were soon tearing and galloping about with tails erect; while the older ones, knowing from past experience that whenever they were hunted about in this way it was to undergo some disagreeable process, took every opportunity of doubling back into the "bush."

"How are you going to get those down?" said Marston to Allan, pointing to a few who were grazing in an apparently inaccessible spot.

"I'm just going up on fut, sir, for doon they must come; an' if ye'll like to go too, we'll leave our horses here *to* the bush."

They were soon up, and Marston was rushing forward when Allan called out, "Have a care, sir—have a care! I wadna ha' brocht ye had I seen that fierce brute amang the lot."

A ferocious-looking bull stood trampling and tearing up the ground with his fore-feet, bellowing and assuming a "don't-come-too-near-me-or-mine" sort of air. Allan cracked his whip, and did all he could to distract his attention, which was evidently fixed upon Marston as the first intruder into his sanctum.

"He'll be on ye, sir! quick, quick, tuk ye doon the rocks again, for the bull's of a parshionate deesposition."

Marston half jumped and half rolled down the

place they had scrambled up a few minutes before, just as the bull came charging full at him. Of course the brute went clean over and far beyond him.

Allan thought he would have broken his neck, or shoulder at least, but no! there he stood a perfect picture of bovine astonishment in a thicket of heath into which he had fallen.

"Ye'll come up again noo, sir, we don't want the bull, and I'll just leave him where he is, he'll be out o' harm's way there."

"Well! that *was* a toucher!" said Marston, climbing over the rocks; "I never had so clear an idea of what the horns of a dilemma meant before."

"I dinna ken what kind o' animal that may be, sir, but I'm gey thankfu' that ye're no' on the horns o' the bull."

Marston's escape was the adventure of the day, but it was not without many a scramble and race that the cattle were eventually "kraaled" for the night, in the rear of Allan's house.

One of the tiger traps had been set by George and Allan on their way up to the cattle, and visited on their return, to see that the bait had not been carried off by the crows. The other they placed at night upon a "kopij," or small hill near the kraal. They were all as "hungry as hunters," and did ample justice to good Mrs. McAlpine's "carbopardjies" (chops) and "sassartjies" (dry curried mutton on bamboo sticks), with delicious coffee and cream.

They had a good day's work for freshmen, and

Marston, for one, was fast asleep on a wolf-rug in the corner of the room, before the supper was over.

About nine o'clock Allan, as usual, was going his rounds to see that all was right. George and Charley went as far as the kraal with him.

"What an awful stillness!" said the latter to George as they were waiting for Allan, who had gone to one of the men's huts with some instructions for the morning. "One might stand here and quote Lord Houghton's song, 'The beating of my own heart is all the sound I hear.' I have heard of men living alone in the desert, but this stillness itself would be sufficient to drive me mad!"

Just then, as if in mockery of his words, a startling shrill cry rang out through the night, then another and another, till they echoed from every hill around.

"It is horribly like the laugh of a maniac," said Charley.

"Jackals," said George; "and that is an old wolf," as a prolonged low howl was heard, which in its turn woke up a father among the baboons, who with a "Baugh" seemed to ask the sentinel on the rocks if he thought any danger threatened his family of little ones. Then again, as if by magic, all was still as death.

Charley drew breath and laughed. "Well! I will acknowledge that the place is not devoid of sound at all times of the night; nevertheless, I should not like to live *here*."

In the morning the young men did not wake as

soon as they had intended, but after a cup of coffee started at once for the trap among the hills.

Allan having already been to the one near the house, and found it untouched, came back and said, "Ane o' thae blacks whilk ye brocht wi' ye, Mister George, is aff the mornin'."

"You don't mean Hendrick or Abram?"

"Na, na, they're baith behind; it's the fellow that aye carries a monkey-skin bag!"

"Piet! Have you any sort of canteen set up near here lately? Piet can scent brandy *miles* off."

"Yes! there's that smugglin' thief, John Smith, who keeps a regular drinking store, and entices all the blacks up there, where he pays 'em for all the goat-skins, or anything else they can get haud of, in brandy."

"How did he get his licence?" asked George.

"He's na gotten ony licence at all, sir; he's a smugglin' carle."

"Well, then, he must be hauled up and punished," said George.

"Who'll tak' the trooble to do that?" demanded Allan; "your father and the ither justices of the peace canna do it, and it's a hundred and forty miles to our magistrate's office; people have neyther the time nor the inclination, nor horseflesh either to spare, for sic thankless work, and the skulking fellow kens that weel and acts with impunity; but he'll be caught ane o' these days by the police; for the blacks hae been slaughterin' goats for the sak' o' their hides; one farmer lost several; and one mornin' two poor creatures came to the hoose wi'

their throats half cut, and there laid doon and deed ! The farmer was savage at the cruelty of the brutal wretches. He mounted his horse and rode off in the direction he knew these goats must have come from ; and, on the way, noticing a number of crows and vultures gatherin' as they do when a carcass is there, he went to see what it was, and found twenty-seven fine goats which had been killed and skinned, all lying in a row. Ye see, sir, it wasna on account o' the hunger they had killed them, it was for the hides to sell to this Smith for brandy !"

"But," asked Charley, "did they not get a search warrant for the skins if they suspected the man of receiving stolen goods ?"

"Yes, sir ; but ye see we mark goats in the ear and the heads were left wi' the carcases, and ye'll find it's no sae easy tae swear to twenty angora goat-skins out o' a hundred, seein' they're a' white alike."

"The trap's gone !" shouted Harry, who with Marston had ridden on in front.

"That's the wolf agin, I suppose," said Allan, "wantin' to mak' his ither foot correspond wi' the one that lost its glove !"

Hendrick jumped off his horse and ran forward immediately on the "spoor" or track, followed by all the others. They had gone but a few steps when they heard him call out :

"Baas, Baas, poor Piet is dead !" And such a sight met their eyes ! A full-grown tiger, or rather leopard, with the trap still attached to one of his hind legs, lay in a pool of blood quite dead ; and

poor Piet, with his hand and wrist actually in the creature's mouth, beside him.

Piet, however, was not dead. They soon found that out. He had been frightfully mauled in the struggle, and had lost a great deal of blood; but the *man*, poor specimen of humanity as he was, had been victorious over the brute.

In disengaging his hand from the animal's mouth, a clasp-knife was found firmly clenched in it, with which he had evidently given the "coup de grace." They carried him to the nearest stream and carefully washed and bound up his wounds with their pocket-handkerchiefs; then, taking the skin of the leopard, they made a kind of hammock, and placing him upon it, took him to good Mrs. McAlpine, whose kind and judicious nursing soon restored him sufficiently to enable him, before night, to tell them his adventure.

It appeared that he started before daybreak with the idea of being able to get back before his young master had finished his coffee, and so be able to tell him whether or no there were a tiger in the trap.

When within a hundred yards or so of the spot he heard such a continued growling and snarling, that his curiosity could not resist the temptation of taking a peep to see what animal it could be making such a noise.

The trap had been fastened to a stump by means of a leathern thong or *rein*, but Piet saw that the tiger, for a tiger it was, had made up his mind to gnaw through it. In a moment he had lodged the

contents of his gun in the animal's head. The shot took effect, and it dropped at once, apparently dead. To make sure he would have put another bullet into the brute, but found to his dismay that he had either dropped his powder flask or left it at home. However, waiting a few minutes more and seeing no sign of life, Piet's Hottentot instinct made him wish for the beautiful spotted skin.

He knew that to fetch any price at all it must be removed entire, so went up to the beast and placed his hand upon its skin, which, of course, was still warm and supple to the touch, but he could detect no apparent movement. Still, to make quite sure the tiger was dead, he would have drawn the well-sharpened clasp-knife which he held in his hand across the white throat as it lay there stretched out, had he not feared by so doing the skin would be spoiled. As it was, he merely plunged the blade up to the hilt into the creature's side.

With a roar, the beast he had thought dead was upon him, and then must have ensued a deadly fight, during which the flesh was torn from Piet's arm and shoulder in a fearful manner. Nevertheless, he managed to retain his hold of the knife, and as the creature came at him open-mouthed, he thrust his hand, knife and all, down its throat, and by almost superhuman effort sawed it to and fro until he had severed the vein through which the life-blood flowed, he himself fainting immediately after from loss of blood and sheer exhaustion.

Carrying Piet down to the homestead took up so

much time that they were late in getting breakfast. They hastily partook of it, however, and went up to the kraal to inoculate the cattle which had never been operated upon before.





CHAPTER III.

THE CATTLE PLAGUE AND HOW TO CHECK IT.



IT may not be amiss nor altogether uninteresting to relate here as briefly as possible what the writer remembers concerning the introduction of inoculation of cattle into the Cape Colony.

We believe, then, as far as our memory serves us, without referring to Blue Books, that it was between the years 1852-55 that a great plague broke out among the cattle in the Cape Colony.

Careful examinations of the animals made after death resulted in proving the illness from which they had died to be tubercular disease of the lungs. It was most distressing to the animal, causing a fearful cough at times, a constant discharge from the nostrils, and a rapid wasting of the entire system, terminating, with very few exceptions, in death.

This disease in a short time made fearful havoc amongst the herds of the colony, the farmers, in many instances, being left with neither oxen for

farm work nor cows for milking, so rapid was the spread of the pestilence.

The legislature in vain tried to "stamp it out," as has been done of late years with the cattle plague in England, by ordering that every animal so infected should be at once destroyed.

It is one thing to make a law affecting people's property, and another to see it enacted in a country in which there are hundreds of miles without a policeman.

However, something had to be done, and many were the experiments tried by the more thoughtful and better class of farmers as well as those by medical men such as Dr. Atherstone, of Grahamstown, Drs. Rubidge, and Dunsterville, of Port Elizabeth, and others in the provinces who wished to benefit their country.

In the neighbourhood of Port Elizabeth a small farm was hired for the purpose of carrying out these experiments, and after many trials it was resolved to have recourse to inoculation.

A number of healthy young animals, as well as older ones, were subjected to the process; at first they were inoculated above the hock and in various parts of the body, but eventually it was found that about the fifth joint from the tip of the tail was the best place for the operation.

All these beasts had the disease in a very mild form, and when quite well were subjected to the trial of contagion and found perfectly safe.

Since that time, inoculation of cattle has become general through the length and breadth of the land; and not only our colonial farmers from the South of

the Cape to the North of the Transvaal, but we believe most of the native tribes also inoculate their young cattle as regularly as we vaccinate our children. Of course, there are instances of carelessness and neglect; every now and then a case of *Long-ziekte* is reported, and then, as we have seen on Mr. Carlton's farm, immediate measures are taken to prevent its further spread.

And now let us join our young men in the kraal.

"I think," said George to Marston, "that as you and Charley are not quite accustomed to our wild cattle, you had better at first take up your position on the top of the wall, it will make a good post of observation, and you can join us at any moment you wish."

"Right you are!" said Marston, "so here goes, though I don't think I shall stay up there long."

He vaulted to the top and stood bolt upright, legs apart like a colossus of Rhodes; but scarcely was he up when a young bullock that was tearing about the kraal with the men at his heels, suddenly made a leap at him, and, catching him between the legs in his transit, alighted with him on his back, but hind part before on the other side of the wall, close to where George and Charley were still talking. George held in his hand the noose with which he was about to catch those in the kraal that he required, quick as thought it was round the short horns of the young thing, and while he held it firmly one of the men ran up and passed a "rein" round the hind legs, when at once it fell on its side with a

thud. Not, however, before Marston had dismounted from his energetic little steed.

"Many a true word spoken in jest, my boy!" said Charley, "you certainly did not remain in your exalted position long; not hurt, eh?"

"Not a bit, old boy! but it's a queer sensation being carried off nolens volens like Europa, you know."

"Well, Taurus seems to have a sensational way of showing his love for you, at all events."

"Now then, we'll begin upon this fellow," said George, "as Marston has been so kind as to catch him for us."

"Let's see what you are going to do to the poor little wretch. How awfully frightened he looks!" said Charley.

"I daresay he doesn't understand being held down on the ground after his wild flight," said Marston; "but if young bulls will try to come the Pegasus, I suppose they must be put down a peg or two."

George now carefully made an incision in the skin above one of the lower joints of the tail, into this he inserted the rounded point of a piece of wood which had been dipped in the virus, or *pus* taken from the diseased lung of the dead animal the day before; this was well rubbed in, the skin closed over it, the thongs that held him loosened, a slight impetus given, and Taurus was free.

This operation was repeated upon about five-and-twenty or thirty of the young cattle in the kraal, some of them in addition having to be branded with Mr. Carlton's initials. But they were not all caught so easily as Marston's involuntary steed, and conse-

quently it was late when they were turned out and allowed to run off at their own sweet wills.

"They don't seem to feel much inconvenience," said Charley.

"No, nor will they, for some days," answered George, "but after a certain time they will be rather more than slightly indisposed, and Allan will have to look to their tails, for sometimes, if not attended to, they fester and become very sore, even, as you have seen, dropping off at that joint, to the great annoyance of the poor beast in summer time, when the flies are very troublesome, and they have no tails to brush them away with."

"I have strong hopes," said George, after dinner, "of catching the mate of that fellow that gave poor Piet such a dressing this morning. We will if you like ride up, by-and-by, for I should like to set the trap myself to-night. I will take good care that it is not walked off."

"Chain it? I suppose," suggested Charley.

"Yes," said George, "there's a good stout one here; there was one with it, but not strong enough, and it has been lost."

When they arrived they found the carcass almost devoured by vultures and carrion crows; the remains swarming with ants who were busily engaged in clearing every vestige of flesh and sinew left on the bones.

"Dear me," exclaimed Charley, "how clean that fellow's skull looks already. I should like to take that very much to Dr. Cullington, our medical man at home, he is very fond of those things."

"That you can do now," said George, "for it does

not appear to have been injured by the birds, but as we are coming up in the morning, I should advise your leaving it till then, when the ants will have left it entirely. But take care, Marston. Don't imagine that you have English ants to deal with. If you get those little wretches about you, you'll rue it."

"I don't fancy they can hurt very much," returned the boy.

"They can though! I assure you; in fact, from time immemorial the greatest torture inflicted by the Amakosa, and other native tribes, upon their enemies or any one they desired to punish with great severity, was by means of that much be-praised, and doubtless in some respects, exemplary little insect."

"How was that?" inquired Charley.

"Well, they used to bind their victims naked to a tree, smear them all over with scorched fat, often making gashes in the most tender parts of the body, then a large nest of ants was placed in or under the tree. These, attracted by the fat, swarmed on to the living but helpless victims, and literally ate them to death."

"How very horrible! Would they do such things now?" asked Charley.

"I hope not; I think that the schools, of which so many have been founded amongst them, must have rendered them incapable of enduring even the thought of committing such atrocities; besides which, the last seven or eight years, in which thousands of them have been in constant intercourse with white men on the diamond fields, often working with

them shoulder to shoulder, in the same "claim," must have done *something* towards the work of civilization."

"There are some fine feathers here," said Marston, picking some up. "Oh, I say! look at this one, would it not make a splendid exaggeration of a quill pen for an old dominie in a charade?"

"Vultures are quarrelsome creatures," said George, "and often fight terribly over a tit-bit, pulling each other's feathers out; but it's great fun to see a third one step in and quietly gobble up the disputed morsel, while the squabble is still going on."

As they neared the spot the following morning they heard no growling, as Piet had done, but a low, plaintive, crying noise.

George had set the trap this time quite behind a great rock, so that they could not see it without going round.

"What can that be?" said he, turning pale; "no wild beast that I know. I hope no child can have got into the trap."

They scrambled up as fast as they could.

"Take care, Marston, let me go first; it may, after all, be the female panther crying after her mate, or her little ones."

But it was a touching picture they came upon.

There lay the "mate," which George had thought he should catch, quite dead; the heavy trap had closed upon, and dislocated the neck, while walking round and over the body were two quite young cubs, beautiful little creatures, about the size of a domestic cat.

"Poor thing!" said George; "she must have come out prowling about after him early last night, for you see she is quite stiff and cold. What shall we do with the little ones?"

"Let's take them with us," said Marston, who was fondling one that had allowed itself to be caught very easily.

"I don't think they will live taken from the mother at that age. However, do as you like."

"I *should* like to show them to Fred; and I expect Lily and Blanche would like them for pets."

"That's all very well while they are mere kittens," said George, "but when they get older I shall have to kill them. The treacherous, bloodthirsty nature is never eradicated, and I would not, on any account, run the risk of the children's keeping them *then*. But I think with you we may as well take them now, we can't leave them here; and I for one don't feel at all inclined to kill the poor little brutes."

George was all this time busy skinning the panther, while Charley was helping him—two beautiful skins they were.

"We'll give *this* one to Fred," said George, "and you shall have the one Piet killed. That is a little larger, but this is the softer of the two."

"But why should you give them to us?" said Charley. "Will not your mother like to have them?"

"She has some that my father and I have shot; and I know she will prefer you having these to carry home as trophies."

"Thank you *very* much ; they will, indeed, be valuable in that light, and be preserved in memory of this most pleasant time."

"I wonder what Marston's about," said George ; "it is very unlike him to be so quiet."

They had finished their job, and George had just cut off the head that Charley might have a perfect skull to take home.

"We will put it," said he, "into a box perforated with holes, and place it in the ground near an ant-hill, or even bury it in the garden, and in a couple of weeks it will be as white as ivory."

They found Marston with his jacket off, making some contrivance for carrying the two cubs down the hill. He had tied the sleeves round at the cuffs with a piece of string, then placing a cub in each, the two little heads appeared at the top.

"There ! Now I can sling them over my neck and have one on each side of me. This fellow that I caught last is inclined to be savage. He swears as wickedly as an old cat ; so I have tied him in round the neck."

There was a hearty laugh at his appearance.

"I don't wish to liken you to an ass, Marston," said Charley, "but your burden at the present moment irresistibly reminds one of an animal often seen in a gipsy cavalcade with a baby in each pannier."

When they reached the cottage in this guise Allan's greeting was : "Hech, sirs ! but you're no intendin' to rear thae vermin to go rampagin about the hoose, and kill every chick and child in it !"


Notwithstanding which disparaging speech, Mrs. McAlpine managed to give them some milk; and after breakfast they all started for Karoolands, the cubs being placed comfortably in a basket and carried by Hendrick.





CHAPTER IV.

A BOTANICAL RAMBLE.

“ AM rather glad that I did not go with them,” said Fred to Frank Harding, as they were taking a ramble together; “it is very pleasant to be able to linger about here without feeling that you must get on.”

“I am not only very glad that we did not go, but also that I have had you to myself these two days. Our long morning yesterday in the book-room with you, to talk over everything, was quiet enjoyment, and our ramble to-day will be all that again in another form.”

“You will have to be the principal talker to-day, for, I suppose, you have been in the habit of passing an hour or two in some shady spot like this, with a book for a companion.”

“Yes; or even without one, the creatures about are companions enough for me sometimes. For instance, do you see that tiny plain-looking bird? That is the ‘Kappock Vogel;’ it makes the cosiest

nest that you can possibly imagine, and as white as the hoar frost, after which it is named. An old Dutchman told me that when he was a boy they used to make it of the silky winged-seeds of the wild cotton which grows abundantly in these rivers ; but since the introduction of sheep, they always use the wool which they find adhering to the bushes. The young birds must be out by this time, so if I can find that little fellow's nest, I will take it. I thought so ; here it is."

"It is more like a fine felt, though of different thicknesses," said Fred. "You may well call it cozy ; it is much the same shape as those of the orioles which we saw at your place."

"Yes, I dare say the birds are related ; do you see this small cup-like nest outside the large one and near the passage ; the male bird sits in that, twittering and chattering to his wee wife, while she is sitting on the eggs inside."

"This nest is wonderfully made, and must be very strong : the passage is as thin as paper, and the bottom of the nest quite an inch thick, showing the sensible instinct in putting the warmth where required."

"Are those the rock rabbits you once spoke of, running in and out of those holes in the rocks ?"

"Yes," said Frank ; "we call them 'Dassys.' They are said to be identical with the conies of Scripture (*Hyrax Capensis*). It was amusing to watch these when they first came here ; I was visiting Karoolands at the time. You see, this is the face of the large dam, and on this side there are a great many cavities in between the natural rocks and

the blocks that make up its foundation. Soon after it was finished, an old fellow came down from the 'krantz' above and lived here quite alone ; it seemed such an odd sort of life for a naturally social animal that we used to speculate as to whether he had committed some great crime, and had, therefore, been driven forth from the haunts of his fellow-conies ; or whether he were used-up and tired of town life ; or had a scolding wife at home, and had, therefore, preferred exile and peace to society and strife. For many weeks 'Petrus,' as we called him, lived this hermit life. He was one of the institutions of the farm, and every day some one wished him good morning. At last, in as sudden a manner as he came, he disappeared ; some thought he was dead, but, on watching his habitation, neither ants nor flies were seen to visit it, as they would have done, to devour the body. Weeks passed, and no Petrus appeared ; in fact, he was almost forgotten, when one morning one of the boys came running in with the startling intelligence that Petrus was sitting on his old ledge, just outside his hole, and that another dassy had been seen with him. This proved to be Madame Petronella ; and, you see, now there is a large colony, of which Petrus is the very ancient patriarch."

"I can well understand your finding it easy to pass a few hours out here without books, with such an imagination as yours," said Fred, laughing, "why, you might even——"

But what it was that Frank *might* do, was not destined to be told just then—for they were interrupted by the most violent hissing conceivable.

"A snake!" cried Frank.

"A dozen at least!" said Fred.

They ran up the bank under which they had been sitting, from the top of which the noise proceeded, and there upon an open sandy spot, between the Karoo and Kanna bushes, were three snakes—two of them standing almost erect upon their tails, fighting each other most vigorously, now darting this way, then that—their forked tongues protruding from their open jaws, their eyes glaring like balls of fire; the third one was hissing away like the others, but on which side they could not tell—all were too much engaged to heed their human intruders, especially as they took good care to keep at a respectful distance.

"A fine opportunity for betting fellows that would be," said Fred; "I wonder which will win."

"I mean to try and shoot the winner, at any rate; he shan't go scot free if I can help it, or that hissing neutrality either," said Frank, pointing his gun. "I wish you had brought some weapon with you."

"Oh, don't shoot yet, let them have it out; it's the strangest set-to that I ever saw in my life."

Their evident aim was each one to inflict a venomous bite upon the other, and it was marvellous to see the dexterity with which, while lashing their tails and writhing their bodies in every direction, they managed to evade each other's fangs. Now down on their bellies—now again on their tails. The combat lasted for some minutes, when all at once, taking advantage of an unguarded moment, the one was bitten by his adversary in the neck. He seemed to know that his time was come, and dropped

in a moment, but as he did so bit the other in the tail.

"They will both die," said Frank, shooting the "hissing neutrality," as he had denominated the non-combatant, who, in the most cowardly manner, was making off as fast as it could, now that its friends were down.

The two that had been fighting were endeavouring to get out of the way, but very languidly.

Fred, who was particularly anxious to *prove* the fact that snakes *could* kill each other in that way, proposed tying them together and fastening them to a stake driven into the ground, but Frank dissuaded him from the dangerous experiment, and they contented themselves with pinning them down with a forked stake, and, returning in a few hours, found both quite dead.

"That is a good riddance to the country," said Frank, throwing the snake he had shot high up into a mimosa bush; "at least, that is, as far as the risk to human beings, sheep, and cattle. At the same time 'snakes have their uses,' as old Derry, the gardener, says, for were it not for them the country would be overrun by vermin of all kinds. The black snake we do not kill on that account; there are others also whose bite is not venomous, or very slightly so. But most people have such an innate antipathy to snakes generally, that to kill is the first object, to inquire the species, the second."

"Your ideas upon this subject would have been endorsed by our well-known naturalist and lover of snakes and fishes—Frank Buckland," said Fred.

"Oh, I do not take credit to myself. I am in-

debted to him for them," replied Frank. "One of my favourite companions has been a volume of his amusing book, 'Curiosities of Natural History.'"

They walked along some distance, startling lizards of every shade, from the delicate, little fawn-colour and scarlet to the clumsily-shaped, but richly tinted blue variety. They shot a koorhaan—a bird of the bustard species—one of the few birds that the colonists shoot for the larder, and passed quite a colony of ring-doves who kept up an incessant cooing in the trees on the banks of the river.

Fred had made many additions to his botanical collections and sketches. A parasite, which he recognized as a variety of mistletoe, made a remarkable appearance in the midst of the delicate leaves, golden balls, and long white thorns of the mimosa, almost every second tree of which was burdened with an incubus of this description, and although the clusters of slender orange and scarlet flowers and bright coral-like berries were very showy, it was no ornament to the shrub of which it was gradually sapping the life-blood.

"This differs very materially, both in blossom and berry, from our English mistletoe," remarked Fred.

"Yes ; so my mother has told me. One day at a picnic on the Little Fish River a small piece with pearly white berries was brought to her as having been gathered in the bush, but she had never seen any before or since."

"I suppose this plant, as in other instances, is carried from tree to tree by the birds?"

"Yes : and on that account is called by the Dutch 'vogel-inente,' or bird inoculation. The glutinous seed

adheres to the bird's beak, and naturally remains upon the first branch against which he sharpens it."

One plant had a most appropriate Dutch name, "maagerman," or "thin man," a fleshy stem no thicker than a man's little finger, and growing from three to four feet straight up out of the ground; without leaf, it presents a most striking appearance.

Another singular plant was the "stapelia," a richly spotted, ruby and brown velvety, star-like blossom; it bore the name of "carrion flower," on account of its extremely offensive smell.

A small plant very often met with on the Karoo plains is the "candle bush." Like a large proportion of South African plants, it is fenced in by a superabundance of thorns, among which upon a dark and clumsy stem, appear delicately pretty flowers and leaves, but it is the stem in which the singularity of the plant consists, this is so full of a rich resinous matter, that each little branch when lighted at the end will burn like a jet of gas.

"Is it made any use of?" asked Fred.

"The Hottentot women collect it for lighting their fires, and I have seen them using it instead of a candle to work by," replied Frank.

Many more curious things did they meet with in their rambles, though not all in the two days that the others were absent.

"Oh, mamma, mamma!" said Lily, "see what they have brought home for us! I have just had a peep at them—two such little beauties?"

"Marston insisted upon bringing them, mother," said George, as the young men all walked into the drawing-room. "So he is accountable."

"I am very glad to have you all back after your hair-breadth escapes. We had your message, and Saartje has gone to Piet ; and now, Lily, let me see the beauties."

Marston opened the basket.

"Two tiger cubs ! my dear boy ! What are we to do with them ?"

"But are they not pretty things ?" said Marston.

"They are, indeed," replied Mrs. Carlton, "but—

"I know if you had seen them, as we did first, crawling over their dead mother, and crying so piteously," said Marston, taking out the quiet one and putting it into Lily's arms, "you would not have allowed me to kill them if I wanted to."

"Oh, mamma, dear. Do let us keep them."

Mrs. Carlton smiled but looked anxious, and placing her hand upon Marston's shoulder remarked, "Dear Marston, do not think that I am sorry that you spared their lives. I am glad, indeed, that you could not find it in your heart to kill them, especially under such circumstances. My cause for anxiety is this, that as we should soon get attached to these pets when young, it will be hard to part with them when they become dangerous. However, we will try, and now then for all your adventures ?"

But Marston and all the children were off with the cubs at once, and Lily was soon feeding them with milk from her doll's teapot.

"Take care, Blanchy," said Marston, "that one in the basket is a regular spitfire ; it is strange how two animals of the same family can have such different tempers."

"What are you moralizing about?" asked Mr.

Carlton, coming amongst them, but seeing the cubs, he exclaimed, "You young mischief! do you think tigers are tamable?"

"I *am* so sorry, sir, indeed I am. Mrs. Carlton did not like my having brought them, and now *you* are vexed with me; but I thought Lily and Blanchy would so like to see them."

"Vexed with you! Indeed I am not. I have been quite longing for you to come back; and as for those pretty little kittens, I am afraid you won't keep them long; those wild things are always troublesome to rear; and now we had better come to supper.





CHAPTER V.

THE OSTRICH CAMP.

THE next day they all went down to the ostrich camp.

“How was it,” asked Charley of Mr. Carlton, on the way, “that as ostrich farming was only commenced a few years ago, the feathers were as fashionable then as now. Where did they get them from?”

“In former years,” replied he, “these plains were covered with ostriches ; I can remember seeing and chasing flocks of them as late as within the last forty years, although they had then begun their retreat to plains more remote from the gun of the hunter, for the Dutch farmer or ‘smous,’ as well as every coloured man, whenever opportunity occurred, killed them to obtain their feathers.”

“Poor persecuted birds ! No wonder they tried to get out of reach of the hunter,” remarked Fred.

“But that was not all, the Bushmen and Hottentots, who have always been the most improvident of

beings, frequently robbed the nest of as many eggs as they could carry away."

"Seeing the size of them, I suppose that would not be many," said Marston; "unless they carried a bag or a basket on purpose, I don't see how they could take more than one in each hand."

"In that manner, young jack-a-napes," said Mr. Carlton, playfully pulling the boy's ear, "as one hand of the native was invariably taken up by his weapons, I don't see how he could take more than *one*, and he certainly would not burden himself with basket or bag on the *chance* of finding a nest. Nevertheless, I well remember an old Hottentot herd bringing home *nine* at once to my mother. I was reminded of it yesterday when I heard of the way in which you brought your pets down the hill; he had taken off his trousers, a cast-off pair of my father's, and therefore roomy enough, and tying them round the ankles formed a double sort of bag, which he slung over his shoulder."

"Well, certainly," said Charley. "Necessity is the mother of invention."

"Yes, and at school," joined in Marston, "we always used to translate the proverb 'necessitas non habet leges'—'necessity has no legs,' but in that case the fellow must have looked all legs and no trousers, it must have been 'legs non habent leggings.'"

Marston's speech produced a hearty laugh.

"I have read in old travellers' books," said Fred, "that several hen birds would lay their eggs in one nest, and that they left them to be hatched by the sun."

“The first part of that was, I think, quite true as regards the birds in their wild state. I remember in troops of seventeen to twenty, there were seldom more than three male birds in the lot, and I know that several birds will lay in one nest if allowed to do so, but we always pair them, and the cock takes his turn on the nest with the hen; as to the sun hatching, all I can say is that the traveller probably found the nest just as the bird was off for the purpose of feeding and taking her bath, which she is obliged to do an account of the great heat, and as, on those vast plains, the holes of water were few and far between, she would in all probability have to run miles for it and so be absent some time. There was another old tale told of the time when between thirty and forty eggs were laid in one nest with, I think a probability of truth, and that is that the outside circle of eggs, being more than the bird could well cover, were never turned as the others were, but left to be *baked* by the sun, and then when the young birds were hatched the hen instinctively broke them to feed her chicks. But you will see that in a tame state they do not require that sort of thing. They are at once fed with chopped food of various kinds, sometimes a little boiled liver, hard-boiled egg, and plenty of green food. We also soon remove them from their mother, who then lays again in a few weeks.”

“There is one enemy to birds’ eggs that would gain nothing by a visit to an ostrich nest,” said Fred. “A snake could hardly break that thickness of shell.”

“No! but they do get broken, though,” said Harry;

“and I think that snakes now and then help to suck them when they are broken. One day I found three or four stones in a nest, and several times since we have watched the crows fly up with stones in their beaks, and let them fall on to their eggs, and if they break one, come down for a feast.”

“Do you not use the artificial incubator?” asked Charley; “I thought every one did now.”

“I do,” replied Mr. Carlton, “but not alone. I have some hens which are such capital breeders that I always let them have a good sitting, about nineteen or twenty-one eggs, of which generally not more than three or four perish; but the failures at first were very numerous. The nests were too exposed, the birds were disturbed, or the eggs proved to be addled. Then the birds could not stand the variation of climate, as when they were in their wild state; but the introduction of artificial incubation after the custom of the ancient Egyptians proved eminently successful.”

“I wonder who first thought of plucking the birds instead of killing them?” inquired Marston.

“I don’t know, but, possibly, some old lady who was in the habit of picking her geese every six weeks. It did not originate in South Africa. Ostrich breeding was carried on in other parts of the world before the Cape Colony took it up.”

“Is it not awfully cruel work plucking them alive?” inquired Marston.

“Yes, indeed it is! therefore, we never do it. Some take a knife: I generally use a long sharp pair of scissors, because I can sever three or four feathers at a time; they are cut as close as possible to the root,

and the bird does not feel it, and the stumps fall out a few weeks afterwards. With this plan there is no cruelty whatever, nor is any cruelty necessarily encouraged by the taste for wearing ostrich feathers ; but I do not think the same thing can be said in regard to those beautiful little birds some ladies wear in their hats ; however, here we are at the camp. We will not all go amongst them, as many of the birds become very vicious at the intrusion of strangers."

"I thought an ostrich camp was a much smaller affair than this ; but I suppose it varies according to the number of birds," said Charley.

"Just so. Our most successful men in this branch of farming have enclosures of a thousand acres each ; in fact, the birds do not thrive unless they have plenty of room, as well as good sheltering places."

In one house built for the purpose they found the hatching by artificial heat going on, and upon opening the incubator the eggs looked very snug upon their warm, soft, woollen-lined shelves.

"You perceive," said Mr. Carlton, "that a certain amount of moisture has to be kept about the egg as would be the case if under the bird. This is very essential, and many were the failures at first, from neglecting to provide for it. I have often dipped them into water when I found them too dry, but now we keep evaporators underneath the perforated shelves."

In an adjoining room they found an old woman with about thirty or forty chicks, just hatched, which she was occasionally feeding with finely chopped

food. She had a boy with her, whose duty it was to look after as many more birds of a previous hatching which were in the compound of the building; these were about the size of turkeys.

“And now,” said Mr. Carlton, “if you will stand within this railing, we will soon get some of the birds up, so that you may see them well.”

George then took out a sack of chopped lucerne and maize, and began scattering some of it. Immediately the birds came running to the spot, their wings raised, and their long necks craned forward in an eager manner.

They soon perceived the strangers, and it was amusing to note their looks of inquiry, and to hear their ku-r-r-r—ra kurr—ra of communication in every direction as they inspected them; their long snake-like necks moving gracefully from side to side, or towering erect far above George’s head.

“What a magnificent eye the ostrich has,” observed Charley.

“I am glad you remarked it. I do not think I have ever met with any animal that has a more beautiful eye. You were looking at that large bird in the moment of his startled excitement, but just look at these. They have the ‘soft brown eye’ of the gazelle. And now I am going to show you the mode of snipping off the feathers.”

When the birds had been driven into a small high-walled enclosure, so close together that they had not room to do any mischief, he selected three very beautiful blood plumes, and quickly severing them in the way before described, presented one to

each as a memento of their visit to the Ostrich Camp.

Thanks being duly rendered by all, both for the feathers and the kind explanations they had heard, all were about to leave the place, when a great cry was raised from a distant part of the camp.

"The old cock bird," said George, starting off in the direction of the noise.

Charley was after him in a moment, before Mr. Carlton could stop him, and Marston had just put his feather into Fred's hand in order to join them.

"Overtake Charley, Marston," shouted Mr. Carlton, "and give him my stick, but come back yourself. Mind what I say."

Marston looked as if about to remonstrate, but darted off saying, "yes sir."

"Fine boy, that!" exclaimed Mr. Carlton.

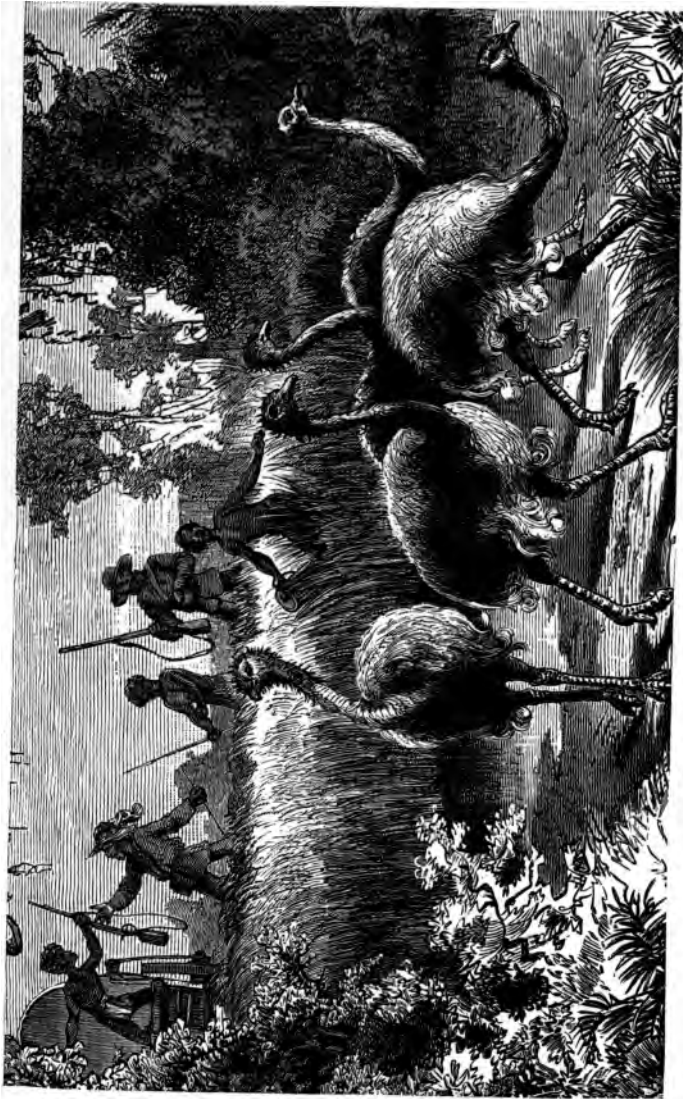
"Come, we must get outside the gate nearest to where they are. Why! where's Harry? I thought he was with us."

"I saw him with the boy," said Frank, running to the chicken house and calling his name.

"He had left with Yonge" the boy said, "while the master was feeding the birds."

"Then they have been attacked," said Mr. Carlton, taking up another long stick forked at the end. "I must see! you had better all of you get out and hold the gate in readiness."

"There they come!" shouted Fred, as Marston and Harry came running along, Marston with his arm round Harry's waist, who was evidently limping



YONGE AND THE OSTRICHES.

a little, and moreover, had one of the legs of his trousers torn to ribbons.

"Are you much hurt, my boy?" asked his father.

"No, father, it is nothing, though if the others hadn't come up matters might have been much worse; it was that stupid Yonge, he knows that bird hates him, and yet he will go up and provoke it; but I think he's had a lesson this time. The creature is awfully vicious to-day, and he got Yonge on to the ground, and although I beat him and did my best, he kicked him frightfully and tore the shirt clean off his back."

"And where is he now? That bird won't let him alone if he's left behind."

"Oh! I told George where he was," said Harry, laughing. "He rolled into an ant-bear hole, while I was keeping my stick warm on the old fellow's back, but I couldn't reach to do much damage, and that was how I got my kick. Then when George and Charley came they had told Marston to wait for me, and their forked sticks kept him back. I think they will let him push them this way, so that Yonge may have an opportunity of getting out of quod."

"Here they are, sure enough, bird and all," said Fred, "why, Frank, he makes almost as much hissing as the snakes did yesterday. But what a guttural hiss!"

"That's because he has to blow it through such a long pipe," said Marston.

"There's Yonge climbing over the wall!" cried George, as he and Charley came towards them,

walking backward. "Father, have you a stick, or will you trust to mine?"

But the bird spared them any further trouble. For as soon as he saw the large party on the other side of the gate, he turned, and at a trotting pace a few of his four to five feet strides soon brought him again to the bosom of his family to tell his adventures to his wife.

"Well," said Charley, wiping his forehead, "that's hot work! What a strong fellow he is; I stepped upon one of those prickly things once, and I thought he'd have had me down. With all that strength of his he ought to be made to work for his bread!"

"Blowing seems to be his forte," said Fred, laughing; "he would be invaluable at the blow-pipe."

"He blew them up pretty well all the way out, didn't he," said Mr. Carlton. "I am glad you managed to get off without hurting him, for he is a valuable bird."

"Is he always as quarrelsome?"

"Oh! by no means! but always at pairing time. To-night he and his hen will be placed in a small pen by themselves."

"But he would not have been so fierce, father, if Yonge had not gone near him. It is strange what antipathies those birds will take, more particularly to some of the Hottentots. They are like dogs in that respect."

"The forked stick is a wonderful help," said Charley, placing it among some others near the gate.

“Yes! as long as you can keep even a small stick before his chest, it is an insuperable barrier to the ostrich; and the large open-forked branch is the best thing for keeping a bird at a sufficient distance to prevent his forward ‘chopping’ sort of kick from taking effect. His muscular power is so great that he can break the leg of a horse at one single blow.”

“And I suppose,” said Fred, “that he himself is impervious to blows?”

“Not at all!” said Mr. Carlton, “I have lost two fine birds through some Hottentots giving them a smart cut with a stick on the neck; one was killed by another in fighting; and a fourth broke his leg by falling into a hole. By-the-by, George, that subterranean retreat of Yonge’s, although it did good service in this instance, must be filled up or we shall have some more broken legs.”

“Did the bird die?” asked Marston.

“No! we put the broken limb carefully in splints, and kept him in hospital for a short time, and he was soon all right again.”

“I wonder how you are able to keep those large birds inside this comparatively low stone wall,” said Charley. “I fancy I could either leap or vault over it myself.”

“You see, they are too heavy for their wings to be of much use to them, although, no doubt, they can jump. For, at different times, two wild birds have leapt the wall to join those inside. And once, when a solitary hen was walking about outside, one of our cock birds joined her, and by degrees induced her to follow him into a part of the camp that had

been left open on purpose. But they do not like gymnastic exercise of the kind, and we find a wall of three and a half or four feet in height sufficient to keep them within the camp."

"I think I have heard it said that the Karoo pasturage suits them better than grass land," said Charley.

"Undoubtedly it does!" replied Mr. Carlton. "So very many of the plants indigenous to this soil abound in alkaline juices, the water is brackish, and the very ground is so impregnated with the salt required that it exudes on the surface. You will notice it here and there on the plains, like a small white wafer, and in the dried-up 'vleys,' it much resembles hoar frost over the hard clods of earth. All this is what they require with their food, and in a country where it is not found it has to be supplied artificially. Crushed bones, too, are given to them."

"I have heard wonderful stories of their capacity to digest iron nails, &c.; are they true?" inquired Charley.

"Oh, the gormandizers! they swallowed my new knife," said Harry; "and woe to a button on your jacket, if it happens to be loose, they'll grab it before you know what they're about. And as to fruit! Why, they run after you like mad things for any ripe figs you may have with you. But a rare bit of fun happened not long ago. A little girl, and that old woman you saw with the chicks, were one day sitting on the ground outside the house, and the girl was threading some of those large white and blue beads. She put them down beside her, while she was getting the string ready to thread them on; and when she turned round for them, the last one was

just being gobbled up. She began screeching with all her might; and while the old woman was helping her to drive off that bird, another one coolly walked up and bolted the poor old thing's reel of cotton, and a little box of needles Lily had given her 'at New Year.' And just wasn't there a concert?"

Harry's story created much merriment, and brought up others of a similar character. Charley Vyvyan walked on ahead with Mr. Carlton, inquiring the value of the birds, their feathers, and so on.

"The value of an ostrich varies much, according to its age and condition, besides which, some are much better breeders than others; full grown fine birds are often valued at from £45 to £60; while for chicks of about a month old, I can sell as many as I wish at £5 each; and I do a good deal in that way, although I have never given up the certainty of sheep and goat farming for the comparative uncertainty of the ostrich. I therefore keep my birds within a prescribed limit; still, I must certainly confess, that even now there is nothing pays so well as ostriches. As to feathers, the price is regulated first by the quality, and then by the market; the former depends greatly upon the food and the manner in which the bird is kept. He should have plenty of space to roam about at will in as natural a manner as possible. There are no feathers better than those of the wild bird. He must also be well and judiciously fed. As the coat of a horse does credit to good care and keep, so does the plumage of a bird, My feathers bring me on an average about £10 a year from each ostrich. Feathers according to the size

and fineness sell from £20 to £60 per lb. Will you walk across with me to those huts?" continued Mr. Carlton. "I wish to see whether Yonge was much hurt."

"How amusing his sudden disappearance was to be sure. Just for a moment, as we were running up, Charley and I saw two boys with the bird—one of them on the ground. Then Marston came up with the stick, and at the instant that I looked away, while taking the stick from Marston, one of the lads disappeared. One might have fancied the ostrich had gobbled him up. What curious places those ant-bear holes are. I have seen many of them about the country. I should think they must be dangerous in riding."

"Very much so," replied Mr. Carlton; "and more especially as the ant-eater makes them sometimes in the course of a night in the most unexpected places—the middle of a waggon-road for instance. In hunting they are most abominable; many a narrow escape have I had when galloping after springbucks in my younger days. One morning I was chasing a fine lot of 'bucks;' they must have given me a long run, for as far as I could see not one of my party was in sight—but in springbock chasing no one stops to think of that. I had chosen my 'clump' and I went after it. All at once, while going full speed, my horse fell headlong into one of these great holes, and I in the most unaccountable manner found myself buried under him up to my waist. I waited for him to make some movement, hoping then to release my legs, for all his weight was upon me, and we were so tightly jammed in that

I could not move. Judge of my consternation, therefore, when I discovered that the horse had broken his neck in the fall and was quite dead !”

“What an awkward predicament to be in,” said Charley. “Did your companions soon find you ?”

“No chance of that in such a place in those days ; and when I began to realize my situation it was certainly not a pleasant one : fifteen miles or more from the nearest farmhouse on a barren Karoo plain. I used all the strength I was possessed of in the endeavour to free myself, but I could not stir. My gun had been thrown quite out of my reach, or I might perchance have attracted the attention of some distant wanderer by a few shots. It was burning hot, and I was already parched with thirst ; but I knew there was no water to be had for miles. The saddle was hurting me, but it had been too well girthed to yield to any pulling of mine. I could fortunately get to the hunting-knife which I carried in my belt, but I could not reach the girth. However, of course I cut the saddle—and you can imagine the relief it was to get a piece of it over my head, for my straw hat had gone with my gun—and then set to work to cut myself out. This, however, took much time and labour. Bit by bit I cut away the flesh of the dead horse, but I could not sever the bones. I was thus busily occupied when a sudden thunderstorm came on ; I had not noticed its approach. On looking up I was surprised to perceive that I was no longer quite alone, for about a dozen or twenty vultures and crows were waiting my departure in order to feast upon my poor old favourite. Meanwhile the storm raged—

and what a storm it was! The lightning was extremely vivid, and was seen flashing in every direction, while the thunder reverberated on all sides. The ugly bareheaded vultures huddled themselves up, while the crows strutted about in the most impudent manner among them. I worked away more vigorously as I began to feel that I was nearly free. And then the rain came down—a perfect deluge on that parched desert land. Oh! how I enjoyed it. I arranged a piece of the hide so that it could catch the water; it was filled immediately, and I slaked my thirst. The next moment I had released myself from my singular prison, and then as I stood over the mangled carcass, myself dripping with blood from the shoulders downward, you will not wonder that my first act was to thank God for my preservation and release.

“I had at first feared that one leg was broken, but it must have been merely the pressure of the stirrup; indeed, in making a minute examination, I found that I had not a scratch or a hurt about me. I soon gathered up my belongings, not forgetting the damaged saddle, which I could ill have spared then. I bound it on my back, and, gun in hand, started for home, knowing that I should not have more than half an hour's daylight; however, the stars are good guides, but long after they were out I wandered on, and still no sign of home. The night seemed alive with wolves and jackals; the latter, of course, did not trouble me, but once or twice, when I felt inclined to lie down under a bush till the morning, I was deterred by the thought of the former, who used at that time to hunt in packs. At last—and it was

after midnight—I heard the welcome sound of dogs barking. I proceeded in the direction from whence the sound proceeded, and discharged my gun, and soon heard a shot in reply. I fired again; then came another responsive shot, and soon after I could distinguish the voices of my men.

“I was thankful to find that as I did not return by supper-time, my wife had made up her mind that I had gone with others of the party to a neighbouring farm for the night, and had therefore not been anxious. Old Katryn soon managed to get me some clean clothes and a hot supper, and never did tired mortal go to his rest with greater pleasure than I did, and that notwithstanding the loss of my favourite horse.”


By this time they had reached the huts, where they found Yonge, who had but just arrived, being carefully tended by his mother. Mr. Carlton was glad to find that the boy had sustained no serious injury, and promising the mother a new striped shirt and an old pair of “Master Harry’s” trousers to replace the torn ones, at the same time telling Yonge that he should have no more if he meddled with that bird again, they all returned home.





CHAPTER VI.

HOTTENTOTS AND BABOONS.

“M I right,” inquired Charley, “in thinking that most of your servants are Hottentots?”

“My *permanent* coloured servants are all Hottentots,” replied Mr. Carlton, “with the exception of Mupala, the Fingo man in the house; the one that waits at table. But there is a strange mixture on the place. The Hottentots I call permanent because most of them have grown up on the farm, and their parents were servants here before them; now and then, when they have accumulated a few head of stock and fancy themselves rich, they go away for a time, but the Hottentot is very generous, he shares with his poorer brethren as long as he has anything to share; therefore his little flock is soon eaten up, and then he comes back to work. The Hottentot has a great many faults; he is often lazy, thriftless, dirty, and will drink when he has the opportunity.”

“What a picture!” said Charley.

"Nevertheless," Mr. Carlton continued, "I like them on the place. I am used to their lazy ways, and as they are like children they know that I will insist upon anything being done that I tell them to do; but then I do not tell them to do too much. They must be clean if they come to the house, and the women as a rule are beautifully so in their cooking. Then as to drinking, they cannot get it here on the farm, besides which my men, with the exception of Piet, have never given me any trouble in that way; then again, these people look upon Karoolands much in the same light as your tenants do upon your village of Fairlands; they are at home here. They know they are sure of getting all they require here, and I, in turn, feel confident that they will do anything in their power for me or mine if called upon. I have also several Kafir herds here, three Fingo herds with McAlpine, and one gang of Basutos building a long stone wall; but none of these are to be reckoned upon more than from month to month."

"Then you have several white men?"

"Only in the position of overseers. McAlpine you know, old Derry, the gardener, and James, another overseer; the other white men are only navvies, and are making a dam by contract."

"Quite enough of them to look after," said Charley; "my visit to you has given me a great insight into Cape farm life. I assure you I feel your goodness to us all greatly, especially on Fred's account; he has already wonderfully improved in health since our arrival in the country. You were kind enough to say that you would endeavour to arrange for our getting forward on our way."

"Well, perhaps it would be better to let him remain in ignorance of this conversation, and see if he is of the same mind a month hence."

"Thank you, sir, for the hint. I will do so, but meanwhile I can write to Colonel Sinclair, which will save time."

After dinner every one seemed inclined to enjoy the coolness of the house. Fred and Frank went off to the book-room, George and Charley joined Mr. and Mrs. Carlton in the drawing-room; while Marston constituted himself drawing master to Lily, with Harry as looker-on and caricaturist of the pair; and Blanche, on motherly duties intent, dressing and undressing her new doll, in which operation the kitten seemingly took great interest.

"Mother," said George, "you *should* see that party in the breakfast-room! It's quite edifying! Marston acting pedagogue, and Harry criticizing his qualifications."

"Did you see the children, George?" asked Mrs. Carlton.

"Blanchy is there, but not little Jack; I dare say he's with Ayah."

"No, she has gone to McAlpine's to see Sartji and Piet; that is why I asked."

"There comes little Jack!" said Charley, "running as fast as his little legs will carry him. There on the road," he added, pointing him out to George as he went to the window.

"Something is after the child!" said George, running out of the room; and catching up a thick stick in the hall, he soon had the little fellow in his arms.

"What is it, my boy?"

"Not Jack! Teddy standing on horensmaan," said Jack, struggling to be put down. "Run, George, he'll bite him dead!"

And George did run, for full well he knew the danger his young brother must be in to have sent that message, the "horensmaan," or "horned viper," being one of the most venomous and active little reptiles they had to fear.

Mr. Carlton and Charley came up as Jack was recovering his breath, and sending him to his mother, who was anxiously watching the party, then ran after George, who they found had already placed Teddy out of danger by killing the viper.

It appeared that the two little fellows were out hunting for lizards, as Teddy wanted ten or twelve of them to "span in" as oxen.

"There's one!" said Jack, "got horns, too, like a real ox!" starting forward to take it in his hand.

But just in time the elder of the two perceived the mistake, and pulling his little brother back, said, "Man! don't you see it's a snake?" at the same moment instinctively picking up the nearest stone and dropping it on to the reptile: the stone was rather larger than a common brick—too large to be thrown, therefore Teddy let it drop, as he thought, on the head. But the snake, which had probably been asleep when the children first saw it, began to move, and consequently the edge of the stone rested on its neck, just leaving the head out, and that looked alarmingly vicious, darting out its forked tongue with great rapidity, and trying very hard to

work its body out from under the stone. And this purpose, in all probability, it would have effected in time, had not Teddy, with great presence of mind, stepped upon the stone, and standing there with both feet together, said, "Now, Jack, man, you run and tell papa or George to come and kill the horensmaan, or he will bite me dead!"

We have told how it was that little Jack, having luckily been seen by Charley, George was able to come to the rescue in time; but it was not any too soon, for the creature had managed to wriggle its body so far out from under the stone that Teddy was in momentary expectation of the reptile being able to accomplish its very evident desire of turning round to bite his foot.

It was such a remarkably fine specimen of the horned viper, and so little injured by George's blow, that Mr. Carlton carried it home, and preserved it in spirit, and it was ultimately placed in the Natural History Museum at Grahamstown.

When they got into the house they found Lily and Blanche both in great distress, because one of the tiger cubs would not take its supper. Persuasion proved of no avail, and "Spitz" died that night. However, the good-tempered little one lived and became a great favourite with the whole household; but one day, when it had attained the size of a full-grown fox, a farmer rode up with a number of dogs in his train. Poor little Spitzerina was playing about in the sunshine, and alas! alas! the farmer's dogs thought they did a virtuous act when they pounced upon and killed her!

There were many lamentations in the house, but

it was noticed that neither Mr. Carlton nor George joined in them ; both knew that the dogs had kindly saved them the sad duty of taking away the children's pet.

About a week after the visit to the ostrich camp, Mr. Carlton said he should be happy to take some of our friends to see Graaf Reinet if they wished to go. Charley and Fred gladly accepted the offer. Marston, however, did not seem at all anxious about it, so the fourth place was available for a servant, who would otherwise have had to accompany them on horseback. They travelled in the same vehicle Mr. Carlton had had with him in Port Elizabeth. A "Cape cart" is quite an institution in South Africa, with a good strong pair of the small horses of the country, and travelling at the rate of six miles an hour and not more than seven hours out of the twenty-four. Under such circumstances a two-hundred mile journey is performed with tolerable comfort to man and beast.

A country gentleman in the colony is very particular about the build of his "cart," often spending from £80 to £100 upon one. They are set upon the best springs so as to ensure as much ease as possible over the rough roads, sometimes, indeed, no roads at all. The fittings also are all made with an eye to comfort ; the back seat is a good water-tight box, capable of holding all the change of dress needed by the travellers, besides tea, sugar, and biscuits, &c., the meat and crockery being placed in a hamper. The seats and sides of the cart are well stuffed, and the comfortably lined canvas tent and curtains which keep out alike the scorching rays of

the sun and the sudden thunder showers make this cosey carriage a travelling home in the wilderness.

Their first halting-place was a large Brandy farm. Here they went into the vineyards to see the 200,000 vines laden with the young grapes, which were all standard and planted in rows ; but as it was not the season for wine or brandy making, they did not go through the "kelderen," or cellars. This place was certainly an oasis in the desert, and what with the vineyards, orchards, and immense corn lands which were irrigated by means of an artificial lake, there was much to please the visitors in showing what could be done in the Karoo, with capital well applied and industrious working out of well-planned improvements.

The place was situated on the banks of a river, which, having worn its way deeply into the sandy soil of the Karoo plain it traversed, was not visible until you were close upon its banks. There was but little in the way of scenery to charm the eye, the mountains being almost too far removed to come into the landscape. The whole country around consisted of vast barren-looking "flats;" but the rows of shady willows, the lofty almond and eucalyptus, forests of peach, apricot, and fig, and groves of orange and citron trees, irresistibly impressed the beholder with what could be effected by the industry of man.

It was not Mr. Carlton's intention to go into Graaf Reinet direct ; he wished to show Charley and Fred a little of the country first.

After crossing a good deal more of the Karoo, they drove through miles of prickly pear shrubs ; the soil was dry and sandy, every vestige of moisture being taken up by this troublesome cactus.

“ Where a leaf falls it takes root, and forms a separate plant,” said Mr. Carlton. “ Therefore, you may imagine with what rapidity it spreads ; and it is not easily stayed in its growth, either.”

“ Does anything feed upon it ?”

“ Yes ; it is quite our stand-by for ostriches, though the fine thorns must first be burnt off. Cattle in time of drought also eat it. The fruit is very good, and is much liked by the natives. The Dutch make brandy and syrup from it, and the baboons and monkeys are ravenous after it. Of course, they all take off the peel with the fine hair-like prickles.”

They now drove for some time through a long gorge or mountain valley, the river winding in and out, just leaving room for the road first on one side, then on the other, necessitating their crossing the stream by means of drifts or fords, at least a dozen times before they reached the head of the valley, where the farm, at which they were to spend the night, was situated.

This was, indeed, a secluded spot. No road to it but the one they had travelled, with the exception of a bridle-path, a very rocky one, to the top of the mountain. But the situation was very beautiful, mountains towering above, immediately before, behind, and on one side of the farm ; the sides clothed with evergreens, zamias, heaths, and ferns, great

boulders and masses of rock standing out boldly amongst them.

The contrast between the quiet beauty of the homestead, embowered in trees of every shade of green, the gardens and orchards near the house, and the corn and maize lands, stretching three miles down the valley, with the grandeur of the mountain scenery, was very striking.

The farmer and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Field, were very pleased to see Mr. Carlton and his friends.

"I thought I must come round this way to show these young Englishmen a little of our mountain scenery, after the tameness of the Karoo flats," said Mr. Carlton.

"I sometimes wish the mountains were farther off," said Mr. Field. "The baboons have been so troublesome lately, that I really fear that I shall have to take to shooting them; and I dislike that exceedingly."

"What depredations have they been guilty of now?"

"Nothing is safe from them—pumpkins and melons, figs and grapes—nothing comes amiss, and they come down into the mealie lands and strip the maize-stalks of their cobs."

"I had an adventure with them last Sunday morning," said Mrs. Field; "you know how very inquisitive they are? I really think they know everything that goes on upon the farm. We have just had a long new tank built, upon which a body of English navvies have been engaged for the last three months. They had finished the job, and were dis-

charged on Saturday afternoon, and left that evening. On the Sunday morning, just before our service time, as I had not been to see it when all the people were about, I thought I would go to look at the tank. It was a lovely morning, and as I walked up the flight of steps on the face of the reservoir, to get to the level of the water, I thought how wonderfully still everything was: even the sentinel baboons with their everlasting baugh! baugh! were absent from their usual rocks of outlook. I was nearly on the top step, and turned to look at the long sheet of water, when all at once I perceived, seated along the entire length of the reservoir, a row of between 200 and 300 large black baboons, all looking as grave as judges, uttering no sound, but staring at the water, perhaps trying to solve the problem as to how it came there."

"Were you not alarmed?" asked Charley.

"I was, indeed, and as quietly and quickly as I possibly could came down the steps and towards the house; and I assure you I was thankful to meet my husband and some of the children, who had come out to look for me."

"They have been watching the men at that work ever since they commenced it," said Mr. Field; "and no doubt had seen all the tools put away, the huts broken up, and the men leave the farm; and therefore, as the coast was clear, felt at liberty to satisfy their curiosity."

"That new reservoir must be a good piece of work," said Mr. Carlton.

"It is," answered Mr. Field; "and I think nearly doubles the value of the property, as, indeed, do all

irrigation works on a large scale. I can now take the whole of the valley under cultivation, for my mountain streams are never failing."

After a short but agreeable visit to this farm among the mountains, Mr. Carlton and his young friends proceeded on their journey to Graaf Reinet.





CHAPTER VII.

GRAAFF REINET.



DOWN the valley again, which looked bright and fresh in the early morning, out once more in the Karoo plain, and then skirting a branch of the great Sneeuwbergen range of mountains, with their sharply defined outlines and grotesque old Dutch names according to their shape, Kemitt Fonteyn, Gunpowder Spring was reached in time for an early dinner.

One of the most barren-looking spots in the "brown Karoo," with not a tree and scarcely a shrub to be seen in its vicinity, this place is still not devoid of interest, having a never-failing supply of hot mineral water, so valuable in rheumatic and cutaneous affections, that it is considered worthy of Government support. The municipality of Graaff Reinet have here erected capital baths, each with a good room attached to it. Adjoining these there is an hotel, where either the traveller or the invalid visitor finds

both attention and care from the landlord and his kind-hearted German wife.

Less than an hour's drive brought them into Graaf Reinet, the oldest Dutch town in the eastern part of the colony, and the capital of the latest of the three original districts into which the country was divided under the Dutch Government.

Graaff Reinet is situated in a basin completely surrounded by hills and mountain walls, with the Sunday's River running round three sides of it, between the town itself and the mountain. After the manner of all old Dutch towns, the streets are laid out at right angles, each one bordered with trees. Formerly these were all of orange or lemon, and the richly laden groves, bearing at the same time blossom and fruit in every stage, added to the well-kept "erf" or garden belonging to each Dutch householder, caused it to be denominated the "Gem of the Desert." The orange trees have disappeared, killed, it was conjectured, by their roots having reached some rock or subsoil through which they could not penetrate, since which time they have been replaced by seringas, or Persian lilac, willows, oaks, &c.

The many-gabled Dutch houses reminded them of Cape Town, and with their pleasant *Stoeps* in front had a quaint and picturesque appearance among those more recently erected by the Englishman or the German Jewish merchant.

The Dutch Church is the finest as well as the oldest public building in the place, unless, it may be, the Drosdty, or "Stadt-huis." But there are also an English Episcopal Church, and places of

worship for several other sects, including a synagogue for the Jews and a mosque for the Mahomedans.

The following morning, after a ramble round the place, Charley remarked to Mr. Carlton :

“ This place reminds one of a town in Holland, only that they have no such mountains there.”

“ And no orange trees or date palms in the gardens,” replied Mr. Carlton, laughing. “ The old Dutch gables, and the people about the place speaking Dutch, have doubtless combined to give you that idea. I have this morning heard that it will be necessary for me to visit Somerset, and if you would both like it, we will extend our trip in that direction instead of going straight home, and then I shall be able to show you quite an English village, though still with the adjunct of a fine mountain background.”

Charley and Fred were much pleased with this arrangement. They remained three days longer in Graaff Reinet, during which time they visited all the different places of interest, including the public library—a very fine one—the romantic walk to the botanical gardens, the source of the water supply, and the marvellous “ Valley of Desolation,” a chasm or ravine in the top of one of the highest mountains, looking like a huge rock-lined crater into the utter confusion and deadness of which no vegetation had as yet dared to give a vestige of greenness.

This last excursion had been taken in company with several of Mr. Carlton’s most pleasant and intelligent friends, from whom our travellers had received true Graaff Reinet hospitality.

The drive to Somerset was very tedious. The Karoo plains were brown, hot, and dusty. They yield fine pasturage for sheep, but notwithstanding the variety of flowers scattered in all directions among the heaths and shrubs, they are not beautiful.

"I begin to miss the grass," remarked Fred. "It seems strange to have been so long in the country and to have seen no meadows. We have in England no boundless plains like these ; no magnificent mountains like those in the distance towering up in grandeur one above another. I am glad to have seen it all, but I think I shall like the green fields and the old park all the better when I get back into my own Devonshire again. I should not like to live always in a country where there is no grass."

"Ungrateful fellow!" said Mr. Carlton, laughing. "Have you not had the perfection of verdure the last few days—a tropical vegetation almost! Ferns and palms galore, and fruits everywhere? And yet, because you have no grass and are rather tired by the jolting over the bad roads, you begin to long for hedged-in meadows and Devonshire lanes! Well, I promise you that on the other side of that mountain you will find plenty of waving grass. At all events, to-night we must rest at the little inn on the top of the hill, and we shall go into Somerset before breakfast, while it is still fresh and cool."

The mountain Brintjes Hoegte proved to be, as Mr. Carlton had said, the boundary of the Karoo on that side, and Fred's eyes were here gladdened by the sight of wide undulating grassy downs as far as the eye could reach.

When they were at the highest point of the pass,

it was curious to note the great contrast between the country on the one side and the other.

The sun was just rising, lighting up the rough and hard looking peaks on the Karoo side of the Zwagers Hoek and Bruintjes Hoegte range of mountains, and the plains they had travelled over the day before looked bronzed indeed in comparison with the Somerset or south-eastern side.

There the long stretch of grassy land and the beautifully green Boschberg and its densely wooded kloofs, looked like a second Tyrol after the savage beauty of the sunlit Karoo.

"What a number of sheep there are over there!" exclaimed Charley, soon after they had left Bruintjes Hoegte behind.

"They are not sheep you are looking at," said Mr. Carlton; "though I must acknowledge that with the contrast of the grass the ant-hills look very like them at this distance."

"I have often read of ant-hills, but I thought they were much higher than those."

"I believe there are parts in the interior where the ants build to the height of from ten to fourteen feet, but I have never seen any higher than two and a half, or three feet at the outside; and you will have noticed that in the Karoo we seldom have any; they generally form colonies underground. In this part of the world, too, you will see large nests of ants in the mimosa trees."

Passing within sight of the opening to the fertile Zwagers Hoek Valley, so noted for its rich farms and lovely scenery, they soon came to the beautifully situated and pretty village of Somerset.

The mountain background, with its velvet-like slopes, dark kloofs, rugged krantzies, and silvery cascades, set off to wonderful advantage the quiet English home-like village which lay sleeping at its feet.

Somerset East is decidedly the most beautifully situated village in the whole of the eastern province of the colony, and is, fortunately, capable of bearing a population of as many thousands as there are now hundreds ; and when the inhabitants can get a branch railroad to the North-Eastern line, it will become more a place of residence for lovers of the beautiful and picturesque than it has hitherto been.

The water, with the exception of one small reservoir, is at present allowed to run away at its own sweet will, but might, by an able engineer, be so husbanded as to last out the longest drought.

But, as Mr. Carlton told Charley and Fred, when speaking on the subject, the people here have generally such an abundant supply of water that they do not trouble themselves to think of the *non-rainy* day until it is too late.

The Boschberg abounds in fine streams, which before now have been, and might again be made, available for irrigation or any other purpose.

They were introduced by Mr. Carlton to several of the people of the place, and, as Somerset is noted for its kindness and hospitality to strangers, everything was done that lay in the power of their friends to make their short stay in the village agreeable.

They visited the Gill College, the Museum of which, although in most respects still only in its infancy, was, in a botanical point of view, perfect. The

classical Professor MacOwan was a great botanist, and had devoted all his leisure moments for some years to augmenting and arranging that department. This was all particularly interesting to Fred, who could have spent days there if time had permitted.

The kind proposal made by a good botanist of the place to take a ramble with them into one of the kloofs of the Boschberg, was hailed with delight and gratefully acquiesced in, and they started early one morning, their breakfast being carried up by a coloured man.

Space fails us to tell of the great variety of ferns, especially the Maidenhairs, which they found. As ferns do not grow in the Karoo, Fred had begun to despair of getting Florence Vyvyan's book filled up. Those gathered in Cape Town, one or two from the Port Elizabeth valley, and a beautiful little hairy mountain fern from Mr. Field's farm being all he had hitherto been able to collect. But this kloof was so richly stocked with them that he scarcely knew which to take first.

However, their friend kindly obviated the difficulty by saying that, as he had many duplicates, including specimens of varieties that would have taken them perhaps days to find, he would give him enough, already pressed, to stock his book.

On the mountain slopes they found flowering shrubs, heaths, and a profusion of the blue agapanthus, the well-known African lily. The wooded kloof was here and there fringed with wild chestnut, "Calodendron Capense," with its pink and mauve blossoms, to which the rich dark green of the olyvenhout, yellow-wood, and other evergreens, made

a beautiful background, set off here and there by the heads of the graceful nooifesboom, towering above them.

Another day they had an excursion on horseback to a farm in the neighbourhood, noted principally *now* for a magnificent waterfall just above it.

At that point the river, which waters the plateau on the top of the Boschberg, falls sheer over the mountain side, which is there quite precipitous, into a basin at the depth of from six to eight hundred feet below.

It was a lovely sight, and well rewarded them for the toilsome scramble they had had to get to it, the greater part of the water being converted into spray before it reached the bottom, the sun's shining on it causing a perpetual rainbow to be seen from some point or another.

"What a fine lot of water!" said Charley to Mr. Carlton. "Do they make much use of it?"

"Yes, it is used in a measure by the farmer; but I remember one of the old Municipal Commissioners telling me that the stream takes its rise upon the Somerset East Commonage; and, if that is the case, of course he is liable to lose a portion of it, as they *may* wake up one day to the advisability of diverting some of it into a reservoir for the use of the town.

Returning from the Glen Avon Waterfall about sundown, their road lay through the Fingo village; and, as they came near, they were amused to see one of the huts rise up and walk. Some Fingo, wishing to move into a more fashionable locality, not satisfied with transferring his pots and pans, calabashes and milk-baskets, to a new residence, was following

the plan adopted by his forefathers, and taking his house also.

The ends of the long stakes forming the skeleton of the hut were removed from the ground, though they were all kept fastened together at the top. Then, five or six women, with an immense amount of chattering, took hold of every third or fourth stake, and hoisting it up carried it to its new resting-place.





CHAPTER VIII.

FAREWELL TO THE FARM.



As they drove up to Karoolands the next evening, little Jack espied them from some look-out of his own choosing, and as they took him up into the cart, Fred exclaimed, amid all the greetings—

“It’s quite like coming home when you see some one out to meet you.”

“I’m very glad you think so,” said Mr. Carlton. “Ah! here they come in force!”

“Welcome home again to you all!” put in Mrs. Carlton, in the most *à propos* manner, as she and the others joined them.

“Lots of letters for you two,” said Marston to Charley and Fred.

“I hope you have had your share too, old boy?” rejoined Charley.

“Oh, yes, thank you. I had a budget; but I see Uncle Sinclair has written to you, and I am dying to know whether there is not one for me in it.”

"We'll soon see; but from whom can this be?" Charley exclaimed, wonderingly.

"Well, it has the Cape Town post-mark; and it struck me that it might be from that nice fellow who took us up the Table Mountain," said Marston.

"Trevelyan? So it is. That's capital; but first for the home letters. One for you from your uncle; now be off and leave me to my dear old mother; I see Fred is already quite absorbed in his correspondence."

"Oh! but, Charley, I must tell you they haven't had our Cape parcel yet!"

"Of course they had not when they wrote; do you think it went by telegraph? We can't expect to hear of that until three months after its despatch."

"Marston," asked Fred, as he passed him, "do tell Frank there are some lovely ferns in the cart-box."

"Frank's gone home," replied Marston, "like a dutiful son, to pay his respects to his parents."

"Gone home! Mr. Carlton said he was going to stay as long as we."

"Well, you see you went away, and as he only cares for *you* he went too. Now *you've* come, no doubt *he* will come. 'Talk of the angels, and you will hear the flutter of their wings!' There's his lordship riding up the road. I am off to meet him."

Home letters! Only those who are divided by thousands of miles of ocean from all that the heart holds most dear can fully enter into and appreciate

the longing for, and hungry devouring of, home letters; and as each weekly mail arrives, and letters come, now from one loved one, and then from another, they are read and re-read till every sentence is known by heart.

At supper-time Charley read aloud the following letter :—

“DEAR VYVYAN,—Thanks for your letter from Port Elizabeth; it was good of you to find time to write. What lucky fellows you all were to fall in with such a man as Mr. Carlton. He is often down in this part. I know him by sight, having seen him at Government House, though he would not know me. Is he not one of the successful ostrich farmers? Fancy having ostrich eggs for breakfast, and roast ostrich chicken for lunch! I am longing to know how your waggon journey went off, and what game you fell in with. I should have thoroughly enjoyed being with you. However, I must not growl, for my good old chief is likely to have to pay a visit to Kaffraria soon, and hints that he may *possibly* go to the Diamond Fields, and even on to the Transvaal. I am to go with him as A.D.C., and this morning he asked me if I thought my friends (yourselves) would like to join me, so as to travel through the country; not exactly in the Governor’s suite, but in company. Of course I thanked His Excellency, and said I would write at once. Hence my letter!

“I think the plan would be, as your young friend Marston would say, awfully jolly, and I, for my part, should enjoy it amazingly.

"I hope Mr. Dalrymple is all right again. I was so sorry to hear of his being so unwell after leaving Cape Town.

"If you like this proposition, we must arrange to meet in Grahamstown, where I *suppose* we shall arrive in about three weeks' time; or, if you would prefer it, at King William's Town, a week later.

"Make my compliments to your friends, and believe me,

"Yours faithfully,

"EDWARD TREVELYAN."

"Well! I congratulate you," exclaimed Mr. Carlton, "you could not have a more pleasant way of seeing the country."

"It's a nice letter," said Mrs. Carlton, "but we shall miss you all very much. However, you must promise to come to Karoolands again before you return to England; and tell Mr. Trevelyan that if he can come with you I will try and induce my husband to give me 'a boiling' of ostrich eggs, in order that he may have one for breakfast if he feels so inclined."

"Thank you," answered Charley, laughing, "I won't forget; and thank you very much also for your kind invitation to ourselves. I think I may say for my friends as well as myself that we should be very sorry *not* to come and see you all again before we leave the country."

"*That* we should!" exclaimed both Fred and Marston.

"I don't want to leave the country," added the

latter, "and I have written to my mother and uncle asking them to let me stay altogether, but I should like the journey with Trevelyan up country. He takes my name in vain for using the expression, but he really is 'awfully jolly.'"

"I suppose," said Fred, "before the ostrich became so very valuable the eggs *were* used as food sometimes?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Carlton; "the Bushmen and Hottentots took them whenever they found a nest within our own time, and that the aborigines did so I think we have evidence in the number of disc-like beads of ostrich shell that we find in company with stone arrow-heads in their kitchen middens. And we used them for food too. But as for me, I could never eat boiled ostrich egg; I found it too rich. Still, they made very good sponge-cakes or pancakes, and a capital omelette."

"By-the-by, Vyvyan," continued Mr. Carlton, "you did not, I think, see any of the hens sitting, or you would have noticed a peculiarity they have. Their sense of sound and sight is very acute, and they will when sitting stretch their long necks out on the ground in front of them. The earth acts as a conductor, and the moment they by that means hear the least sound they raise their heads, and their eyes see anything that may be moving on the plain."

"No, I did not see a hen sitting," said Charley; "that must be a survival of their wild nature—the timidity of the female, while her protection is neces-

sary for her young. How many generations will it take to make them as confident of the protection of man as a barn-door fowl, who constantly sits at the time of incubation with her head under her wing?" I want to ask your opinion as to purchasing a conveyance of some kind to use during our proposed journey and the remainder of our stay in the colony. My father has placed it in my power to do so, and Colonel Sinclair seemed to think we should be more independent that way."

"That would have been the case in his day, no doubt, and even now, under certain circumstances," replied Mr. Carlton; "but, in the present instance, I think you will be wiser to take the same chance as the others. You may find yourselves forced to take horses when you want mules, or vice versâ. When you are at Grahamstown you will be better able to judge of your requirements in that line. Another objection is that it would necessitate having a groom. As you have seen by Piet's example, your Hottentot groom is not always to be depended upon. You can well imagine the annoyance of being obliged to keep such a one solely on account of the horses; whereas one who is merely a body-servant can be dismissed at any moment should he transgress."

"I am very sorry you are going," said George to Charley, a few days before the time for their departure. "That's the nuisance of having visitors—when you get people you like very much they are sure to have to go away."

"I am sure it's very nice for us to hear you

talk like that. I never expected to meet with friends at once in this manner. I shall miss you very much. But, George, how about your wedding? When is it likely to take place?"

"That's another thing! I wanted to ask you to be my best man; but now, if you are going to the Transvaal, I don't suppose you'll be back in time. Mary will be very disappointed."

"But, George, you did not say you were to be married so very soon!" expostulated Charley.

"Oh, it won't be for some months yet! The time is not fixed."

"I should like to be with you very much, and depend upon it, I will if I can. We are to come back here, you know. I hope by that time to hear whether or no Marston will continue to stay here, and I thought too that Major Harding might be persuaded into letting Frank go back with us. Fred and he could read and go up together, for Fred tells me that Frank is well-grounded, and only wants a very moderate amount of coaching."

Many were the regretful partings between Frank and Fred and Marston, and the whole family, but especially Lily, who thought she could do no more drawings, and little Jack, who was learning to make a boat, and was afraid it would "*never* be all right now." Indeed, every one on the place regretted when the time came for leave-taking.

They did not fail to pay a farewell visit to poor Piet, who had by that time been removed to Karooslands, and was fast recovering from the wounds inflicted upon him by the tiger. Old Kaatje, Hendrick,

Abram, and many others, including Yonge, who was as ready to get into mischief as ever, each and all came in for their share of good-byes.

And, with many kind wishes from their good host and hostess, and injunctions from all the children to make haste back, Charley Vyvyan and his friends took leave of the Farm in the Karoo.





CHAPTER IX., AND LAST.

OLD ENGLAND ONCE MORE.

JUST ten years had passed since the incidents related in our last chapter.

At the window of a pretty morning-room in the Rectory of Fairlands stood the young Rector, looking across the grounds and some distance down the road.

"I can't think who it can be, my dear," he said, replying to a question from his wife.

"Never mind who it is, Fred, but come and talk to your boy," exclaimed the proud mother.

"I am sure one of the riders is your brother, Florence, but I can't for the life of me make out who the other can be," said the Rector, not heeding the remonstrance.

"Charley! is he one, did you say? Why, he was here only a day or two ago; it must be some one who is anxious to see you. I wonder who it is," said young Mrs. Dalrymple, and then rang the bell

for nurse to take baby away, while Fred went to the porch to meet Charley Vyvyan and his companion.

A tall, fine-looking, brown-bearded young man walked into the room where Florence was waiting anxiously.

"Here's an old friend, Florence. Can you guess who it is?" said Fred and Charley at the same time, as they followed the new-comer into the room.

She held out her hand, but looked as if in doubt.

"Mrs. Dalrymple would not recognize me with this great beard. Even Edith did not know me till I spoke."

"Is it possible," said the Rector's wife, "that you are Sinclair Marston? I am very glad indeed to see you, and looking so well. And your wife? Did you bring her home with you?"

"Yes; I am anxious to introduce Lily to you. I am sure you will like her."

"Where is she now?" asked Fred.

"At Sir James Harding's place for a few days," replied Marston. "You know Lady Harding is a very old friend, besides which, I suppose you have heard of Frank's engagement to my sister Edith?"

"Yes, we did," said Florence, "and were very pleased to hear of it."

"Wasn't that a singular chapter of events which brought Major Harding home?" said Charley to Marston.

"Yes, it seemed so; but I don't know that I ever heard all of it," replied he.

"Well, you see the Major was a third son; the eldest, Sir Francis, married, and had one boy—a fine handsome fellow. The second brother was a clergy-

man, a very clever man ; he died, but left two lads. Not much chance, you would say, of heirs failing in such a family. However, James, the baronet's son, was thrown from his horse while hunting, and killed on the spot ; the night the body was brought home his father had a fit caused by the shock of the sudden and terrible calamity ; death ensued, and father and son were buried together. Meanwhile, the two nephews were sent for from Switzerland. They happened to be staying in a small village on the Lake of Geneva, and to reach the station in time for the express train, in order to be present at the funeral, took a small boat to cross the lake. A sudden squall arose, and the boat was upset and both drowned. Of course Frank was here. He had only a short time before been visiting at his uncle's, and was sent for again when father and son died so suddenly. He managed everything wonderfully up to the time of his father's coming home, and then returned to Oxford. He is a splendid fellow, and in every way does credit to his Cape birth and English education."

"I should think his father must often feel thankful to George and to both of you for persuading him to send Frank with you."

"Oh, by-the-by," said Fred, "how are our old friends George and Mary getting on?"

"Exceedingly well. George bought the farm from the Major, or rather Sir James, when he came home, and is now one of the most successful farmers in the district, and Mrs. George is one of the best and most hospitable of women. They talk of coming home some day. She is anxious to visit

her parents and the Hall of which she has heard so much, and also to see a little of the world."

"And you, Marston, have you ever regretted going to South Africa?"

"Oh, no! a thousand times no! I have enjoyed the idea of coming home, and bringing Lily to see my mother and Uncle Sinclair. They are both delighted with her. My brother is in India with his regiment, so she will not be able to make his acquaintance; but I do not think we should either of us care to live in England, even if we could. We shall go back to our farm life with great content. We do not live very far from Karoolands, and so are able to see Mr. and Mrs. Carlton very often. They sent many kind messages to you both, and bade me say that they looked back with pleasure on the few weeks you spent with them."

"And I feel sure," replied Charley Vyvyan, "and think Fred will say with me, that of all the very pleasant year we spent at the Cape, no part of it yields brighter and more agreeable memories than that spent on the Farm in the Karoo."

THE END.



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