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The Rose of Rietfontein A South African Pastoral Romance


George Herbert Close Jr.

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THE ROSE
OF RIETFontein,

A South African Pastoral Romance,

BY
GEORGE HERBERT CLOSE, JR.

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CAPE TOWN:

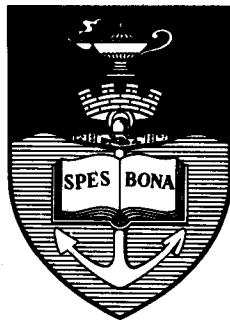
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THE ROSE
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A South African Pastoral Romance,

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CAPE TOWN:

W. A. RICHARDS AND SONS, GOVERNMENT PRINTERS.

1882.

Miriam
Tom Thomas

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PART THE FIRST.

INTRODUCTORY.

The scene of the following romance is on the southern coast of South Africa. The time—several years ago, though I shall not specify how many.

CHAPTER I.

THE WRECKLING.

→ **T** WAS a beautiful summer's day. All around might be heard the joyous songs of birds as they darted about, hither and thither, among the sugar bushes. Ever and anon they would light upon the natural goblets, full of sugared rain-water, and for a moment cease their warbling to quench their thirst with delicious nectar of Nature's preparation. Now and again would a radiant sugar-bird flit across the vision, and then, faintly borne by the gentle gale from the ocean yonder (concealed from gaze by a range of smoking sand "dunes"), came the wail of some distant gull—a wail falling on the ear with a sort of mournful far-away tenderness of cadence. What a contrast to the storm of the previous night, when a fine gallant old ship, whose spars were now strewing the beach for miles, had been wrecked, consigning hundreds of human beings to a watery grave. What dismal shrieks of agony might have disturbed the dreams of the rustic inmates of yon lonely homestead! Bodies were constantly being found, evidently of Indians, torn by the cruel jagged rocks. The body, in many instances, was devoured partially by fish. The vessel had been a Coolie ship, bound, probably, from

the East to the West Indies. (From her name-board, afterwards washed up, it appeared that her name was the "Seringapatam.") Along the beach rode Hendrick Vos, Field-cornet of the ward. He was a Boer, of the true South African Dutch type, plain in speech, stolid of demeanour. His dress consisted of brown corduroys, felt wide-a-wake, and veld shoes of raw hide. Accompanying him, on foot, were several half-caste (so-called) Hottentots. All were intent upon the work of burying the corpses; one of the field-cornet's duties. Over every grave was placed a rude impromptu cross of wood, to roughly mark the poor drowned person's last resting place. A Hottentot came up, and informed Hendrick that a little child, of wondrous beauty, had been rescued the previous night, and was now to be seen at the hut of old Platje, about a mile away from the spot where they then happened to be. After some enquiries and answers, old Vos remounted his steed and galloped up to Platje's, whose wife, on entering the pondok (or hut), he found engaged in tending a child of surpassing beauty, thickly enveloped in fine cashmere shawls. She informed Hendrick that her son Arend had last night bravely rescued the child and its ayah, or nurse. That, on reaching the shore, the ayah had perished from the effects of a violent contusion, caused by a floating spar, in the surf.

Beneath his phlegmatic exterior, Hendrick concealed a true, manly, kind, Dutch heart. He yearned to adopt this poor waif, of apparently Eurasian extraction (for its high cheek bones, broad forehead, olive complexion, seemed to point to an Anglo-Indian paternity.) He gave immediate orders for the child's removal to his homestead; as his word was simply law hereabouts, it was quickly obeyed, and the wreckling was presently established in most comfortable quarters, gladdening the heart of old Vrouw Vos with its presence. For the worthy couple had long wished for a child, but the Fates had not granted them their desire, and here was a foster child sent to them in their old age.

CHAPTER II.

CORNELIA SWART.

SOME months afterwards a grand christening took place. The Predikant (minister) from the nearest village was sent for, and the Wreckling was baptised by the name of "Cornelia Johanna Dorothea Swart"; "Cornelia Johanna," after the worthy farmer's mother, and "Dorothea Swart," from the good wife's maiden name.

As the child grew up, she improved in beauty, and expanded in mind. Her amiability, too, made her a favourite with all on the place. She received a little instruction from a school in the nearest dorp (village), kept by a worthy lady of the time-honoured name of Leslie. All who saw her were puzzled by her features, the caste of which was neither European nor native. A gold ornament, found upon her at her rescue, furnished matter for speculation, and how came she and her ayah to have voyaged in a coolie ship none could tell. She was a mystery—a loveable mystery though. She was fond of reading, and improved her mind daily; she divided her time between that and her pets, canaries, &c. Her life was for long calm and happy, but one day old Vos, whilst out hunting in the veld, was thrown from his horse and killed. The widow Vos not long afterwards removed to a distant farm, also on the coast, named Rietfontein. After Vos's widowed sister-in-law had married again a Van Sittert, that person came to stay with her; she was Dora's second guardian. Both Mrs. Vos and Mrs. Van Sittert came to be looked upon as Dora's guardians. Her first guardian, the widow Vos, went to the Midland District afterwards.

CHAPTER III.

ALFRED MANNERS.

No country can boast of such lovely retired nooks as old England. One of the quietest and loveliest of these is Kettlethorpe, in Yorkshire, not very far from Knaresborough. There was a mill on the banks of the Nidd. Like all millers, the owner had a pretty daughter, known to poetical rustic swains, her admirers, as the "Rose of Kettlethorpe." She was a veritable "nut-brown maid." Her most favoured lover was Alfred Manners. He was a very good young man in every respect; but he had a dangerous rival, a cunning, plausible, fellow, named Philip D—. He hated Alfred for his success, and, resolving to oust him from her affections, he, at an evening party, slipped a £5 bank note into Alfred's coat pocket in the ante-chamber, then raised a hue and cry. He thereby fixed the guilt of theft upon poor Alfred, who, on pulling out his handkerchief before the guests, pulled the note out also. Stung by the disgrace, he fled. Efforts were made for some time to find traces of him, to no avail. From words let drop by him to the host of the Kettlethorpe Arms, he was supposed to have gone out to the Cape of Good Hope.

And now, Alfred, an eternal separation from the Rose of Kettlethorpe. Wait! There is the Rose of Rietfontein.

PART THE SECOND.

THE STORY OF THE TRAGEDY.

CHAPTER IV.

BRANDFONTEIN AND ITS INHABITANTS.

NEAR the coast of Cape Colony is a fine pastoral farm, which I shall name Brandfontein. In extent it surpasses any farm for miles around; the homestead is near the centre of its area, and has, at a distance, a curious castellated appearance, since, with its numerous outbuildings, it crowns the summit of a limestone rock, which forms a table-land. From this may be obtained a grand view of a wide extent of country; this elevated platform is occupied by the "werf," or yard, being a large square, enclosed by a low wall; four gates open outwards, in the centre of each of the four sides, leading to the country beyond. On the north side was the dwelling house, a fine old rambling one-storeyed edifice, having wings, over which were "zolders," or attics. The hall jutted out from the centre on to the "werf;" on the opposite side was an open verandah. On the eastern side was a large stone enclosure for cattle, called the beast kraal; next came another stone enclosure, half-roofed, the discordant bayings and growlings from which would lead one to suspect it to be the kennel. So it was. Here was kept a goodly pack of hounds to hunt the prowling ovicide jackal, that by night was wont to commit much havoc amongst the flocks. On the western side of the "werf" were ranges of stables, having large accommodation for horses; over these were lofts, or "zolders," for storing forage, next to these came the blacksmith's shop. On the southern side were the wagon-house and sheep-

shearing department, having attics over them to which access was to be gained by means of outside steps. On this side also, but nearer to the middle of the "werf," were the round threshing floor and two walled circular enclosures for stacking corn, barley, &c. The walls were twelve feet high, the stacks went much higher—sometimes, in good seasons, sixty or seventy feet. The wall ran round all these, close to the building, being built substantially of stone. From this wall the plateau gradually sloped, on the south side, to a very bushy tract, where were some open grassy spaces on which sheep "kraals" had been erected. These kraals were large rectangular areas, enclosed by a fence formed of inverted bushes placed upon high mounds, with a ditch on either side. On one side of the kraals was a shed for the protection of the sheep during rainy weather, beyond these, a hundred yards, was an immense semi-circular area, having the base line from east to west, the semi-diameter running southwards for fully half-a-mile. This enclosure was fenced in like the kraals just mentioned; gates, at wide intervals, afforded ingress; a bush fence divided this area equally.

Looking southward, supposing you to be standing at the hall door, you would see this vast field stretching away to a distance, having its base at right angles to the line of vision. You would see that the fence also divided the area enclosed into two quadrants; the quadrant on the right was a field of waving corn, with oat and barley patches—at harvest time a beautiful sight, with its waving golden crops. The quadrant to the left was the "grass-kamp" or grass-meadow, a wide flat covered with sown and artificial grasses, and dotted far and wide with groups of grazing cattle, forming, in the opinion of many, the loveliest rural landscape in all South Africa. In this "kamp," near to the centre, was a very singular isolated hill, or "Kopje," contrasting with all around, consisting of rugged stony ground, scantily covered with a few thorn bushes.

Eastward of the "werf" and adjacent to the "grass-kamp," in a part of their extent, were four "kamps," fenced like the rest, in which were a few "domesticated," but by no means "tame," ostriches. The ostrich-breeding industry, lately begun, was as yet only in its infancy. Beyond these again was a tract of bushy land, extending to the southern coast, which was only marked out to the eye by ranges of "sand dunes," dazzling from their pure whiteness, seldom relieved by a green bush. The eye turned from these for relief to the pleasing verdure of the "kamps" and corn lands. Looking to the north, the only feature in the landscape was a distant range of blue-seeming mountains; nothing beyond this but the everlasting dun "veld" (open country), accepted by Cape colonists as the natural appearance of Mother Earth. But nearer to the home-

stead the bushes were very high, often attaining forty feet, or even more—in many places very tangled. Eastward, a high bush stretched away for about a couple of miles; westward, downs and flats alternated, both grassy and varied, here and there, with beautiful flowery carpets of Nature's tapestry, formed by extensive patches of "sweet nurslings of the vernal skies."

And now, having given this very imperfect description of a very remarkable, though out of the way, farm and homestead, let me proceed to a far more difficult task, namely, to sketch the characters, traits, and lineaments of the human occupants.

At the time this tale commences, there were on the farm, as owners, Mrs. Venter (whose husband had gone to England for a visit, and was still absent, so he need not yet be introduced), her son Jacobus, her two daughters (Sannie and Susan), her younger son Hieronymus (Jerome), and, finally, Hendrick Lourens, the overseer. Of course, in addition to these, there were several domestics about the place, black and off-coloured, and several shepherds, who came and went, being replaced by others frequently, so that I can say nothing about the greater part of them. I shall therefore, at present, confine my brief description to the members of the family, including the overseer.

Mrs. Venter was a short, stout, comely lady, who had been well-educated and was well-read, and could converse in English, so that you would hardly think her a Dutch-Africander. She had attained a tolerable age, namely, fifty-five, yet so well preserved was she, and so active in her habits, that strangers invariably took her to be much younger. A member of the Dutch Reformed Church, a strict Calvinist, she was sincerely pious; but she had one fault—like Eli of old, she had spared the rod, and consequently had to suffer from the spoilt child.

As for her son Jacobus, he was a most curiously mixed character. Educated in England, he had become very different from the general run of young Africanders, and had moreover acquired a great deal of knowledge of the world; and he had such complete insight into human nature, that he could play upon a man's mind as one would upon a harp. He was tall, with aquiline features, but not quite prepossessing, on account of a certain cunning about his expression, and this was not in the least belied by his real character, as he was known far and wide to be a most accomplished "verneuker," or cheat. And what made him all the more dangerous was his cleverness in assuming a plausible appearance of innocence. After he had cheated you, and to use his own expression, "taken a rise out of you," he would argue with a great show of reason that he had actually been trying to do you a favour, and other people

would be inclined to believe him, so utterly and completely did he assume a virtuous look, or one of injured innocence. He pretended to oversee the farm, but really his time was quite as much occupied in hunting, riding to hounds, and other sports, as in farming. He pretended to be a crack shot, but oftener missed than hit. In religion, he was a free-thinker in theory, and an atheist in practice, for he never by word or deed acknowledged a God above him. The only real good quality he had was a certain "good nature," only shown, when he happened to be in a good humour. He was so idle, and so vicious, that he would sit down and tell lies, just to pass away the time, or for want of anything to talk about.

There was a son, Piet, whom I have omitted to mention, but he was in England, at school, so he may be dismissed for the present, with the remark that he was far better in every way than Jacobus.

Sannie and Susan do not call for much description, as there were no very salient points in their characters. They were ladylike, about fifteen and seventeen respectively, rather good-looking, but nothing at all superlative, and could scold very much and loudly, if they were vexed; before company, they were perfect doves.

Hieronymus (Jerome) was a boy of about nine, but he looked older. He had been very much spoiled, and was extremely wayward and passionate, almost mad at times. He had a reddish complexion, and auburn hair, with fiery eyes.

His good point was, chiefly, a strong profound sense of justice, and a hatred of oppression. He would kill you, were he angry enough; but he would never cheat you, or take any unfair advantage of you; no, not on any account. He was a boy of a very resolute disposition indeed, and often gained his point by sheer sternness of purpose, and defiance of castigation.

As for Hendrick Lourens, the "voorman" (foreman), or overseer, he was more of a Dutchman than the others, and indeed could speak very little English, picked up at table; however, his English, when he attempted it, only served to render his Dutch less intelligible. He was a broad-shouldered phlegmatic man, of the middle height, slow and decisive in speech, grave in demeanour, yet occasionally humorous. He was a very conscientious hard-working man; his fault consisted in making too free with the blacks, which an overseer should not do; also, he was too frequently in debt at the village, and often getting summonses from the local agents, which would sometimes necessitate his drawing his pay beforehand, in order to meet these claims.

Having thus given a slight sketch of each of these principal personages at Brandfontein, I must hasten to my next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

THE OVERSEER SPEAKS HIS MIND.

ONE evening, some years ago, after a hard day's work had been done with the reaping, and Hieronymus and Lourens being quite sunburned and knocked up by the toil, the whole family were gathered around at supper in the 'Sall' or Hall. The walls were decorated with racing pictures, and portraits in oil of famous steeds; together with certain pictures *majorum nostrum*, which frowned at the occupants of the house day by day, as perhaps silently chiding them for the degeneracy of the times. Heedless of these pictured worthies, the group at the table ate and drank and chatted, and chaffed and laughed away the time. Mrs. Venter occupied the head of the table, the overseer at the foot, and the rest on either side.

Presently, Hieronymus, being hungry, and therefore very irate, exclaimed, "Confound it! this mutton is as tough as that old cook's hide. Can't you tell her to do it a little more?"

"The mutton is not tough," said his mother.

"I say it is. Well, I shan't eat this; it isn't fit for any Christian," pushing the plate away.

"Nothing does seem good enough for him!" remarked Sannie to her mother. "You always spoil him, and take his part, ma; he is a perfect fiend at times, yet you scarcely ever scold him. Yet, only let him complain of me or of some one else, and then, mij magtig! (my mighty!) you can take his part."

"Who asked you to speak? just hold your saucy jaw, or I'll throw this plate at your head," burst out angrily from the fiend."

"Hieronymus! Hieronymus! you should not speak so; how can you? Unless you keep a better control over yourself, you will commit a murder some day or other, and then what!"

"Look here, ma," interposed Jacobus, "what is the use of your speaking to the boy in that namby-pamby lackadaisical way, as you always do. The boy doesn't care for it, not one bit. The matter is really very simple. He only wants a precious good horse-whipping, that is all. If you don't like to give it him, why, let me do it, and you will soon see whether that cheeky young rascal (schelm) won't think of it for many a day after."

"You just try it on," said the boy, ferociously eying his brother. "You call me a schelm; you're one yourself. There now!"

"Look here," said Jacobus, "I have stood your nonsense quite long enough. It is all very well trying it on with the others; with me it will be different, so just you look out."

There was something in Jacobus' expression that caused the boy to forbear, so he ate his meal in sullen silence, and made no more remarks. Lourens, who had been a silent spectator, wisely paying attention to his meal, had now finished, and thought fit to put in his oar, having, it will appear, been himself vexed at the lad's previous conduct.

"Ou' noy" he commenced, in a quiet, subdued, but decided voice; "Ou' noy, I say that I am not going to be any longer bothered with that boy in the land. He will not work, but he can much play, and play with young Cæsar is all he will ever do. Cæsar had his scythe, and Hieronymus must needs take it away from him, and hide it. Cæsar was angry, and then they two fight, and for all the food they can eat, what work? I don't like it. I say, old lady, you must send him to school, or what good can he come to? He is too stupid for work in the land, and won't let Cæsar work either."

The old lady listened attentively, but at the conclusion, raising her voice gradually to a shrill pitch, commenced a tirade against Lourens, now and then addressing the whole group. "Hendrick! The last one on the place, yes everyone of you here, and all the blacks besides, complain of the boy. Why must you all hate him so? Remember, if you hate him, you hate me. Am I not his mother, is he not my son?"

"Yes, very well," replied Hendrick, "wat jy zeh is waar; but, if he plagues the last one on the place, why the last one must make complaint; it is natural."

To this Mrs. Venter made no reply, but turned to Hieronymus; and he (by way of fair play and hit all round perhaps) now came in for his share. "And you too, you young wretch, are always giving me trouble by the way in which you conduct yourself. Take care, for one of these days I shall send you to school, where you won't have such opportunities of getting into mischief as here. And you are always keeping young Cæsar and little Willem from their work, with all your making of voorslags and hunting for schulpaaien; doing not a stroke of real work. What on earth becomes, I should like to know, of all the whips you and Cæsar make?—Every day, constantly, I hear from you the same excuse, when I want you to do something for me, that you are busy making a whip. If you mean the whips to be used on your own body, you can never make too many, I assure you."

Here the boy, bursting into tears of rage, jumped up, and put an end to the lecture, by tearing out of the room, where he did not reappear for the rest of the evening.

"Kyk nou" she said to Hendrick, "isn't it really dreadful to have all these troubles upon one?"

"Ya" replied Lourens; "but as long as you let him have such comrades as those young nix werd schelms, Cæsar and William, you can't expect anything better from the boy. Either say to those two young rogues 'trek Pereira,' or see your boy ruined."

"But I can't send Cæsar away, he stops by his father's, who is far too useful to me as a "herder;" I can't send the boy away from his father. And for William, he is a poor young "wees kind," and it would be cruelty to send him away; besides he is apprenticed to me, and I may not."

"Then send Hieronymus to school, or get a tutor for him. The "meester" will keep the boy in order."

"That is what I have often thought of doing, myself. But I must send to Cape Town, and I hear that, even there, it is very hard to get any young man, at least one of good education, who is willing to become a 'meester,' at all events for the small salary I can offer, only three pounds a month, with board and lodging."

"Look here, ma," said Jacobus, "if you like, I'll write to a friend in Town, who knows a lot of people, to look out for a meester. Either one must be had, or you must send Hieronymus to school; one thing or the other; at all events you can't let him grow up as he is, in utter ignorance of everything except what is bad. Whatever the boy ought to know, he doesn't know; whatever he ought not to know, he knows. Besides, why do you indulge him so much, I should like to know; you never indulged *me* like that, when *I* was his age. If ever I spoke like *he* does, constantly too, I got a jolly good hammering for it, that is all."

Mrs. Venter was going to reply, when the shrill barking of the dogs on the "werf," presently succeeded by the rumbling of wheels, betokened the arrival of a cart; shortly afterwards, the hall door opened, and in walked Arthur Yelverton Marks, Esq., agent at the neighbouring village of Ventersdorp, who had come, as he informed the company, after greeting them all round, upon business matters connected with the great case, now pending, of "*Hess versus Brickels*," to which I may perhaps refer in a future chapter. He had brought his gun with him; so had evidently come on pleasure as well as on business. After refreshment, he sat down and had a talk, in a low voice, with Mrs. Venter; the rest of the company retired. And here, for a while, I must leave them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST IMPRESSION.

I HAVE very often thought to myself, what a capital field for the students of Ethnology and kindred sciences Cape Town would make. It is not so much because of the number of varieties of the human species contained in our Metropolis, as on account of the infinite gradations and mixtures and tints displayed in the ever-shifting panorama, that I speak thus. In Cape Town, a Pritchard, a Pickering, a Latham, would find a perpetual feast of intellectual gratification presented to them. Enter with me into that general dealer's shop, in Plein Street, where the crowds passing in and out (it being a Saturday afternoon,) betoken that within a thriving business is being carried on. Watch that stately Malay, with composed hard-set features; with what erect yet clattering gait she approaches the counter, and demands the price of best currants, or raisins. Look again at that young half-caste Hottentot, with what a black guard elegance does he comport himself; the hair denotes his Caucasian origin; the eyes and slightly-retreating forehead mark him as partly African. What a contrast to the stately Moslem priest yonder, is that Angola negro, showing his ivories, and laughing with all the abandonment of the Ethiop. And that fine young woman, too, almost a lady; it would assuredly puzzle any ethnologist to say what she is. Too dark for a Malay or European, too much of the long straight tresses for a Negro, eyes with the real Oriental flash; what on earth is she? It would surely require all the acumen of Blumenbach to answer that question. That Islam priest too, though a "Malay," is evidently of the Arab race, judging from the perfect oval shape of the skull, the flowing beard, thin lips, the sinewy-looking frame, capable of enduring the dreary pilgrimage to Mecca, which he has lately performed. There are three or four serving behind the counter; one of whom is so remarkable in feature as to attract attention from those passing along, and cause them perhaps to wonder who he is that seems to differ from others about him somehow or other.

Tall, thin, with a bronzed complexion, blue eyes, he has not the alert keen trading look about him generally found in the devotees of commerce; on the contrary, his face, though candid, has an absent melancholy expression, difficult to describe, resembling perhaps that expression noted by a great artist and physiognomist in the face of Charles Stuart the

Martyr. There is actually an expression that would seem to presage coming misfortune, if your imagination is lively enough to see it in that light. And yet this young man hardly seems twenty years of age.

A woman comes in, and asks for a pound and a half of coarse oatmeal, at fourpence, and, after complaining of that young man not being quick enough, tenders him half-a-crown. He gives her from the drawer, by way of change, one and sixpence, out of sheer absence, evidently having carelessly taken the half-crown for a florin. Being a half-caste, and of Cape Town, she abuses him in very low Cape Dutch indeed; for, on being annoyed, a Cape Town coloured man or woman, of a certain type, is the most barefaced shameless impudent animal to be found anywhere. There are bright exceptions however, and as education and refinement progress in this most conservative metropolis there will be many, very many, more.

Well, he rectifies the mistake on seeing it, rates her for being abusive, and as a reward, hears her pronounce him "mal," a curious expression, probably French, used by Cape speakers instead of "uitzinnig" or mad.

Presently, in comes a young man, to buy mealies, who evidently knows the one I have been describing, for he addresses him as Herman Staunton, and asks him how he likes Cape Town. "Well," replies Herman, "having only been here a month, I have not yet been enabled to form a very decided opinion respecting it. When I left England, I had formed the notion that this city was purely Dutch, or nearly so. While, on the contrary, there seem to me to be a great many elements besides of other races and nationalities. For instance, look what a lot of German shopkeepers there are; there are five in this street alone; my employer is one also. What numbers of Malays?—how came they here?"

"Why," the other replied, an intelligent-looking middle-aged Englishman, of decent exterior, "why, they were originally from Java, a tribe called "Battas" sent to the Cape by the Batavian Government, as convicts. They afterwards became slaves; how I don't know; the thing would be easy enough in slave times."

"They seem very opulent," remarked Herman, "some of them; driving about in their carts, all in fine colours, gay harness, and all that."

"Yes; they are the aristocracy amongst the coloured people here, quite. That arises from their superior skill as artists and handicraftsmen."

"That boy is 'vaiting,'" said the German proprietor, "please attend to him; he wants six pounds of fourpenny sugar."

"Well," says the customer, "I shall see you again, Mr.

Staunton, perhaps to-morrow, when we can have more talk on various subjects. Good-bye for the present." As he goes out, an acquaintance of his inquires, "Who is that young man serving there?"

"What, the one I was talking to?"

"Yes."

"Oh, he is a young man from England only about a month. His name is Herman Staunton. I made his acquaintance shortly after his arrival here. One thing about him strikes me as being very remarkable."

"What may that be?"

"Why, this. You may ask him as much as you like, but I'm blessed if he will ever let you know what were his antecedents before coming out here. He would never tell me, though I have asked him often enough. Beyond the fact that his name is Herman Staunton, and that he hails from England, he refuses to disclose anything about himself. I wonder what can be the reason."

"Oh, perhaps he has done something or other, to have made it necessary for him to come out here; and perhaps he thinks, as the Cape proverb says, "Do not stir muddy waters, else they stink." He may also believe that "bye-gones should be bye-gones." It is always the case with those folk, who dislike speaking of their own antecedents, that it is just because those antecedents won't bear speaking about."

"I don't agree with you in this case," replied the other; "his address is too honest and straight forward, and his speech too frank and outspoken, to make it at all probable that any fault or crime has been the cause of his reticence. There is another thing about him, I cannot quite make out. When in your company, he will go on very comfortably for a time, conversing and laughing and joking, when suddenly, and without any earthly cause apparently, he will become silent and melancholy."

"That may be the result of unrequited affection."

"I don't agree with you there, either. He positively told me one day at my house, when we were having a smoke together over a glass of ——— Whew! did you ever see such a beauty as that yonder? Just look there!"

These two happened to be coming past the "Noah's Ark," (now, alas! an extinct institution, like its prototype!) A young country lass, rustic and shy in manners, but exceedingly beautiful, was passing, and caused the sudden exclamation just mentioned. She was accompanied by one who was evidently a country Dutch farmer, not at all resembling her, and too elderly to be her husband apparently.

"Isn't she remarkable looking?"

"Yes," replied the other, "but what most surprises me is her uncommon style of features. She seems neither European nor African; more of an Asiatic, judging by her physiognomy."

"Can't you say 'phiz'; it is so much shorter."

"No; I can't for the life of me bear those American contractions; they are vulgar, and spoil our noble English tongue quite. Far better say 'photography' than 'photo,' 'physiognomy' than 'phiz.' What an abominable contraction, by the way, is that of 'sub' for 'subordinate.' Perfectly outrageous! Well, your road lies this way, mine that way, so good bye. I shall see you again soon." And they separated.

Now let us return to the shop. Herman was not there now, having in the interim gone out to get a note cashed at the "Commercial" (bank) for the shop. A country clergyman walked in, and looked round. A good number of people were waiting their turn to be served; presently, the proprietor, thinking the parson a customer, said, "Are you waiting for somedings," in a German accent. "No," was the reply, "but I wish to speak to Mr. Staunton; only he does not seem to be here."

"Sit down on that chair, please; he will be in a moment here."

So the minister of religion seated himself, but had not to wait long, for Staunton returned in a few moments, when the clergyman asked the proprietor to excuse his subordinate for a few minutes. This being assented to, and leave being given, the clergyman requested Staunton to come outside, as he had something of importance to communicate. They went, and the minister of religion told Staunton, that "now it was settled that Staunton should go out to Sandy Cove as catechist; he hoped that it would not be long before he should be able to start;" to which Staunton replied that he had given a month's notice to his present employer, and would start on the expiry of that term.

"One thing however," said the clergyman, "goes against you, in the opinion both of myself and of my brother ministers, in the Church here. It is the fact that you will not give any account of your career, previous to your arrival in Cape Town; that looks suspicious at least."

"Well, I cannot explain that, sir," replied Herman; "Only you may take my word for it, that there is nothing wrong about the matter. My conduct here is a sufficient guarantee for my general character, I should hope," and he looked fully into the minister's face, as he spoke.

That reverend gentleman promptly assured him of the fact that nothing definite was known, or could possibly be urged, against him; only that what had been alluded to was perhaps

slightly suspicious. "Well, Staunton," he went on, "Mr. Bennet will give you full information, when the time comes, as to the journey down, and I shall probably write to you myself. Good-bye, then."

"Good-bye, sir," and Herman hurried back to the shop. He found it just then in the full bustle caused by a considerable influx and reflux of a tide of visitors or customers. Just as he got behind the counter, the same young lady, whose appearance had drawn an exclamation of surprise from Herman's friend, near "Noah's Ark," entered, and everyone in the shop had their attention drawn to her at once, so striking was her style of beauty, and so different withal was she from the generality of those usually seen in our metropolis. She had, on account of the numbers being served, to wait her turn, seated on the chair civilly offered her by Herman. We shall now have an opportunity of surveying her at greater leisure, and she, it may here be remarked, will occupy a conspicuous position in coming pages.

Her figure to many might seem deficient in sylphlike grace, being somewhat stout; but the face was very striking, though not by any means of the unearthly type commonly sung by poets. On the contrary, the features were broad and open, the forehead capacious, giving evidence of great intellect. The eyes were large and lustrous, and complexion rosy, or even approaching to olive; the hair, floating back over the shoulders, was jet black. There was a sort of good-humoured expression about her, but the oriental depth of those fathomless eyes warned one of the possible latent fire which might kindle into flame at the least approach to any unwarrantable freedom. There was a singular contrast between her modest yet unconsciously dignified grace, and quiet manner, and the rude slap-dash vulgarity and coarse-bred nonchalance of some ordinary Cape Town females, of mixed race, present in the shop,—mulattas, quadroons, and octoroons.

Herman noted her well, and carried away with him, long afterwards, a mental photograph of this strange creature in his mind's eye. But he did not, at the moment, feel any extraordinary sudden attachment, as some may suppose; for he was of a mind too deep to be suddenly influenced in such a way; besides that, he was busily occupied the next moment in attending to a complicated order from some customer.

This young lady, whom I have been describing, presently purchased a stock of needles and cotton and various etceteras, explaining to the proprietor, in Dutch, that she lived far down in the country, and therefore wished to invest in enough to last a long time. Her voice was soft and clear and musical, making a good impression on those who heard it, as to her being, though

somewhat rustic, yet refined rather than 'boerish,' in the bad sense of the word. She departed soon, nor did Herman ever expect to see her again; and whatever thoughts he might then have concerning her were speedily put to flight by his having to get ready to take several parcels out presently; in one instance, as far as the turnpike toll-gate, at Papendorp. As he went along, now free from, and undisturbed by, the petty distractions of a shop, he had leisure to soliloquize. His thoughts, put into words, might be rendered as follows:—

"Well! I am glad my first taste of South African life is so soon coming to an end; thank Heaven, too, for it! Not much of a life that, having to be behind a dreary counter, from seven till seven, and even till ten, on Saturdays. But I shall soon change it for a higher existence, that of a catechist in the country, a romantic little cove perhaps, inhabited by simple-minded innocent and docile Africans, very different, I both hope and believe, from those coarse blacks about here!
"But what a nice face has that customer; I wonder who she is, where she comes from! I recollect hearing her tell Mr. Bamberg she was from the country; I wish I knew what part. But, ten to one if ever I see her again. It will just turn out to be, 'out of sight, out of mind.'"

Ah! but if he had only known all! Mortals wish and speculate and propose and plan, and dream their day dreams; forgetting that He, who alone disposes, will cause our desires to become realised, if they will only, in faith, leave to Him the issue, provided those desires are right and true. For, although Herman did not acknowledge the fact to himself, nor was even aware of it, yet the impression of that strange face, seen only casually, was working its way into the depths of his heart, eventually to become a Desire, and either to destroy his peace of mind, or, if left in God's hands, obtain a fruition.

CHAPTER VII.

AN AFTERNOON IN THE VELD.

ONE afternoon, shortly after the occurrences narrated above, Hieronymus, accompanied by young Cæsar, went along to have an afternoon's holiday in the 'veld.' Proceeding through the "gras kamp," Cæsar first of all commenced the programme of amusement, by chasing a large-sized ostrich, a male bird, which stood in their way. He chased it, being a rash kind of youth, right away in the direction of the 'Kopje,' despite the loudly-given, but alas unheeded, advice or warning of Hierony-

mus, who kept screeching out, louder and louder, as Cæsar got further and further from him, "must not, Cæsar; he will kick." Presently indeed, the cunning bird, finding that now they, that is to say he and his pursuer, were far away from any fence, or means of protection for Cæsar, wheeled suddenly "right about face," and, with mouth wide gaping, seeming to the boy like a great giant, charged at him, raising his formidable right claw to kick; but Cæsar, with admirable presence of mind, just at the very moment the bird should have struck him, dodged under, and lay flat; the enraged fowl, meantime, carried on by the impetus, ran over his prostrate body, and a little further too. This gave the boy time to jump, and run again, and on the ostrich's second charge, he again dodged the bird, by suddenly falling flat down, for the ostrich can only kick a person whilst he is upright; a few of these manœuvres, and the boy had reached the "Kopje," and crept under a large thornbush at the base.

Hieronymus ran back to the stables, saddled his favourite horse "Perseus" quickly, and calling to the groom to do likewise, and make haste about it, quickly galloped to the "grass camp," where they found the ostrich, as it were, besieging Cæsar, unable to get at him in his bush-city, yet preventing the boy from sallying forth, or making a sortie. The bird was soon driven away, and along the fence, bounding his own proper camp; a work of some difficulty, for they had also, whilst driving the great fowl, to look for the gap in the fence by means of which the creature had obtained his egress. The gap proved to be a great way off, in fact, close to where the Sandy Cove road passed by an old pondok on the boundary of the great "grass kamp."

Having performed this task, and made the gap right, by placing the inverted bushes back in their right positions, Hieronymus got off "Perseus," which he gave to the groom to take home, so that he might himself continue his excursion on foot. "Who made that gap, do you think?" asked he of Cæsar, who replied, "Isaac, I think; he is now by the sheep there yonder," pointing in the direction of the Cove. "He is very rascally; can't he make the gap right when he crosses the ostrich-camp. He knows well that the ostriches will come into the grass camp; it will make Jacobus angry enough, that I can tell you. I shall him much strike van-nant," he continued with an ominous crack of his shepherd's whip, and a look that boded nothing pleasant for the delinquent at their next meeting.

Just before arriving at the gate at the further end, Cæsar called out, at the same time pointing to the hedge, alongside of which they mostly kept their path, "Look! what a large puff-adder," and Hieronymus, turning his head, saw it half con-

cealed in the dry twigs of the hedge, and distending its neck with a frightful and malicious look. But Hieronymus, besides being naturally brave, was also accustomed to such encounters, and, snatching up a supple stick, happening to see one near him on the ground, very soon demolished the reptile, which was more formidable than large. Even when apparently dead, so tenacious are these, and indeed all snakes, of life, that neither of the boys conceived they had thoroughly succeeded in killing it till they had chopped off its head with a sharp stone, after repeated blows. They left it lying there, intending to pick it up on their return, so as to take it home and exhibit it as a proof of their prowess.

They continued their walk, and, as they passed through the gate out of the camp, Cæsar made the remark, that, "if Hieronymus had missed the reptile at the first blow, the "doodelyke ding" would have bitten him, in its rage, and that then he would 'go dead.'" "No," answered Hieronymus, "you can live after a puffadder has bitten you, if, within the half hour, you could get some brandy and ammonia." This passed off in Dutch, of course. Cæsar asked, "what's that word?—Am-am-oon-ya!" not being very conversant either with the sound of the word itself, or with its meaning. Hieronymus could not, however, satisfy him on that point. So Cæsar asked him "How much of that stuff a man must drink—twee glassen?—or drie?"—two glasses or three.

"Oh! as much as he possibly can," was the answer. "The more the better. A man, bitten by a snake, does not get drunk so easily. He can drink almost any quantity with safety."

Presently, they came within sight of a jackal which, at a distance, they perceived to be devouring something; on coming up, they perceived it to be a yearling (sheep); the ovicide had, of course, slunk away, on their approach. The poor victim was, of course, as dead as could be. From a minute inspection by the two boys, it appeared to have been only partially devoured; the dainty portions alone having been devoured by the discriminating jackal. "That's what makes me so kwaai" (angry) remarked Cæsar. "If these jackals only eat up a whole sheep or lamb, now and then, it would not matter. But the 'schelms' are very 'slim'; they just kill an animal and devour the 'lekker' (nice) bits, leaving the rest to rot, or be devoured by 'aasvogels.' Then, away to another, which they 'make dead,' and eat the 'lekker' bits of that. A jackal kills about ten times as much as he can eat."

Thus Cæsar; more rudely, however, in Cape Patois. What he said was true enough, and the fact he mentioned makes the keeping of a pack of hounds an imperative necessity, in some

parts, to rid the place of such dainty beasts of prey. Passing through a lane, leading between high bushes, tangled with creepers, Cæsar took Hieronymus aside, in order to show him a wonderful mier's (ant's) nest, of the tribe dwelling in bushes. Suspended from a twig was a large black, globular mass, several inches in diameter, which, as a close inspection showed, swarmed with an incredible host of ants. So with the main stem and branches leading to the nest; the branches were absolutely black, and covered with teeming swarms of ants, ascending and descending; the sight, if one tried to look closely, was quite bewildering. This nest must have been more rare, or more perfect, than usual; for even these boys, accustomed to such sights, expressed rapturous surprise.

"Allah Wereld!" exclaimed Cæsar.

"Mij Magtig!" echoed the other, "I never saw so fine a nest of ants; no, not in all my life."

And, having thus given vent to their astonishment, they ran along, to make up for lost time. Hieronymus intimated his intention to pay Sandy Cove a visit, to see what was going on there, and have a chat with the people. He also expressed his intention to invest his pocket-money in the purchase of sweetmeats and cakes. So they went gaily on. At last they came to where, in a spot sheltered by a large clump of sugar bushes, the shepherd boy previously referred to lay on his back, his senses apparently steeped in the oblivion of sleep. Hieronymus, feeling all his ire kindled at the thought of the boy's forgetfulness in having left open the gap, whereby the ostrich had escaped from his proper camp, ran up, and summarily awoke him by a vigorous kick on his leg, asking him at the same time what *he* meant by his negligence. The young shepherd at first denied having left the gap open, but, on being threatened with a good thrashing, admitted the fact; and Hieronymus warned him accordingly to go and look after his sheep, which were, during the boy's "siesta," much scattered.

A little further on, they met Hendrick Lourens, on horseback, returning from Sandy Cove, whither he appeared to have gone for a supply of fish, for on either side of the saddle swung a goodly string of dried stumpnoses. He drew up his horse as they approached, and asked, "Where go you? To the Bay?"

"Yes," answered the boy. "Did you get a good lot of fish?" they asked in their turn. "Oh, my! what nice fish," remarked Cæsar, handling those on the off-side; "see, how very fat!" For there were also a few fresh ones in addition to the dried; and the overseer told them that Jack Hopkins, at the Cove, had said they were the fattest he had caught for years past. The overseer then rode on his way.

By this time the boys had arrived within sight of the hamlet,

(for it was too small and scattered to be called a village), of Sandy Cove. On the beach, in front of the only large house there, were drawn up five or six boats, and the whole population of the place were seemingly present, engaged in carrying the fish out of the boats, and laying them on the sands. There seemed to have been a capital haul.

The hamlet consisted merely of the large stone house referred to, with a high stoep, part of which building was a shop, kept by a man in the employ of Du Toit & Co., of Ventersdorp. In a line with this, a few yards from the shore, stretched about twenty small "wattle-and-daub" huts, of appearance by no means inviting, all which formed the abodes of the local fishermen, all half-caste Hottentots, excepting two or three men who called themselves Englishmen, and were runaway sailors originally. At the back of this row of huts, was a dense clump of bushes, which afforded, some kinds at least, a good supply of fuel. All formed part of the farm Brandfontein, excepting the large house and shop referred to above, and all the fishermen were tenants of the Venters'.

The boys went up to the shop, as Hieronymus wished to buy some kind of toffee and sweets, both of which he knew, from glad experience, were to be had there tolerably cheap. They found, however, that Josias, the coloured shopkeeper, was out, and the place locked; so they stood and watched the group of bare-legged people in front, actively engaged in slitting and beheading their finny captures, on the beach.

At last they saw Jack Hopkins approaching, and, when he got nearer, he sang out, "Holloa! Hieronymus, how goes all at Brandfontein? Any more work, in the way of whitewashing the house, for me to do? I have got lots of lime ready, if you want any; tell your mother, eh!"

"Why, I heard Ma' say, yesterday, that she wanted that wall mended that bounds the yard on this side. I think she will soon ask you to come up and put it to rights."

"Very well; I am only too glad to get such employment. I am tired of always fishing, day after day, and mending seines and nets, and burning lime. There's all that lime yonder," pointing in the direction of the kiln; "I can't sell it; no one will buy; though I used to sell it as fast as I could possibly make it."

"Where's Josias? I want to buy some sweat-meats for myself and that young fellow there?"

"Oh, he's at Arend's house; he will be here very soon." And Josias was just then seen coming along, and, when he got to the shop, he soon let the youngsters have what they wanted.

As the boys were preparing to go back, old Jack remarked, "You have heard, perhaps, over yonder, about the new

schoolmaster as is coming for this here place, from Cape Town?"

"No," replied Hieronymus, "I haven't heard anything about it. Who told you?"

"The English parson, at Ventersdorp, was here 'tother day, and said they had at last succeeded in getting a man for us; though whether he'll stay long here; when he sees what a very wretched old hole Sandy Cove is,—why, that's quite another thing. You'd better tell Mrs. Venter about it, just by way of a bit of news, d'ye see?"

The boys had now to hurry home, as it was getting late. On their way back, they did not fail to pick up the dead snake, which they carried back as a sort of trophy, setting forth their great pluck, in having encountered and slain the venomous creature. And thus ended their afternoon's enjoyment.

CHAPTER VIII.

VENTERSDORP, AND A COURT CASE THERE.

I HAVE previously mentioned a Mr. Arthur Yelverton Marks, who occupied the post of local agent, attorney, and public prosecutor at the magisterial centre of Ventersdorp. He had held that post for some years, in fact ever since the new division of Ventersdorp had been formed out of the old Philipsburg division. He was a short saturnine man, much given to the writing of essays, on various subjects, in the Cape Town papers, and possessed of a shrewd and dryly humorous temperament; as an agent, &c., he was very keen, and reckoned very dangerous, as, when a man had once got into his clutches, he had hard work enough to come out again. Nor was he altogether so scrupulous as a strictly honorable man might have been expected to show himself, as regards the various ways and means of making money.

One afternoon, he and a visitor from Cape Town, were sitting in Marks' drawing room, and were having a rather desultory conversation on any subject that came uppermost.

"When did you say this place was built?" inquired the visitor, a gentlemanly-looking young man, named Edwards.

"About forty years ago. It received its name of Ventersdorp from old Venter, of Brandfontein, now deceased; and, like most inland villages of South Africa, originated in a church being founded. Old Venter, who was a very religious chap, built that church over the way there [do you see it?], and gave all the surrounding land to the Consistory; which land was divided

and sold in "erven," and then built upon. Because, don't you see, the Dutch Reformed Church gets all the proceeds of the sale of erven. Most of the villages in this country have originated in this way. By the way, speaking of the Venters' reminds me that I was at Brandfontein the other day, their residence you know; I went, partly for a little shooting, and partly to have a talk with Mrs. Venter concerning the case now coming on at the Magistrate's Court, 'Hess versus Brickels.'

"What is that about, if I may ask?"

"Why, you see, Mrs. Venter has in her employ a very shrewd half-educated Hottentot, who acts as a sort of jack-of-all-trades, and makes himself useful in herding, reaping, and thatching, and in fact does all kinds of odd jobs about the place. Now this man has also, like many another native, a few sheep, and also a house and garden, at the mission-station of Sharon, about three hours from this. The other day, he bought from one of the neighbouring farmers, a man named Jan Hess, a number of sheep; instead of paying for them at once, he gave Hess a promissory note, signed 'Hans Brickels,' which is the fellow's name. He now refuses to pay the eleven pounds odd, which he owes for the sheep, and, I hear, denies the fact of that signature on the note being otherwise than a mere forgery, and intends to swear in Court that it is so. I am afraid Hess will lose his money, but, by all that's sacred, I shall indict the fellow for perjury; and see whether he won't get a couple of years' hard labour, clever as the fellow thinks himself."

"But can these blacks really read and write, and sign their names to promissory notes? I always thought them far too ignorant and untaught," remarked Edwards.

"Oh yes! You must remember that Brickels has been, to a certain extent, educated at Sharon. Most of the blacks round about can read and write a little in the Dutch language; very well, too, some of them."

And, in a few days time, the above-mentioned case came on before Mr. Merton, the Resident Magistrate, a person well known, and greatly respected, on account of his inflexible uprightness and impartiality. The court-house was very full, and many could not obtain admittance, for the parties in the case were well-known, and great interest was generally supposed to attach to the issue.

The first witness called was a Hottentot, who had seen the sheep, but had supposed, for his part, that they were a bad bargain; and he declared that he himself would not have given a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for any one of them, inasmuch as they were all particularly affected with scab. That, however, did not much affect the question, which was, whether the sheep had been sold, and whether a promissory note for the amount owed had been signed or not.

The second witness, a Scotch mason, who used to wander about, doing odd jobs, deposed to having witnessed the signature of the promissory note. On being shown it, however, by the clerk, he did not think, he said, that it was the identical one, for at the time, and when in the act of signing, the defendant's hand shook, and could not, and, as far as he (witness) could remember, *did not*, write so bold a signature as what he now saw.

"Why do you think his hand shook?" asked the defendant's agent, Christoffel de Villiers. "Do you think it was from drinking?"

"May be, or not," answered the cautious Scot.

"Come, I require a direct answer. Had my client been drinking, to your knowledge, or was he sufficiently sober to know what he was about?"

"He had been drinking a little, but not much."

"How do you know? Did you hear from anyone else that my client had been drinking something, or did you yourself see him?"

"I saw him myself, in the act of drinking, before signing."

"How long before? You are on your oath, remember, and had better try and recollect as accurately as you can."

"About half-an-hour before."

"What did the prisoner drink, and how much?"

"He had had two "sopjes" of brandy."

"By himself, or in company? And in whose company?"

"In mine."

"Oh, you had been drinking too! How much had you?"

"The same quantity as Brickels."

"Two sopjes. Well, your worship, I contend that, in such a case, Brickels could not exactly have known what he was about when he signed the note, inasmuch as he could not have been perfectly conscious of what he had done after the quantity taken."

"The question in that case," remarked the magistrate, "is whether Brickels really was affected by what he took, and not merely whether he had taken so much, or so much. If, on the one hand, he were drunk, then that signature there cannot be his, for it bears the mark of having been made by a steady hand. On the other hand, supposing him to have been sober, in spite of the quantity taken, why in that case, he must abide by it, unless it is shown to be a forgery, as he declares it to be."

After more witnesses had been called, the magistrate gave judgment in favour of the defendant, inasmuch as all agreed that he was not quite sober when he signed his name. The plea of forgery was passed over, much to the chagrin of Marks, who wished to trap Brickels on that point. The Court was dis-

missed, and Brickels and his Hottentot friends went round to Wessels' canteen, to celebrate his victory over Hess by standing drinks all round. But he was forgetful of the proverb, if indeed he had ever heard it, "Don't halloo till you are out of the wood." For he let out much more in his cups than was quite consistent with his safety.

For, a few hours after the case was concluded, the magistrate, Mr. Merton, going out for a walk, met Mr. Marks, who appeared to be in a greater hurry than was at all usual with him. "Your worship, I have heard something very particular about that fellow Brickels. I am glad I am in time, for I see you were going out for a walk."

"Yes, so I was," replied Mr. Merton; "however, I shall postpone my little excursion, since you want to see me. Step in here. Now," (when they had reached his study,) "what is it?"

"Why," said the attorney, "a few minutes ago, that little servant girl of Wessels', who has the canteen over yonder, came to my house, and said she wished to see me, as she had something very particular to communicate. What she related to me, in a round-about manner, was very interesting, and confirmed some suspicions I had of that Brickels."

"What did she tell you?"

"This: Not very long after the case in Court was concluded, she said, Brickels and his friends, including the witnesses, or at least some of them, were sitting in a room next to the public tap-room, occupied in drinking and smoking. She overheard Brickels boasting, he being not very sober, and therefore talkative, of how nicely he had played his game. It appears that, when the man signed the note, he was not at all drunk, in spite of what he had taken, but, for purposes of his own, he had caused his hand to appear shaky and otherwise simulated tipsiness. The farmer Hess, well-known by Brickels to be a careless man, carried away the real promissory note, written in a shaky hand. Afterwards, as the rogue had calculated, Hess, according to his well-known and very careless habit, let the document lie about his 'voorhuis.' Then Brickels bribed a girl of Hess's, his own sweetheart, to take away the note, and substitute another, written in a seemingly different hand, and produced in Court to-day. He also said, to make sure, that the note was a forgery."

"And is this what the little girl told you? But I wonder what motive she can have had; surely she did not expect to gain anything by it, did she?"

"I wonder myself why she told me," said Marks; "however, she has a nice candid face, and bears a very good character, I hear, with her master, Wessels. He has mentioned to me,

long ago, her remarkable truthfulness, and said he could trust her with anything in the house more than he would many a grown-up person. Shall I send for her? She can then tell your worship what she told me."

"Very well, I will send for her. She is at Wessels's, you say?"

"Yes; her name is Salome Jacobs."

So the magistrate went to order one of his servants to go and fetch her from Wessels's. Whilst the man was going, the magistrate remarked, "You know, Mr. Marks, that I cannot by rights take up the matter out of court; however, I wish merely to ask the girl what her motive has been in telling you about what she had overheard." When the girl presently came in, the magistrate was quite impressed by the remarkable candour and frankness displayed on her brown features, as well as by her comeliness. She had, indeed, a very prepossessing look; a broad, flat face, full of truthful meaning, and tresses, neatly parted, waving behind her neck; apparently, her age was about eleven. She was evidently half Caucasian, and, probably, with a very small admixture (if any) of the aboriginal Hottentot. At first she seemed shy, and moreover, indeed, somewhat afraid, or at least overawed, at being in the magistrate's presence, or, as she might have phrased it herself, "bitje bang."

The magistrate looked friendly at her, and then asked her her name. She replied that it was Salome Jacobs. He then bade her repeat what she had told the attorney. She repeated what Marks had already heard from her; and, in answer to a question from the magistrate, Marks replied that the story she now told was substantially the same as she had previously related to him, with one or two very slight and unimportant additions, he thought. Then Mr. Merton inquired of the little girl her motive in thus informing upon Brickels. She replied that she had no ill-will against him, and indeed hardly knew the man; but that when she overheard him boasting of his rascality, she thought it her duty to inform upon him. In reply to a question from Marks, as to where she had got hold of such ideas, whether at Sharon, she answered "Nie, by Sharon nie, maar by Rietfontein" (No, not at Sharon, but at Rietfontein.)

"From whom at Rietfontein, my good meisje?"

"Van de jonge noytje daar (from the young lady there); her name is Dorothea Swart."

"Oh!" said Marks, "if she ever talked to you, I do not at all wonder at your having picked up such a notion, as that you should inform upon anyone whom you know to be doing or saying anything wrong. I am acquainted with this Dorothea Swart, of Rietfontein, Mr. Merton, and have a very good opinion of her."

"What sort of a person is she? 'You may go now' (to Salome). Salome Jacobs left the room, and the magistrate repeated his query, "What sort of a person is this Dorothea Swart?"

"She is a very good, as well as very comely, young damsel," answered Marks, with animation, "and I only wish others were like her more. She resides at Rietfontein, with the widowed lady who owns the farm, Elsie van Sittert. They are not supposed to be at all related, and there is indeed no resemblance between them, but there is a story current that Dorothea Swart was shipwrecked somewhere on the coast, and adopted by old Elsie; that was, perhaps, before their coming to Rietfontein."

"Where is Rietfontein?"

"In the Philipsburg district; to get to it you must pass through Sharon; it lies two hours on the other side."

"Why, then perhaps I have been near there," remarked Mr. Merton; "does it lie anywhere near Koude River?"

"Very near," said Mr. Marks, "just the other side of that curious hill, Rhenosterkop."

"You say she has a very good reputation?"

"Very, in the neighbourhood at least. She does a vast amount of good in her way. If any of the niggers are ill or dying, no matter how far, she will go to them at once and talk and pray with them, and very often gives them something in the way of a blanket, or something equally acceptable. She has been known to walk twelve miles, and then sit up all night with an old Hottentot woman who was bedridden. The Dutch minister at Philipsburg once alluded to her as a 'Colonial Dorcas,' and said he wished others would only follow her example. She also shines as a peacemaker."

"Is she well educated?"

"She is as far educated as old Elsie, herself a very well-read woman, could teach her; but she has never been to a boarding school, nor indeed, *as I think*, to any school, but she has made herself very well acquainted with both English and Dutch literature. She is as much at home with Milton as with Cats or Vondel. But, excuse me for the remark, Mr. Merton, you seem to have taken a sudden interest in her," said Marks, with a grin of the sardonic order beginning to overspread his features.

"Not more than anyone else would be on hearing of such excellence," replied Mr. Merton. "Well, I shall be going now; and, as regards that man Brickels, keep an eye on him, as we may come to hear more, perhaps. Good evening."

And they parted. Brickels, on returning home, in the exuberance of his spirits, and with the characteristic loquacity

of his people, boasted to his comrades concerning his good luck, and openly spoke of his own slimness; this coming to the ears of Marks, that gentleman indicted him for perjury some weeks after. So many were the witnesses who had heard Brickels talk about himself, that he was committed for trial on their evidence, and eventually made his appearance at the Circuit Court at Philipsburg, where the judge testified his admiration of the man's slimness by giving him two years' free lodging, board, and work too, at the harbour works of Table Bay. And so, for a time, he disappeared from society, by no means universally regretted.

It is now time to return to another personage of this tale.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SCHOOLMASTER SETS OUT.

ON the expiration of his month at the general dealer's, Herman Staunton was ready to set out for his new sphere of duty at Sandy Cove. The clergyman in town, before-mentioned, gave him a letter of introduction to Mr. Newton, the curate of the English Church at Ventersdorp, as well as to Mr. Osmond, the rector of Philipsburg, who was over Mr. Newton in that capacity. After saying good-bye, Herman jumped upon the post cart to Philipsburg, and was soon joggling along down Darling Street, past the Old Castle, down Sir Lowry Street, through unromantic Papendorp, with its unromantic name, on and on, rattling away at the rate of eight miles per hour. Leaving the Royal Observatory to the right, surrounded by meadows that reminded him of "Merrie England," they soon passed through Salt River, and the "Plantation," evidence of a mighty change wrought on the old sandy flats, showing what wonders in the way of reclaiming the wilderness can be effected by perseverance.

There was no other passenger, so Herman sat by the driver on the front seat. The driver being a very taciturn man, he was left to his own reflections, and with the wholesome breeze from one or other of the bays playing on his face, and the fresh wild landscape, more and more thinly peopled as they rushed along, Herman felt quite exhilarated and joyous-hearted. They passed through two or three hamlets, by many a lonely "pondok," in its little garden, and in a few hours arrived at the "*Brackenbury of the Cape*," with its miles of firs, amidst which fine old mansions and vineyards peeped out; while the distant surf, distinctly visible every now and then,

with the grand old heaps of Alps on the other side, made such a scene as makes it no wonder that a former Dutch Governor should have chosen this site for a palatial residence. Here a change of carts took place, and a fresh driver, whom the present of a little tobacco caused to know English as well as could be, and speak it fluently too.

As they presently ascended a fine mountain pass the driver remarked, "De baas kan nie Holandsch praat nie?" (The master cannot Dutch speak "not.")

"A little, but not much."

"You will soon learn it in the "contree" (meaning country).

"I hope so; not much English spoken there, I should think?"

"In the dorps (villages) plenty English, but not so many Boers can speak it." After a pause, "Is the baas going to stay at Philipsburg?"

"No; I am going further on, to Ventersdorp."

"Oh, I know that place; I was there when I was a klein jong (little boy) so high. It is a mooi (nice) place."

"A what sort of place?"

"A mooi; how do you speak it in English? oh! a fine place."

"A pretty place, is it? But I am going a little beyond the village itself; when I said Ventersdorp, I meant the district; I am going on to Sandy Cove; what sort of a place is that?"

The man laughed. "Sandy Cove! Het is de leelykste plaats in de wereld (it is the ugliest place in the world.) There isn't a nasty place after that, I should think. When you see Sandy Cove, you become quite disgusted," said the driver, who knew English, it seemed, well, though he couldn't always avoid running into the vernacular.

"What sort of a place is it?"

"Oh! it's just a lot of pondoks (huts) on the strand; only one good house on the place, with a shop belonging to Du Toit and Co., of Ventersdorp. All along the strand, from the houses, are a lot of high sand-hills. Magtig! (Mighty!) it is leelyk (ugly)."

They soon reached a place where the road had been cut out of the side of a steep hill; immediately below was a frightful ravine, at the other side of which rose a high and precipitous mountain. Herman almost shuddered when he saw how near the cart was to the edge; sometimes it seemed that if the horses were to shy down they would go into the ravine—an awful thought as he gazed down into it! For a long time did they wind along at a good trot, and Herman felt a sense of relief when they got out of it into the open country. There was

always the weary sameness of far-reaching veld, with its stunted vegetation, only varied by the nestling homesteads, few and far between, on the slopes of distant purple mountains, or by the side of some unseen rivulet. Some of these lonely white houses were surrounded by clusters of trees, oaks and firs. After being lost in reverie for a long time the driver suddenly exclaimed, as they ascended a long rise, "There, do you see that long mountain on the left? behind that lies Philipsburg; we shall be there soon, before the sun goes down." They presently crossed a stream and, ascending the further bank, Herman saw a round, clay-coloured structure gradually appear, and, on gaining a higher level, a white farmhouse, with which were grouped some outhouses, amongst which half-naked black little Hottentots played about, or chased each other about up and down a great heap of dung; at a distance, a herd was bringing in some sheep. Herman, pointing to the clay-coloured structure, with what he now saw to be a sort of floor in its midst, inquired what that was; the driver told him it was a thrashing-floor. On Herman's further inquiry as to the mode of thrashing, he informed him that a man stood there and drove a string of horses round and round upon the corn, which was simply laid upon the floor. He also asked Herman how it was done in England—for Herman had let out he was from that country. Herman replied that there the *old* method was (and perhaps was yet employed) to take a "flail," that is two wooden sticks loosely joined together, and beat out the grain from the husk; but that some kinds of machinery had now superseded hand labour. He asked, in his turn, whether the driver was aware of grain being thrashed out by machinery in the colony; to which the man replied, "Yes; as for instance, by Mr. McKenzie, down Ventersdorp way, and by all those who could afford it, being the wealthier farmers." And, after a little reflection, "By Brandfontein, near Sandy Cove, the baas (master) shall see maseenery (machinery). Will the baas go to Brandfontein, to kuyer (pleasure) sometimes?"

"Perhaps I shall. Is it near to Sandy Cove?"

"Yes; Sandy Cove is on the farm. Only an hour from the house to the Bay. Very nice people when I was there; but that's a very long time ago."

They were all this time, Herman noticed, approaching nearer and nearer to a spur of the mountain before-mentioned; and, at last, on ascending a gentle rise, first a church in the early Norman style, then a group of white houses, half-hidden by foliage, then a more pretentious-sized, but barn-like, white-washed structure, then some houses on the mountain slope, embosomed in trees, and surrounded with gardens, arose to

the view. Past that pretty English Church, with its correct architecture, past a square full of people eager to hear the news, (for the Post Office was there), they galloped at a flashing trot, to show off, whilst the cracked old bugle emitted its unmelodious twangings; and then to the Post Office, where the bags are flung down, and Herman alights to stretch his legs, and give up his ticket to the polite official; and countrified young fellows eagerly ask of the driver 'wat nieuws' (what news)? Up again on the cart Herman springs, to be taken to the clergyman's house, for there he will wait for the morrow's cart to Ventersdorp. The parsonage, or rectory if you will, was in an out-of-the-way part of the dorp, near to the foot of the mountain, and had a fine garden around it, and a handsome verandah round three sides of the domicile.

The Reverend Mr. Osmond was at the garden gate, and when the cart set Herman down, guessing who he was, he cordially saluted him. Herman gave him the letter of introduction, and, as the rector perused it, took the opportunity of scanning his features. He seemed an energetic decisive person, good-humoured, but nevertheless one who would not put up with much nonsense from anyone with whom he might have to do, judging by his mouth, which curled somewhat haughtily sometimes, as if from habit.

"Well! come inside, Mr. Staunton; you must feel tired. Is that your box? Jan, breng de baas' kist binne" (Jan, bring the master's chest within);" this to a black servant, who accordingly shouldered Herman's box and portmanteau, and conveyed them to within. Very soon Herman is seated at the tea table, spread in English fashion, for Mr. Osmond was not long from "home."

"Let me see; you will have to be off again early, at seven, I think, to-morrow morning. You will arrive at Ventersdorp at five in the afternoon. After some minutes spent in discussing the viands, Herman remarked, "I did not expect to find such civilization in these country parts, Mr. Osmond."

"No; no more did I, when I first came here. The popular ideas entertained 'at home,' concerning South Africa, are vague, very vague. I think this country has never been sufficiently advertised by the Government; consequently, people in England often know less about this, one of England's possessions, than they do of Egypt, or any other foreign country. My first idea was, on coming out, that, outside Cape Town, you were in an uncivilized or barbarous locality, if not quite a desert.

"And yet, the country is very thinly peopled," said Herman, remembering the miles of uncultivated land, only relieved here and there by some oasis of verdure, round some distant homestead.

"Very; more so than any other civilized country I have ever heard of. And yet, when you do come to a village, you find capital inns, handsome churches, banks, prisons, and all the evidences of great refinement."

After tea, Mr. Osmond told Herman, that, if he liked, and didn't feel too tired, he would show him the church and schools, as well as the Dutch Church; "and if we only had more daylight before us, I would gladly show you what other sights we Philipsburgers have to boast of."

They went accordingly, and what Herman saw of the interior arrangements of the church and schools, led him to the conclusion that the spiritual and educational wants of the village were very well cared for. On their return, Herman retired early to rest, so that he might be prepared for the long day's travel before him.

On the morrow, after taking leave of Mr. Osmond, who saw him to the cart, and said farewell in a kindly manner, besides handing him some biscuits, &c., for the road, Herman again seated himself in a post-cart, and was presently rattling along over the long bridge, which crosses a stream coming down the mountain side: on which he now perceived more plainly what had caught his eye on his arrival, namely, on a gentle slope a fine large house, with a lofty "stoep," approached by noble avenues, in different directions, and surrounded by gardens and orchards. On his pointing it out to the driver, a Sharon Hottentot, with a simple good-natured face, and a profusion of old ostrich-feathers stuck about the crown of his slouching felt hat, that person told him it was the Philipsburg "warm baths," that the stream they had just crossed was also warm, and came from the remarkable springs further up. "But the stream became cool after having passed under the bridge," he said; "in fact, it was hardly tepid a little way above." This man also understood a little English, it seemed, but not so much as the previous driver. He informed Herman that he had picked up a good deal of what English he knew, when in the service of the Ventersdorp Magistrate.

But still he spoke, and Herman understood, some Dutch along the road; though Herman, having learned that language out of Van der Pyl's Grammer, was rather at a loss as concerns the peculiar idioms and phraseology of 'onze Kaapsch taal' (our Cape language).

The country through which they were now going was a wide wide sea of green round hills, through which wound along, in a very meandering and tortuous course, bright sparkling streams, here and there, however, forming dark gloomy pools, where an occasional overhanging rock shut out the sun's glare. They looked like (Herman thought), delicious spots to

strip and plunge in the renovating fluid, so bountifully supplied by nature. There was no time, however, for the indulgence of such a luxury; the inexorable post-cart *must* keep up its eight miles per hour. So it kept on, up and down, up and down; no house, no human being in sight, nothing but distant flocks of sheep browsing on the hill sides. When eleven o'clock arrived, they wound round the broad base of a green hill, and suddenly burst into view of a most beautiful homestead, with gardens, "kraals" (cottage and enclosures), and all the evidences of rural prosperity. They only stayed here a moment, to deliver some letters to a servant, for the farmer there, and soon emerged out of the pretty valley, and gained the top of the next ridge. Here, Herman saw before him in the far distance, a purple range of mountains, sloping down abruptly at each end. The driver pointed with his whip-handle, and said, "Can the 'baas' (master) see that 'berg'?" (mountain). We are making for that. On the 'regherhand' (right hand) is Sharon, 'Mister Hottentot's village,' (with a grin: he meant mission station, I suppose); "on the 'linkerhand' (left hand), lies Ventersdorp; a 'dorp' (village) at each end of that long berg" (mountain).

"And where does Sandy Cove lie?"

"Oh! Sandy Cove; it lies just over the other side of the 'berg,' three hours from Ventersdorp, and three from Sharon." He pronounced the word "Sar-on."

"Then I suppose you can go there round that mountain, either way; either by Sharon, or by Ventersdorp?"

"The baas is regt (the master is right), het is net zoo," (it is just so). "But," continued the man, "if you go by post-cart, of course, you *must* go to Ventersdorp first; that has the 'post Kantoor' post office."

"Where do you come from?" asked Herman.

"Where I 'bly' (live). 'Ik bly by Saron' (I live at Sharon). My house and my wife both are there, and I have some sheep also, and a 'mooi tuin' (nice garden). My wife also makes 'lekker komfyt, and 'lekker meebosch' (nice preserve), and nice mebos, (a preparation of apricots). "In my garden I grow meabies, 'aard appeltjes,' (earth apples), and pumpkins. I have two horses, lots of 'hoenders' (fowls), and seven pigs. And I go out to work among the farmers, or drive their wagons and carts; as I am the best driver in 'Saron'; or I help them in reaping, shearing, or building 'dams' (reservoirs of water).

"But how is it, then, you are driving a post-cart?"

"Oh! that is only the last two weeks I am doing this. Apollos, the post-cart driver at Ventersdorp, is very sick, so I am driving 'so long,' till he becomes all right again."

Herman fell into a reverie after this, and ceased talking for a long time. He was aroused by the driver, who had been singing snatches of "Herrnhuter" (Moravian) melodies, suddenly exclaiming, "does the 'baas' (master) see that long high mountain over there," pointing to a peculiar looking mountain, beyond Sharon.

"Yes," replied Herman, looking at it.

"Well, that is the Rhenosterkop; I worked very often for the farmers there. On the other side is a nice place, with plenty fruit; they call it Rietfontein. There stops there only an old 'noy' (lady), a 'weduwe' (widow), and a 'noytje' (young lady). The 'noytje' is very good; Magtjij! (Oh my!) I don't think there is such a good one, no, not in the whole of Africa."

"Herman took less interest in hearing this, than if he had known who that 'noytje' (young lady) of Rietfontein was; in the latter case, he would have questioned the man eagerly enough.

"I was once very sick with fever, and others of the 'volk' (folk) were afraid to come by me, for fear of catching it. This young 'noytje' alone came, day after day, and each time brought me nice grapes and fruits, and sat and talked to me for hours and hours, or read to me out of the 'kinder-Bybel' (children's bible), and the 'Bode' (a Moravian newspaper, religious). I shall never forget it. The 'predikant' (preacher) says he would be glad if all the others were only half such good Christians."

After passing through a lonely country, where the cry of the solitary "koran" (a bird) alone broke the dreamy silence that reigned all around, the cart out-spanned at a lonely clay-coloured barn-like farm house, opposite which was a small river, running under a steep cliff of limestone rock, and almost choked with reeds and "papias" (*papyri*). The Boer, in his 'veld shoes,' corduroys, and slouching felt hat, held out his hand, with a grunted "dag-hoe gaat het" (good-day, how goes it?) to Herman, and a "groetenis" (greeting), *without* the hand shaking to the driver Philippus. The Boer, a grave taciturn, beetle-browed sort of puritan, led the way to the principal room, called the "voorhuis," whilst Philippus out-spanned the horses, to be changed (for this was a postal station), and then he went into the "kambuis" (kitchen) for coffee.

In the "voorhuis" (front house), a shy damsel in the hideous "kapje" (sun bonnet) or hood, offered a cup of excellent strong coffee to Herman; and the Boer, seated on the "rust-bank" (sofa), inquired, "wat nieuws" (what news?) in the best high-'Holandsch' he could muster. Herman made a speech of five minutes' duration, concerning politics, etc.; but was rather

taken aback, when, at the termination, the Boer said, "Mynheer moet bitje Holandsch praas; ek kan nie Engelsh verstaan nie" (master must a bit Dutch speak, I cannot English understand not;) as though all his eloquence had been thrown away; as indeed it was, for the Boer could only understand Cape Dutch. Philippus relieved him from all embarrassment, by presently coming to call him, and, after greetings had been exchanged, off they were again. The horses were fresh, and went along without a hitch. In a few hours, Ventersdorp appeared, and here the flat country near the sea lay stretched out before Herman, in all its broad expanse. Past the court-house, past the tronk, then a church, then a new house building, and finally to the post office, where Herman alighted, and asked for the parsonage. A boy took him there, and on knocking at the door, it was opened by the clergyman himself.

CHAPTER X.

THE PARSON. ARRIVAL AT SANDY COVE.

HERMAN saw before him a short, dark-eyed, earnest-looking gentleman, with black hair and beard, to whom he introduced himself. "Come in," said the minister, "I am glad to see you. Do you feel tired? Step inside; we expected you by this cart, and I have tea ready for you, at once. But first, you would like to wash your face and hands from the dust. Indeed, travelling about in this warm country is very dusty work; very!" They were soon discussing an ample tea, and the clergyman remarked, "It is not at all a usual meal, hereabouts, is tea; indeed, it is quite an unknown thing amongst Dutch 'Afrikanders;' but I have a great partiality for it myself, it is such a cosy meal, and the beverage 'tea' I find to be more soothing to the worried nerves, after hard parochial work, on a warm day, than anything else. What is your opinion?"

"Why," answered Herman, swallowing his toast, "I have not, myself, ever thought much upon the subject. Though, I remember, Cowper the poet showed a great partiality for the meal; and I do confess, that, of all meals, tea is the most refined. Essentially the meal of good fellowship, and table talk."

"You are right," said the clergyman, Mr. Newton; "at dinner, now, the viands are more gross, and somewhat obscure the wit, but the 'cup that cheers but not inebriates' inspires a more subtle and refined flow of ideas. However, were we to drink tea in the proper Chinese fashion, and not as 'outer

barbarians,' with milk or cream, and sugar, the effect of tea would be, to render us too nervous."

"I see," said Staunton, "that you have what Cowper calls the 'hissing urn,' but not all his other accessories."

"No; allowance must be made for the climate. By the way, did you see Mr Osmond at Philipsburg?"

"Yes; he seems a very good sort of person. Though, of course, I am not acquainted with him, and therefore cannot speak much as to his merits."

"He is my rector, I am only curate; and yet at Oxford, where I was slightly acquainted with him, I gained the degree of M.A., whilst he has only the right to style himself B.A. Rather an equivocal position for me."

"Yes, I think so too. To what party does he belong in this South African branch of the Anglican church?"

"Oh! he is dreadfully low church. I hold high church opinions myself. On one occasion, when Mr. Osmond was down here, I was very much annoyed. I asked his advice upon some of our church matters, I forget exactly what, to which all the answer I received was, a satirical joke. I thought the jest very much out of place, and uncalled for."

After tea, the clergyman said, "if you do not find yourself too tired, I shall introduce you to some of our church people here. Would that please you?"

"Oh yes! have you many?"

"Not a very large number in this village. Only about thirty grown-up members in this small place. Most of the people hereabouts are of the Dutch Reformed Church. Their minister is the Rev. Mr. Wehran, a German by descent, but born in the Colony.

They went to see the principal church-warden, Mr. Burns. He received them very graciously, and welcomed Herman to the district. In the course of conversation, and whilst discussing Herman's accommodation at Sandy Cove, Mr. Burns, a very portly, slow-spoken, but kind-hearted Englishman, mentioned that Du Toit & Co. had just removed the man Josias from the charge of Sandy Cove shop, and house, belonging to that firm, on account of some mismanagement of the business.

"Josias will be, for the future, at work more immediately under their eye, and in his place they are going to put Mrs. Drake, the late jailor's widow."

"A very respectable woman, much attached to the church," said the curate to Herman, "and you will, for the present, occupy a room in her house; she will find you in meals, &c.; and all you will have to do will be to pay her so much per month, being relieved from any other thoughts external to your sacred duties as 'catechist.' Is it not so, Mr. Burns?"

"Well," replied that person, with a dubious air, "for my part I think she talks too much, and people who have religion always at the tip of their tongues, seldom have much of it in their hearts."

"I cannot quite make out why it is," said Mr. Newton, turning to Staunton, "but Mr. Burns has, somehow or other, a prejudice against Mrs. Drake, whom I have good reason to think an excellent person, though how or for what reason he has entertained that prejudice against her, I am at quite a loss to conceive."

"Ha!" said Mr. Burns, with a slight frown, and a shake of his head, "time will show which of us is right, in our judgments of her, whether you or I."

At this moment, conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Du Toit, head of the firm of Du Toit & Co. After the preliminary introductions and greetings, he informed the minister that it would be advisable for Herman to defer going to Sandy Cove for a few days, as things were not yet made ready or put to rights there, although Mrs. Drake had set out the previous day. He then informed them, that such was his regard for the church that Herman could have the room in his establishment rent free, also credit for six months at their shop at Sandy Cove. Having expressed their gratitude, the minister and Herman took their leave. "You see," said the former, as they crossed the square before the Court House, "how well inclined to us the people round about are fast becoming; a few years ago, and such a piece of good-will as Mr. Du Toit has just displayed (though not a member of our communion) would have been next to impossible. By the way, would you like to see our reading-room?"

"Where is it?" asked Herman.

"In this building, the Court House, on the left hand side. It is dark now, but then we have it open till nine at night."

"A very good arrangement," remarked Herman. "It would be well to follow the example in the S. A. Public Library at Cape Town, which is actually closed at four p.m., the very part of the day people begin to find leisure to go there. When I was living in town, I found it practically of no use to me, as it closed at four, and I never got away before seven."

They entered a well-arranged room containing a very well-stocked library, well supplied with the latest periodicals and novels, and works of travel. It was also well lit up with two swinging paraffine lamps, and the attendance of readers was fair, considering it was mostly a Dutch village, and the books were all in English. There was a small attempt at a museum, there being a glass case with a few stuffed birds, a nucleus of a more important concern which the Civil Commissioner had been

trying to establish. "What is that curious looking bird," asked Herman of the clergyman, "do you know?"

"Oh! that is the 'ground hornbill' (*bucorax cafer*) a rare bird, not of these parts, but from the Free State. So our Civil Commissioner told me. He also informed me that the Kafirs, in time of drought, are wont to tie a stone about the neck of one of these birds, and throw it into a pond or river, by way of propitiating the spirit who sent the drought. They think, as others say, that the bird causes the water to become so offensive, that rain must follow to wash the defiled water away."

"A strange instance of superstition! But, if there be a drought how can they find a pond to throw the bird into?"

"That I know nothing about. I suppose they do go where there is a permanent spring, never failing, yet most of the country may be labouring under drought. I only told you as the magistrate related it to me."

Next day, after breakfast, they went to see the English Church, a neat little building in the "early decorated" style. The interior was very ecclesiastical, and the chancel window had a fine representation, in stained glass, of the Crucifixion. Now there was also another thing which showed a very good feeling on the part of those who had erected the building; that is, there were no pews, simply seats, open to all. The seats for the choir were in imitation of the proper cathedral arrangement, before the altar in the chancel, and with two sides in imitation of the Cantoris and Decani of a cathedral. The minister sat down to the seraphine and played a voluntary; when he had finished, he remarked what a relief from the world it was to come into a church for a few minutes, even though empty.

Next day, they observed a great crowd in front of the Court House, and Mr. Newton told Herman there was a great case coming on that day, namely, that of Gysbert van As, who had shot his wife at a farm thirty miles away, called Buffel's Vley. He asked Herman whether he should like to go and hear what was going on, to which Herman answered in the affirmative; they went into the court, which was becoming rapidly filled up with spectators, as the case excited universal interest. The case had begun when they went into the court-room, after having been some time in the reading apartment, and a young man was in the box, of good exterior. The prisoner's agent was saying, as Herman entered, "What is your occupation?"

"Tutor, at Buffel's Vley."

"Where were you on the evening Van As shot his wife?"

"In the 'voorhuis' (forehouse)."

"What were you doing there? Were you alone?"

"I was not alone; I was engaged in talking to a lady who had come over from Rietfontein, about an hour's distance from Buffels Vley."

"Who was that lady?"

"Miss Swart, of Rietfontein."

"Were you talking to her about the time Van As fired the pistol?"

"Yes. Whilst I was talking to her we both heard Mrs. Van As cry out, 'O Jan; what have you done? My God! I am dying!'"

"And then you both ran out to see what was the matter?"

"Yes; we found Van As in his own room, holding up his wife, who was bleeding profusely from a wound in the breast. As I entered I heard him say, 'Janet, do you think I did this on purpose?' To which she answered, 'No Jan! before God, I don't.'"

"Then," said the agent, "you do not think the shot was fired on purpose?"

"No! quite the contrary. For, whilst I was residing there, Jan van As always appeared to me to be very kind to his wife, and on very good terms with her."

"Do you know anything more about this case?"

"No; for, at Dora Swart's suggestion, I mounted a horse immediately, and went as hard as the horse could gallop to Sharon, to fetch Dr. van Hamer, to come and see the dying lady."

"Very well, we've done with you; you may go."

The next witness was called, "Cornelia Johanna Dorothea Swart." The witnesses were all in another room, and the messenger went to fetch the one called. When she came in, conducted by the chief constable, who acted as messenger, she passed through the crowd of "Boers" (farmers) and other spectators, close to Herman, who started with surprise when he saw her, for it was the same young lady he had observed so attentively in the shop in Plein Street, in Cape Town. He was almost breathless with surprise. When he had regained his composure, he thought it would be as well to wait a little, and hear a part of her evidence, if not the whole.

"What is your name?" asked Mr. Marks, the agent.

"Cornelia Johanna Dorothea Swart."

"Where are you staying?"

"At Rietfontein."

"Where you at Buffels Vley when Van As shot his wife?"

"Yes, I was, on a visit to Mrs. Van As."

"She and you were great friends, were you not?"

"Yes; very great friends, for more than a year."

"Then perhaps you may be able to inform the Court as to

whether she had ever, in your hearing, spoken of any ill-feeling between herself and her husband."

"Never at any time had she ever expressed such a thing to anyone; it would have been to me, rather than to others. Yet I never heard even the slightest hint of any such matter."

At this stage Herman and Mr. Newton left the court-house, for Herman had said in a whisper that he was tired of standing there any longer.

In the afternoon, Mr. Newton said to Herman, as they were sitting in the garden, "When you are at Sandy Cove you might, by way of a change you know, sometimes go and see the Venters, at Brandfontein, close by, within walking distance."

"Are they nice people?" enquired Herman.

"Well, the old lady is, but I can't say I am very fond of her son Jacobus. If you like, I shall give you a letter of introduction to give them when you pass through their place, if you go by that route."

"Does their farm lie on my road to Sandy Cove?"

"The farm does in any case, but you see there are two routes, one of which goes by the 'great house,' as they call it, the other road takes you through the farm indeed, but is at the nearest point about a mile from the house."

"What sort of a place is Sandy Cove; a nice place?"

"No, not very; a mere fishing station, you understand; all the men there will be below you. As for a school-room, we are going to have one built as soon as possible; for the present, you will have to occupy one of the deserted boat-houses near the point called 'Carnarvon Point,' from a wreck which took place there once of a vessel called the 'Carnarvon.' The boat-houses are very full of sand, I am afraid, but that will soon be remedied, as Du Toit has promised to put matters to rights as far as he is concerned."

The minister left him for a while, on business, and Herman, to beguile the time, sat smoking a cigar, and reading a History of England, which he picked up somewhere "knocking about." It was an ordinary one, and he soon threw it down in disgust at something or other in it.

On the parson's return, and as they sat at tea, Herman said, "Who was that young man giving evidence as we entered the court-room? he seemed a good sort of fellow, and very candid in his manner."

"That was, as you heard him describe himself, the tutor at Buffel's Vley; Jan van As has three boys, of from ten to fourteen, and he is their instructor. His name is Philip Durville."

"By the way," remarked Herman, "I read a little out of a School History of England I saw lying about during your absence. What disgusted me in it was this: like all the rest of

them, it pretends to sum up in a few words the character of a monarch; whereas, even the wisest and greatest historians, after the most intense study and impartial research, are unable to decide, after, all the real character of such a man as Cromwell, for instance."

"I believe there is something in what you say. But really these little summaries for schools have not the space to go so very minutely into the characteristics of each sovereign."

"Still they need not employ such sweeping epithets as they do. One history, written by a Puritan, will style Cromwell a *saint*; another, written by a Churchman, calls Charles I. a *martyr*."

"True, but the best plan is to get that history of Froude's, or that of Macaulay's, which go according to research, and read *them* only; then give your summary of it to your scholars, to correct the crude ideas they may have gained out of an ordinary school-book."

In about four days it was arranged that Herman should set out for Sandy Cove by Du Toit's cart. When the day came, and "good-byes" had been said, and the cart was rattling down the somewhat rugged slope leading to the low region on the coast, Staunton felt as if he had just left a well-known sort of home; so kind were the people of Ventersdorp during his short stay there. All along the coast before him he saw distant ranges of glittering white sand hills, which effectually shut out any view of the ocean, save where a rise now and then gave a glimpse of a piece of the blue water.

The cart outspanned half-way, for a little rest to the horses, at a farm, the owner of which, a tall grave-seeming Boer of the old school, sat with Herman in the "voor-huis," drinking coffee. He inquired of Herman where he was going, what to do there, and so forth. On being informed, he commenced an invective against missionaries, catechists, schoolmasters, *et id genus omne*, and said that formerly, when the blacks were slaves, they were civil, obedient, and industrious, but that, *now*, they were a lazy lot of "schelms" (rascals), good-for-"nix" (nothing), impudent, and fond of acting as though they were all born ladies and gentlemen.

On leaving this place, the "veld" gradually gave way to a more bushy tract, animal life was more abundant, the songs of birds livelier, and all Nature seemed to become more energetic. On the distant flats, troops of wild ostriches were seen scudding along, a beautiful sight, and reminding Herman of a passage in the book of Job, that ancient poem, than which none are more true to nature, or more sublime.

The sand range became nearer and nearer, and at last, rounding the extremity by a sort of pass, through a bushy

upland, Herman saw the great old ocean heaving and sighing, and at his feet one large house and several huts, and some fishermen on the beach mending their nets. The cart drew up at the door, and Mrs. Drake welcomed him; but the first sight of her did not impress Herman so very favourably, as she had a grim, sanctified look, belied by a quiet expression in the eye, which denoted something like malice slumbering. However, he was made very comfortable for the present, and sat down to a dinner consisting of "perlamoen's" stewed, and delicious "klipkous." There we will leave him.

CHAPTER XI.

EXTRACTS FROM DORA SWART'S JOURNAL.

First Extract.

It has been a very lonely day and, indeed, almost all days are lonely, spent in this out-of-the-way farm of Rietfontein. The only variation in the universal oppressive monotony that seems to reign around has been the letter I received from Philip Durville. I hardly know whether I *like* or *detest* that man. Sometimes I think I like him; he speaks with wonderful eloquence; yet how really cold and heartless his system of philosophy. No wonder he is so much disliked by the neighbouring "Boers," with their simple confiding faith in their Church and her tenets. And yet they seem to run into the opposite extreme; they take too much for granted, and believe without inquiry; indeed, sometimes hardly knowing what they *do* believe. As for Philip, how his perpetual cant about the "origin of species" wearies me! I will not, as I am determined I never will, believe in the descent of man from anything lower in the scale of Creation. I think, with Malvolio, too "nobly of the soul of man" to believe that it could ever have inhabited the body of a fowl.

Second Extract.

What a change from the calm stillness and unambitious toil of a rural existence is this great world of Cape Town! How I miss those dear little ducklings and goslings that I feed at home on the stoep every morning! And yet there is this counterbalancing advantage in urban life, as Durville has often told me, that there are wider sympathies and higher aims, more refinement, and more philosophy. Is there really? Have those money-getting faces one single more spark of Divine glory than many of our Boers in the country? Is-

there not infinitely more "verneukery"—how I do detest that word—more avarice, and more vulgarity too? And yet I am speaking too broadly, for, at that lecture that I went to hear at the Public Library, I heard more in an hour, and felt my soul more fired with the spirit of true philosophy than perhaps I should in twenty years at Rietfontein. But what a startling fact was that I heard—and yet the lecturer's word is sufficient guarantee for its truth—that some South African language has seventeen genders! I hope that does not mean seventeen sexes! There is sufficient misery in the world from two. Well, I suppose, with my small stock of grammar, that gender does not really denote sex; that, in most languages, it does so merely by a sort of accidental employment of gender terminations. And yet, here I am philosophising, when all the time my heart is a woman's, and is ready to burst with suppressed —— (No, I will not name the word!)

Third Extract.

To-day I went into a shop, in what Philip would call the most "shopocratical" street in Cape Town. I went to buy some necessary things, to be had cheaper here than at one of our country stores. But who was that young man behind the counter? I never saw a more interesting face! but how melancholy! Why melancholy has "marked him for her own! I wished to enquire, but no! I should have excited surmises in other people's minds. Besides, what would Philip say, were he to hear that I had made such an inquiry? Why he would go mad with jealousy; that "green-eyed monster" would devour him at once, cold and philosophical as he deems himself.

Fourth Extract.

I cannot but think on him; no, for my life, I cannot. Philip! Thy reign in my heart is o'er; if indeed there ever were much room for thee! If ever I come to know that other one—I mean the one behind the counter—and he comes to like me, then I am not sure I shan't return his affection.

Fifth Extract.

How glad I am to be back in the country at Rietfontein! How fresh and sweet all is here, after the turmoil and whirl and bustle of Cape Town. I quite hold with the poet when he says, "God made the country, and man made the town." And when I am awakened in the morning by "the swallow twittering from the straw-built shed," or rather by the "cock's shrill clarion," my first act is to kneel and thank God that my lot has been cast in the country, where the air is so fresh, and

"lone Nature may freely breathe." (I wonder, by-the-bye, whether Philip ever prays.)

Sixth Extract.

To-day (date omitted) is the anniversary of my birth. I have spent the morning in anxious prayer for God's blessing on this a new year of existence to me. I wonder for what purpose I was created? When in town, I heard much of what are called women's rights; but what a lot of nonsense was uttered too! Surely, woman's province need not usurp man's; woman was made to be the exponent of all the milder, more domestic, virtues; the moment she takes man's part on herself, she ceases to be woman. And has not our sex been highly glorified in the Virgin, when she gave birth to the Christ-child? What higher glory can she possibly wish for?

I wonder where I was really born, or who was my father? All I know is what my kind guardian, Mrs. Vos, has told me, namely, that when she was residing on a farm far away, on some distant coast—the other side of Mossel Bay, I think—a dreadful shipwreck took place of a vessel, supposed by her description to have been the missing ship "Seringapatam," from Bombay to London. That all were drowned except one woman, evidently a Hindoo "ayah," who had a child in her arms, and who came ashore with the mainmast, to which she clung desperately with one hand. That child was myself. The nurse could speak no language but Hindostanee, neither Dutch or English. She died in a few hours' time, and Hendrick Vos, the farmer who found us on the beach, brought me to my reputed mother (Mrs. Vos), who adopted me. And that charm fastened to my neck; will it help to unravel the mystery of my birth, I wonder? Durville, when Mrs. Vos showed it to him, said the charm was an *Afghan* one; but how came it on me? I am, I suppose, an *Indian*, perhaps an *Eurasian*. But people say, some do, that I show in my features more of the *Persian* type than any other; perhaps mixed with the *Caucasian* or *European*. No, I am mistaken; *Persians* are *Caucasians* too, are they not? Well, perhaps time will show. Only the mischief of the thing is that some of these stupid Boers think I am *half-black*, ignorant of the fact that swarthy-ness is not confined to the *Ethiopian* race alone.

Seventh and last Extract.

I am much pleased with what I have heard about Salome Jacob's bold denunciation of the *slimness*, or rather dishonesty, of that Brickels. She acted quite rightly. But I hear from Mina he has threatened that when he comes out he will

“slaan” (strike) her “dood” (dead.) I hope it will not come to that. I think I shall ask Salome to come here; I know she is very fond of me; besides, how much better for her to be here than in a place like Wessels’, with all the evil necessarily to be seen and heard about a canteen.

This morning Durville rode up, and I had a dispute with him about the derivation of that curious Cape word for “much,” *bayang* or *banje*. He derives it from the French “bien,” often used for much or *veel*, and says it was introduced by the Huguenots, who settled about the Paarl and Drakenstein. Very possibly; but if so, how is it they have managed to preserve that one French word, and no other? Unless the word often used for master, “sieur,” be of French origin; some say of Portuguese “senhor.” But I think of French origin more likely.

I have, since that, been busy making “sambal,” by pounding quinces, salt, pepper, and chillies in a mortar. But I do not, I am afraid, by any means prove as expert in the operation as Mrs. Vos. Adolph has lost five sheep, whilst sleeping under a doorn (thorn) bush; he says they were devoured by muishonds. Why does someone not bait that “fall trap” more regularly? These “muishonds,” whether Adolph’s story be true or false, are really great pests; thirteen of our geese destroyed in one week, and such a perfect flock of milk-white ones too.

CHAPTER XII.

A QUARREL AT BUFFEL’S VLEY.

PHILIP DURVILLE, whom I briefly alluded to as giving evidence at Ventersdorp, was a young man of good prospects from England, somewhere in Yorkshire. His father was a well-to-do landed proprietor, much devoted to Bedale meetings and coursing. Then why was Philip a tutor at Buffel’s Vley? Why, just because he liked! He had come to our Colony to see the world as it wags out here; hating to do nothing, and yet being also, like his father, fond of hunting and field sports, he had engaged himself as tutor to Van As’s sons, at a nominal salary. He had a regular remittance of pocket money from home, whither he intended returning in a few months, having now being six months at Buffel’s Vley. Van As was glad to have him, as Philip, being really independent, had bargained for a lower wage than any other tutor who got his living by the thing, would have been at all satisfied with.

One morning, Van As and his eldest son Piet, set out for

Ventersdorp, leaving Philip in charge of the other two lads, and of the place generally. Before going, Van As said to Philip, giving him a key, “hier is de sluitel (key) van der zolder,” or, (here is the key of the loft, or attic, or garret.) And he also instructed him thus: “We shall be away for four or five days, as I am going beyond Ventersdorp, for a day, to my cousin’s farm, ‘Zeekoegat.’ Well, let the ‘Kombuis’ always be free of dogs and cats, so that none of the ‘koss’ (food) is stolen by them,—‘de honds kan baijie stiel’ (the dogs can much steal). Every morning, when Anna Brickles comes to you for the rations for the boys and ‘herders’ (shepherds), go up with her to the ‘zolder’ above the kitchen, and weigh out two pounds of ‘koss’ (meat), and a ‘schemel’ of meal, for each man, and put down on paper what you have served out to her; then lock the door behind. On no account must Anna be in the ‘zolder,’ without you, as I don’t trust her too far; she is too great a ‘schelm.’ Magtig! she can ‘praat,’ (talk,) but don’t you trust her too far, that is all. Good-bye.”

And the “Boer,” a fine, sturdy, grave, and almost noble looking “Boer,” Van As, galloped off, followed by Piet.

Philip went to the “voorhuis” (outhouse), and filled his pipe from a large tin of cut Boer tobacco of *Heidelberg* growth and manufacture, then took a seat and began thinking how he should make the most of a holiday he intended giving himself, and the two youngsters left at home. Whilst he is thus tranquilly occupied, I may as well describe the surroundings. This homestead, unlike that of Brandfontein, was built on a dead flat, and immediately in front was a fenced-in produce garden; all around was a series of “camps” (enclosed fields), similarly fenced in to those of the other farm, and containing a few ostriches. To the north-east was a long, but not lofty mountain, the Rhenosterkop, and behind that was Rietfontein, an hour’s distance or more, going round the mountain, but much nearer “as the crow flies,” of course. To the south lay the sea, only a quarter of an hour’s good walk from the house. As for the farm house itself, it was a small whitewashed, many-gabled, thatch-roofed Dutch structure, having five rooms and a kitchen, and no stories, merely the ground floor. Opposite the kitchen was the overseer’s house, with a watercourse and a “dam” (reservoir) about it, and a garden, belonging to the overseer, Piet Lourens, a cousin of Hendrick’s. Behind, were three or four labourers’ cottages; all beyond was dense high bush.

After his reverie was concluded, Philip shouted for the boys, and told them to go and fish, and bring him some “*Klip kous*” for dinner, or they would “catch it.” They gladly took the holiday thus accorded them, and were soon off, together with a

Hottentot, Piet Rooi, an experienced hand at fishing. He next summoned Anna Brickels,—aunt of the convicted Brickels,—and, staring hard at her, simply said, "Ik is baas van dag," (I am master to-day), and told her to mind and give no trouble, or she had better "look out." He then went up, to give her the rations, she naming the men, as she received their food, respectively. This done, Philip sat down in the "voorhuis" again, and recommenced his interrupted whiffing. And, as he puffed, he thought within himself, soliloquising thus:—"I wonder now, what object Van As has in this expedition of his; he is going to Ventersdorp, is he? I believe no such thing. I rather think he is going to pay his addresses to Miss Dora, of Rietfontein; I'll ask Anna Brickels. Oh, I forgot; he has Piet with him, and Piet would 'split' all about it on his return. Yet stay, why should he not really go on to Ventersdorp, and leave Piet there, pretending to be going to Zeekoegat, whereas he just coolly goes to Rietfontein instead. Pooh! preposterous!" Puff! puff! puff! "This confounded pipe is getting stopped up; I must go to the 'kambuis' (kitchen), and seek for a 'riet' (reed) from the brooms there."

So saying, he got up and went to the kitchen, where Anna Brickels was sitting smoking by the fire. She was a strange-looking old Hottentot, with a skin like parchment, and yet a look of fire in her eyes, that spoke of great energy of spirit. She got him the reed he wanted to clean his pipe with. Philip gave her a stick of "tabak" (tobacco), to make her communicative, and asked her whether she had heard any more about Dora. The old woman laughed, and said, in a low voice, "jij moe nie de baas vertel" (you must not the master tell); and, on Philip's promise of secret, she said, still in a low voice, "de sieur (master) is gone, not to the Dorp, as he said, but to Rietfontein, to 'vry' (court or woo) the young 'noitje' (lady) there. Magtig! isn't she a 'mooi' (nice) 'schepsel' (creature)!"—"How do you know; 'gij leirg' (you lie), was the not very polite observation of Philip."

"Didn't you notice the saddle he had, and the horse? Don't you know that, when a man goes to 'vry,' he has the 'zadel' as 'mooi' (nice) as he can, and the best 'paart' (horse—paard) in the stalls?"

Philip knew very well how the 'Boers,' when going a courting, invariably pay more attention to the horse's trappings than at any other time. He asked Anna, further, what reason she had to think it was Dora he was courting. She replied that she had, when at Rietfontein, been told that Van As had been there on a former occasion, and that one of the "meisjes" (girls) had overheard him propose to Dora, in the orchard, she concealing herself behind a pear tree in order to listen unobserved.

"And does Mr. Durville know," continued Anna, "that Jacobus Venter, of Brandfontein, also goes to 'vry' (stay) there?"

"Pooh!" replied Philip, "she will never have him; he be hanged. I think I have a better chance!"—This to himself. He went into the garden, and lay under the shade of a quince hedge, first looking to see whether the porcupine traps had caught any 'yster-varks' (iron hogs), during the night; finding there were none caught, he resumed his lair, and lay ruminating.

"Confound it all, everyone wants her! Yet, why should I care. Lovely as everyone says she is, she will be an old skinny hag some day, if she lives long enough. If she dies, it is just as bad, nothing but a heap of bones, and a grinning skull! Like a rose, is she? But what does the rose look and smell like, when withered? I don't care so much about her as she thinks; as soon as I see a prettier girl, she may go to 'blazes' for my part. And yet, I am determined none of these 'Boers' shall think he can cut me out; yes, I will have her, just for the honour of the possession." And he arose, and paced too and fro, with hasty and determined strides. At last he went towards the house, and met a wagon and span of oxen, having for a load, a coloured man and his box. He sent for the overseer; when Piet Lourens came, Philip said, "you know, I am 'baas' (master) to-day, so you must tell me, how comes this wagon to have been and come again to-day; who is that 'zwart' (black) 'schepsel' (creature) on the wagon?"

"Ik het de wagen gezondt voor een herder (I have the wagon sent for a shepherd)."

"Well, that is fine! Send a whole wagon and span for a herder; where from?"

"Modderfontein."

"What! can't a shepherd walk that little bit of a way, but must have a wagon and span of oxen to bring him. That is a waste of labour;" and he laughed scornfully.

"Maar, daar is de man's kist (But, there is the man's chest)!"

"Oh! chest. Well, why couldn't the lazy hound bring his bit of a box with him himself? You had 'nix' (nothing) to do with his box. All you had to do, Piet, was to hire the 'herder' (shepherd), and let him come as he can, box or no box."

In the evening, one of the men came to Philip, and told him that Jeremias was absent, at Sharon, and that, nevertheless, Anna had asked for rations for him, which she kept herself. Philip accordingly went straight to the kitchen, and taxed Anna with "verneukery" (cheating), in having received rations of bread and mutton, for a man whom she must have known to be absent. Anna denied the charge, but investigation proved

the truth of it, for it was proved by one of the "meisjes" (girls), that Anna had purloined the rations thus claimed. Unable to deny any further, Anna took refuge in abuse, to which Durville replied by calling her a thief, a "schelm" (rogue), and a "blixem" (blackguard), and other elegant and equally polite names. Anna retorted with much virulence, and a war of words ensued, which baffled all description. And, thus engaged, we will leave them.

CHAPTER XIII.

"OH! THE DREARY, DREARY MOORLAND!"

HERMAN STAUNTON, on his first arrival at Sandy Cove, rather liked the position he was in, desolate as the place was. The people generally willingly sent their children to school, but were not always punctual in paying the fees; some from the scarcity of "geld" (money), even offering payment in fish; yet Herman had a very comfortable home, and at first Mrs. Drake behaved very nicely and kindly to him. His food was well served, and his things at the wash were not stolen too frequently; now and then, indeed, he would miss a coloured handkerchief, but then they were useful as bandanas!

At the outset, he held school, for want of better accommodation, in an old boat-house, filled at the further end with a large quantity of old broken spars, and oars, and other such relics of by-gone shipwrecks. Also, to make matters worse, the sand had drifted into innumerable crevices, and the roof was partially blown off by gales, being indeed, what remained of it, merely a flimsy affair of reeds, the thatching having been the work of ignorant or careless fellows, who thought "anything would do at the Cape." The scholars numbered no more than twenty or thirty, at various times, and in the reaping and shearing seasons, even under twenty. They were a curious mixture, the aboriginal element being overlaid with European and even Malay or Indian, though it would be very hard to tell. They were a happy careless lot, of considerable shrewdness, and aptness of learning English, which they, many of them, picked up with surprising facility. After a while, Mrs. Drake also sent her two boys; these were of pure English extraction. To summon them to school, there being no bell, Herman substituted two large iron things, belonging to some old ship, which he tinkled together, and which indeed were audible to a considerable distance. After school was over, Herman would go a fishing, with a few of the boys, to whom he

often pointed out; and explained, the wonders of the sea-shore, and the curious anemones, glaucuses, Portuguese Men-of-War, and medusæ; and he often employed them to collect these creatures, with the intention of forming an aquarium. Sometimes he would go with Jack Hopkins in a boat, and enjoy some of the pleasures, and occasionally perils, of deep-sea fishing. Jack Hopkins would, on these occasions, give some of the outlines of his eventful life, he having once being a sailor, on board a man-of-war, and having taken part in some stirring naval engagements. But the agreeable monotony of his life was once unfortunately varied, for Herman had a row with Mrs. Drake, one evening; she complaining that he did not devote enough time to her *own* children, whom she maintained he ought to have given more attention to, and not merely treated them with no more favour than he bestowed on the young "niggers." Herman replied to this, that it was his duty to make no distinctions; that indeed, as it was essentially a Mission School, he had to look more to the blacks, since for their benefit was it established, more particularly. She at last apparently conceded him the point, but she made him pay for it afterwards (so the reader will discover, as he gets on in this narrative).

On Sundays, Herman held service in the same building, the benches being differently arranged; Boers and their families often attended there, when they came, as they sometimes did, to Sandy Cove, as a watering place. These services were in English and Dutch, alternately; matins in the one, and evening in the other language.

One Sunday afternoon, Herman took a stroll to a distant part of the beach, round the point, and, being left to the indulgence of his own thoughts, soliloquized in this fashion:—"I little thought, a few years ago, that I should ever have been here on this lonely African strand! And to what do I owe it that I am here? To the machinations of that scoundrel who defamed me to all the dwellers in that sweet rural spot where I was born and bred, and where I would I were this day living. Had it not been for that scoundrel, I should now be hearing the word of God in that beautiful old moss-covered edifice that has stood the storms of centuries, and not in a vulgar boat-house, like this morning. But oh! could I only see before me now that serpent-slanderer, with his apparently candid face!—candour all the more dangerous, for it has caused people the more easily to believe him, in his calumny of me. Yes, I wish he were only here now, to confront me face to face, and repeat to me what he has so slanderously told to others."

As he said this to himself, he had gradually gained the summit of a sand-hill, and saw on the other side the very person

he was thinking of, emerging from under a thorn-bush! At first, Herman could hardly believe his own eyes, but, on looking attentively at the man who was advancing, he saw indeed that *he* it was and no one else. Yes; there stood a few yards off, the villain who had poisoned Herman's existence, and forced him to flee from undeserved shame and reproach to this far-away spot!

The new-comer stared in his turn, then turned a deadly pale, seeing Herman indeed, whom he supposed to be far distant, actually before him. Pale! why he resembled a man who sees "spook" (a ghost) at midnight in a lonely cemetery!

Herman's eyes flashed fire; long-continued rage burst into flame, for here was the fuel! here before him, when least expected, was his enemy of old!

He ran up to the other, and with a passionate exclamation, wrung out of the agony of his heart, struck him down, and trampled on him. Rage lent him superhuman strength, you see. The other was so taken by surprise, partly at seeing Herman before him, whom he had supposed to be far away in a distant part of the world, and partly at the extreme suddenness of the blow. But, presently, he recovered his wits, and endeavoured to rise by a sudden impulse, but Herman held him down with a grasp of concentrated power, kneeling, with his hand on the other's throat. "Cowardly, unmanly villain, detestable hypocrite, seeming so smooth and open, all the time you were undermining my reputation, at last forcing me to expatriate myself, to escape unmerited reproach! Oh! I could murder you! but I will not; rather will I leave vengeance to Him to whom alone it belongs. Go then, reptile, slanderer, incarnate devil! go and repent if you can; or, if you have the grace to make the only amends in your power, do so, and free me from that dreadful position of exile from all that is dear to me, from home!"

As he spoke, he relaxed his grasp; but the other, springing up, his face cut with Herman's most violent blow, and blood trickling from the wound, stood opposite Herman with a sneering expression, only saying, "Madman! I'll make you repent this, by Jove, I will! I know where to wound you, my fine fellow! I heard you were here, and more about you too, only I *was* a little startled at the first sight of you, or else you would not have got me down so easily. Never mind; you little think how you will afterwards smart for this!"

The other, when he said he had heard of Herman's being at Sandy Cove, had really heard about him as a schoolmaster,

about whom also he had heard certain things said; but he had not yet heard his name; therefore was he surprised at the sight of him.

Herman turned away contemptuously, and retraced his steps to Sandy Cove, by the shore. "Good heaven!" he thought, "that I should have met my adversary *here*, of all places; and that just when I happened to be thinking of him! I wonder how he came to be here, or what is his occupation? and what could he have meant by the threat he uttered? In what way; he will injure me, I do not know, nor can I even surmise; but this I am sure of, that injure me he will, more especially as he has so far restrained himself as to refrain from striking me in return for the blow I dealt him. Rogue! I wish my arm had had ten times the power! I could have struck him dead almost!"

He perceived people, from the Cove, at this moment approaching in the distance, and knowing he would have to pass if he kept to the beach, and also not being in any humour for greetings, he climbed over the range of the sandhills to gain the inland road. As he reached the summit, he perceived his antagonist, still standing where he had left him, rather far off now. Strange! there he stood, with his face on the ground, and actually stamping and shaking his clenched fist! It was too far for Herman to make out whether he were gesticulating or not; probably he was.

When Herman gained the "veld," (open country), here rather open, he ceased to have any view of his late antagonist, for the distant bush had concealed him, besides that he was on a lower level. The house and surroundings of Brandfontein were a marked feature in the distance, and the only picturesque object to be seen. The scenery was tame, but very lonely.

"How dreary all seems," said Herman to himself; "it makes the very heart ache. Nothing but white glaring sandhills, that dazzle in the hot glare, or bushes that seem to have been browned and scorched by the hot African sun. And the girl, too, shall I ever see her again; or if I do, will she ever return my affection. Oh! If that dark-eyed Hour of Paradise, that Oriental-seeming beauty, were but mine! but no! this world goes by contraries, and they who wish most ardently are the very ones who always fail to attain the object of their desires. Besides, what says Will Shakspeare? 'The course of true love never does run smooth.' True! but without her, life is but a blank to me; nothing to anchor by, in the ever-ebbing sea of existence."

"And yet, life is but a succession of moments, each of

which carries its own burden of grief or woe. What does it matter, at any given moment, that the last moment just gone by was wretched or happy, as the case may be? And after all, 'no cross no crown;' and this is the cross preordained of old that I should bear. What says the saintly author of the 'Christian Year':—

"Who scornful pass it with averted eye,
"Twill crush them by and bye."

"Yes; to some minds, it is a necessity that they should be overwhelmed in the dark sea of dreary doubt, before they may come to a perfect knowledge of infinite bliss. Some must be crucified e'er they can be saved; crucified spiritually; the soul being ever on a rack of doubt and disappointment; the storm must precede the haven; for, after all, monotony in joy, in this world, would weary, the appetite would pall; man delights in contrasts, and, thoroughly to appreciate happiness, there must first have been the contrast of misery.

"And yet, argue as I may, I cannot reconcile my philosophy, or even my religion, with my feelings. I know not how or why, but so it is, I cannot help thinking of that divine face; those celestial features haunt me, whether I will or no.

"Where does she live? somewhere in this district, undoubtedly; but that is no clue; this district is wide, and has many inhabitants. One thing, however, is certain; that, if it be God's will, I *shall* see her; if I do not see her, then am I satisfied that it is *not* God's will.

"I am determined, if ever I meet her, at any time, or in any place, to throw the die, and risk my fate at once, and without hesitation."

As he thought thus within himself, he arrived near the houses, and Jack Hopkins coming up, he was diverted from his speculations by the cheery voice of that old fellow. "I say, sir," said he, "have you seen my wife and her sister going along the strand?"

"Very likely; I met some persons, but did not notice who they were, as I was busy thinking about something. Well, Jack, I don't mind letting you know what I did in the way of adventure, over yonder, a short while ago."

And, as they sat on an old upturned keel, Herman told Jack about his rencontre with the stranger. At the conclusion, Jack shook his head and said (for Herman had named his adversary to Jack), "A deep fellow, that, very deep. Take care, now, of him; I know the fellow well. Deep, very deep!"

CHAPTER XIV.

SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS.

A FEW days afterwards, a party was given at Brandfontein, to celebrate Mrs. Venter's birthday. From the village, and from some of the neighbouring farms, came a great number of visitors, including the Magistrate, Clerk of the Peace, Marks, and others; and also from Rietfontein, Dora Swart; and from Buffel's Vley, Van As, his son Piet, and the tutor, Philip Durville. The hall was filled almost, at dinner time, and the long table groaned under the weight of the good things which loaded it. Ham, beef, mutton, goose, turkey, snipe, shot by Jacobus, who luckily *had* managed to be successful in shooting some, varied by a desert of blanc-mange, "komfyts" (jam preserves) of quinces, peaches, apricots, and many other fruits, which had been procured from distant orchards, and preserved by Susan, at Brandfontein; besides "kookies," (cakes) tarts, *cum multis aliis*, which it would at once weary me to recapitulate, or the reader to peruse. Only I ought not to omit that peculiar "komfyt" of this country, "Hottentot fig komfyt," which is excellent. To wash all those good things down, ample supplies of "vanrhum" (a Cape liquor) were at hand, besides foreign liquors.

The party went along very merrily, until someone noticed the absence of Herman Staunton, who had been invited; but he had sent, it seemed, a note of apology for his non-appearance, on account of bad health! he wrote.

After dinner, an excursion was planned to the beach near Sandy Cove, some to go in the wagonette, others, for whom horses could be found, on horseback. Jacobus Venter and Phillip Durville rode side by side, somewhat in the rear, as they had happened to have a private discussion at the table, and wished to continue it. "What was that you were telling me?" asked Jacobus, as they rode along past the middle ostrich camp, over the hedge of which a truculent-looking bird was gaping at them, with his long neck stretched out; "what was that you said just now; "didn't quite catch it."

"That he looked even more fierce than that bird yonder," replied Durville, pointing to the object of comparison, which did indeed look like one which would "skop" (kick) soon enough, if he had them on foot.

"But I don't quite understand why he should have been so savage, as to strike you down so promptly, the moment he saw

you. There must have been some previous cause, or else he is a madman."

"Why you see, as I told you at the table, I had, when in England, brought this charge against, him of purloining those Bank of England notes; but then you see I felt it to be my duty; I did not act by any means out of simple malice."

At this moment Susan Venter and Dora galloped by, but soon got rather tired, and subsided again into a trot, so that the young men overtook them, and passed by. They distinctly heard Dora say, "Yes, Susan, if I only see him again, I shall be happy; but what chance is there of that! I suppose he is far away, and that I shall never come across him again." And they were left behind, so that the rest was all lost.

"I wonder," thought Philip, "whom she can be speaking of, confound it all, these women's fancies are always running after something or other that is far away; what is hard by, they always seem to despise."

"Well," said Jacobus, "shall we go to the beach at once, or shall we go round to the houses, and see what they are doing there?"

"Oh, this will be the best path for our horses, by all means," replied Phillip, who had his own reasons for the preference. "Look how far ahead the wagonette is! why it will be at the beach in another ten minutes!"

So the two men spurred on their horses, and took the nearest path, which was too narrow for a vehicle to pass; they reached the sandhills soon, and gained the beach, along which they galloped, to reach the spot towards which the vehicle was making.

Susan and Dora came up presently, and the wagonette being *outspanned*, and the horses "knee-haltered," the again united party began to discuss how they should best amuse themselves. "I propose getting the large boat," said Mr. Merton, "from the men over there, for a consideration of course. We can go out and have a row; the sea is very calm and still."

"I propose some duiker-shooting; over yonder are some fine fellows, the fattest ducks to be seen. What say you, Philip?"

"No, I prefer fishing; besides I have not got my gun with me."

"I shall go and take a stroll to the houses, and see how Salome's sister is getting on," said Dora; "are you going with me, Susan?"

"Yes, very well," and they started.

"Look, those sardines, how they are actually running to

land; there are thousands of them stranded; what is the cause of their doing that," asked a lady of the magistrate.

"They are pursued by a shark," answered he, "What say you, Jacobus, Mr. Van Wyk, Mr. Durville, shall we go and get the boat, and chase the finny monster? what splendid sport it will be, far better than shooting bucks. What do you say?" to Van As.

"Ja! la! 'ons de blixem vang!" (yes! let us the scamp catch!) answered that worthy. And accordingly Jacobus ran off to ask Jack Hopkins for the use of the boat; and passed his sisters and Dora as he went.

"Dora," said Susan, "I want to introduce you to the English Church catechist at this place; though, indeed, I hardly have any right to claim acquaintanceship with him, having only spoken to him once, and that was with gun in hand, he met our cart over at 'Leeuwfontein,' (lion-fountain) and we stopped for a moment and spoke to him. (I suppose he was going out for a little shooting among the 'pheasants,') (partridges). He seemed a very nice man, and well-spoken, but very melancholy, and quiet in his manner. Now, generally speaking, I don't think much of a man's being so 'still,' the Dutch 'spreekwoord' (proverb) or proverb says, you know, 'stille waters heb diepe grond,' (still waters have deep ground) or, as the English say, 'still waters run deep!'"

"Oh! look at these creatures, how deeply and quickly they hurry themselves as we approach; one would want a spade to follow them, and a deep spade too!"

"And look, too, at that dead 'stingere,' or 'stinging ray'; what a terrible spine it has. Do you know that, once, when I was bathing here, with another young lady from up-country, she trod upon one of these, and was lame for three months after. They are terrible creatures!"—Presently exclaimed Susan, "Look there! Jacobus, Jack Hopkins, and actually the very man I wanted you so much to see, bringing along with them that large boat; are they going to fish I wonder?"

And soon they met, and the three with the boat stopped and greeted the girls. When Dora shook hands with Herman, she started all at once, and turned pale. Herman said to her, "have I not had the pleasure of seeing you before, somewhere?" and he looked earnestly at her. "Yes, I recollect," she answered, in a low tone; "in Cape Town."

"How is it you did not come to our party," said Susan; "you received an invitation, did you not? Then, I recollect now, you sent an apology stating that you could not come, on account of ill-health. Yet you seem well enough to help to carry that large boat down."

Herman was going to answer, but Jack called out then to him to help to carry the boat further. He left the two ladies, then; but, having got the boat to its destination, he returned, and reached the large house, just as Dora and Susan were entering. They were very soon seated in the "voorhuis" (fore-house) and Mrs. Drake served coffee and rusks all round. She seemed pleased to see them, and told Herman that there was a nice chance for him now.

"Can you come up to our place," asked Susan; "there will be lots of fun. All the 'Boer' (farmer) games, music, and I don't know what. Don't you think you would like to come, if not for my sake, at least for Dora's; for I can see that you like her."

"How on earth," asked Herman, "can you see that? I have hardly spoken to her yet, have I, Miss Swart?"

"Oh, I can see easily enough, by the way you look at her, when you glance in her direction," replied Susan Venter. "But, I can tell you, you have lots of rivals. Isn't it true, Dora?"

"Excuse me a moment," said Mrs. Drake, "I have something to do in the next room, of importance. I shan't be gone long." And she went into her own room, got out writing materials, wrote a letter, put it into an envelope, and addressed it thus:—"Rev Mr. Newton, Ventersdorp Parsonage." There was nothing very wonderful about the matter, but, had some one present only known what that missive contained, that person would not have felt quite so easy in mind perhaps! On returning, which she did very soon, as the letter was by no means a long one, Mrs. Drake said to Herman, "if I were you, I wouldn't think twice of accepting that invitation. You will have to wait a long time, before you come across such a fine opportunity of amusing yourself as you now have. I would go by all means, were I in your place."

Herman, after hesitating a little, at length agreed to go at once with the two girls to the beach, and then return with them in the wagonette. He first went and quickly put on his black suit, then returned, and declared himself ready.

To explain the reason of Mrs. Drake writing the letter, or what was therein, would be premature at present. That must come in another chapter. However, it will be useful to the reader to know that, whilst Herman was on the beach, a little half-caste boy had been at the house, with a message for Herman to the effect that old Mietje April, who was ill, had requested him to come and see her at Leeuwfontein (a bit of rented land, near the Cove, belonging to the farm Brandfontein); this message Mrs. Drake had, for reasons of her own, purposely withheld from Herman; so that, of course, not knowing anything about it, he would not go to Leeuwfontein, and old Mietje would naturally be disappointed and annoyed.

Well, to return to Herman. He found that the party who were fishing, had, with the aid of Jack Hopkins, managed to harpoon the monster (the shark), and were dragging it ashore. Jack intended to extract the oil, and sell it, so the ugly fish, with a tail like a lochaber axe, and a cavernous jaw, being also several feet long, was hauled up high and dry, and afterwards cut up, and boiled down, when the visitors were gone.

Susan, as they now began, some of them, to inspan the wagonette, and others to saddle their steeds, after saying something to Dora, came up to Herman, and said: "Will you do me a favour?"

"Certainly, if it is only feasible."

"Why then, my horse is at your service. I want to go in the wagonette, and I also want you to mount my horse and go in my place, along with Dora, as I was her companion coming."

Most men would not think it such a tremendous favour to be asked to go in company with a beautiful dark-eyed brunette, like Dora Swart. Nor did Herman, so he readily enough consented to bestow the favour requested. When they were all fairly on the way, Dora said, "Shall we take the short cut, through yonder 'grass camp,' and see if we are not at the house before the rest. They will be going round the 'ostrich camps,' a long way, as there are several turnings to make. Here, we shall have a straight road,"

At this moment, Durville galloped by, being rather behind, and, as he passed, he scowled, at seeing who was with Dora.

Herman both noticed and understood the scowl.

"Do you know that young man?" he asked.

"Yes; it is Philip Durville. Do you know him?"

"Yes, rather too well." Then, at once changing the subject, he said, "Do you remember the time you saw me in that shop?"

"Yes, quite well," she replied.

"Well, I have been thinking of you ever since that." Seeing she looked pleased, though without answering, he proceeded:—"And so much did I adore you, that I have, ever since, prayed for a glimpse of you." Taking heart, as he proceeded, he added, "And I determined, whatever might result, to ask you next time I saw you, whether you would accept my affection for you."

She paused for a few moments, then answered, "I will not conceal from you that I do return your affection; that is all I can say at present."

"Then I am happier this day than ever I was before. Indeed, who would not yearn for the possession of so priceless a rose as you?"

They had arrived on the 'werf' (great yard) now, and Abram came and off-saddled their horses, and walked them up and down, before leading them to the 'stalls' (stables). "Jij is eerste, de anders is noch nie gekom." (You are first, the others are yet not come), said he, smiling. Abram was always a happy-looking fellow, and always ready with a good word, or a remark, for everyone.

The wagonette arrived by the other gate now, and Herman mingled with the rest, as one by one they entered the hall.

The sun was just setting, and the evening was delightfully cool, there being just the slightest breeze from the north-west. And here we shall leave them to their enjoyment, and proceed to another scene.

CHAPTER XV.

SIX MONTHS' AFTERWARDS.—GRAHAMSTOWN.

THE reader must now suppose six months to have elapsed. In that space of time what a host of occurrences, feelings, changes, joys, sorrows, may take place; what alterations of circumstances, to some for the better, on the whole;—cure many a heart-ache, soothe many a poor suffering wretch! Come along with me, in space-annihilating imagination, over torrents, wild mountain passes, far-reaching tracts of "veld," and trackless forests, making light of all difficulties; come with me, I say, and having reached that romantic breezy "neck" "nek" (a depression in a range), look down, and tell me what you behold there? A beautiful town, nestling in some of Africa's sweetest scenery, girt by gently-heaving green hills, and decorated with many a spire, that, heaven-pointing, leads the mind far away to some similar scene in the Home Land. Beautiful parks, glistening mirror-like reservoirs, green gardens, waving orchards, adorn this inland town, and draw forth the delight and admiration of all who have ever had the pleasure of feasting their eyes upon this rare landscape, so essentially English in its surroundings, and in its most progressive population. Yes! many a wave of noble English feeling, generated at this spot, has carried its influence far and wide, making itself useful for an incalculable amount of good.

But now, kind reader, having enjoyed the panorama thus spread out below you, let us descend, and, winding along, past many a heavy-laden wool wagon, with toiling "kurveyor" (carrier), and yelling "voorlooper" (conductor), and lumbering span of sixteen oxen, past many a picturesque little English

home, with its trim surroundings; enter at length the broad principal street, and, having passed that squat structure, that stands in the way, like a great ecclesiastical bore, as it is, let us turn down that street, and enter, half-way down, that tobacconist's shop.

A young man is saying to the proprietor, "Have you no better stuff than that? I got some very fine shag at the last town I passed through, though it was rather dear; but I don't mind paying for it, if I only get good stuff."

"Try this," says the owner: and the customer does accordingly, pronouncing it excellent. "This is very good; where do you get it?"

"Oh! I import it straight from Cape Town, it being a mixture invented by a person there; it can't be got anywhere else. Of course, you see, I have to make a profit on it; consequently, it is dear here."

After a pause, during which the young man puffed vigorously, he said, "I found the lung sickness very bad in the country as I passed through: I am afraid it will affect the transport service a good deal."

"Not so much as you may suppose. We have, to the east, a tract of fertile country, where the oxen are quite unaffected, as yet. It is from there we get our supplies of cattle for 'trek' (journey with a wagon), or draught purposes."

"As we were coming along," continued the other, "we had the most severe thunderstorm I have ever known. We were travelling comfortably along, one night, when we all at once heard a rumbling noise from the north-west. In half-an-hour the torrent was pouring upon us, and the forked lightning flashed in all directions, sometimes quite close to us. When the lightning ceased, it was a darkness that beat all other darkness to fits, I can assure you. All the time the road was such a perfect stream, that the oxen could scarcely get along. For hours we proceeded, till at last we saw a dim light in the distance, and made for it; we found it to be a Boer's house, and a lot of some other wagons were 'outspanned' near it, and a lot of 'voorloopers,' and other natives, trying hard to keep up a great 'doorn-bosch' (thorn bush) fire, which they hardly managed; the rain was so tremendous. How they got it alight is to me a mystery."

"Did you go inside?" asked the tobacconist.

"Of course, I should rather think so. We found a dozen 'kurveyors' inside, and the 'vrouw' (wife) making and handing round cups of coffee. We spread our 'karosses' (skins prepared) on the ground, and in spite of the thunder, I managed, for my part, to get a good night's rest. I am glad to have reached this pretty town at last.

Next day, we 'trekked' (journeyed) again, and found in the 'veld,' further on, a Hottentot, and a clump of sheep struck dead, it seemed, by the lightning, overnight."

"I should recommend you to buy this," said the shopkeeper, "it is called a 'veld-kombaars,' and will keep you warmer at nights, when journeying, than anything else; you see, it is a covering of sheepskin."

"Oh! I am colonist enough to know that, by this time, I should think."

"Where are you bound? if I may ask."

"To the 'Free State,' for a little sport. I shall probably even extend my tour beyond the Vaal."

"Are you from England?"

"Yes. But I have been several months in the Colony. For some time, I was a tutor, or what the Dutch call a 'meester,' at a place called Buffel's Vley, in the Venderstorp District. I gave it up at last, partly because, you see, I am independent, having ample supplies of money from home, and partly because my employer got into prison, for killing his wife. You have read about it in the papers, haven't you?"

"Oh yes! now I call to mind, you were with Van As, were you not?" I read all about it in the papers; it was a most remarkable case. But, won't you come into the house, and have a glass of port, best brand, you know. I shall, in return, request to hear *your* account of the matter, since, having been living on that spot where the crime was committed, you will of course have something fresh to tell. Come in?" and he led the way into his dining room, a snug apartment, some steps below the shop. "Here, Jim," to his son; "just mind the shop, will you, and take care you don't give over-weight, like last time."

As he poured out the wine, the young man began his narrative, giving it, no doubt, as it pleased him, omitting this fact, inserting that, as was most convenient.

"Well," he began; "as regards the trial, I was not present at Philipsburg, where it took place; but I was on the farm at the time of the alleged murder, and was indeed the primary cause of its being brought before a judge. When the affair occurred, it was brought into Court at Ventersdorp, where, by the Magistrate, Van As was acquitted. Some time afterwards, a dispute arose between him and a woman in his employ, as cook, named Brickels. I had accused her of purloining food, and pretending it was for the use of some fictitious shepherd, and Van As, through the officiousness of others, came to hear of it; though, for my part, I should have let the matter drop. Accordingly, he and that woman had a quarrel——"

"Why," interrupted the other, "surely she was one of the witnesses, if I remember right."

"So she was; but, listen. She abused him for three mortal hours, till at last, in mere self defence, Van As, with the assistance of several men and myself, hand-cuffed her. In a few days, she having left the farm, came a summons for Van As, and on the day of trial for 'assault and battery' alleged by her to have been committed, I had to appear as a witness. Such was the evidence, that the Magistrate could do no more nor less than simply fine Van As for illegal use of hand-cuffs."

"He not being a field-cornet, or J.P., I suppose?"

"Exactly; though he did try to make out that, having once being a field-cornet himself, he was a special constable; that, however, was all nonsense, and helped him not the least."

"But what has all this to do with the chief trial, that where he was convicted? I do not see."

"You shall hear. Not satisfied with the comparatively light punishment (if such it could be called) Van As received for having hand-cuffed her, she was determined to have her revenge in a more complete fashion. So she first of all went to Sharon, and collected little bits of evidence, here and there, from 'Totties' (Hottentots), who had been shepherds and domestics under Van As, and added also a charge of her own, — a very curious and improbable charge it was too!"

"Stop a bit," said the tobacconist; "had this woman been examined at the primary investigation by the magistrate?"

"No, she hadn't. The charge she brought against him was, his having wilfully killed his wife, because he was fond of a girl in the district, called Swart. That he had once, months before the murder, said to her, 'Anna, I wish I wasn't married to that woman; I'll kill her; so much do I like Miss Swart.' It was supported by the testimony of two other women, whom, I suppose, Anna Brickels had bribed. And so poor Van As was convicted."

"But can these Hottentots concoct such lies, and do you think them capable of perjury, against a man's life, almost?"

"Can they? Can't they just! On any occasion a 'Totty' in court, in cur parts, at least, thinks himself a most confounded fool, if he doesn't tell a lie. He thinks it best to be what he calls 'slim' (clever). 'Slimness,' to a Hottentot, down West, at least, is the virtue most to be cultivated; therefore, lying is the great vice; and, unfortunately, the exceptions are few."

"They are worse than our Kafirs, *there*."

"Yes; I suppose the Kafirs are a more manly race, and have higher qualities, barbarous as they are."

"They resist Christianity very stubbornly. Yet, those who are most *stubborn* in 'resisting,' will when converted, be most *staunch* in 'persisting' in their new faith."

"I think so too."

"What is that name you mentioned, the name of a place, I think? It sounded rather scriptural, I forget; was it Shiloh?"

"Oh! Sharon. A mission station, a few miles from Ventersdorp," answered Durville, for *he* it was, indeed. Well," he continued, looking at his watch, "it is time for me to go; I have an appointment at the Hotel. I shall see you again, before you go. Good-bye, then, for the present."

"Good-bye!" said the tobacconist, and Durville hastened to his appointment. And, as he went along, he passed some constable bringing in some Kafirs,—'red' or uncivilized Kafirs. On inquiry from a by-stander, he was told that they had been arrested for not having passes. As he turned a corner, whom should he see but Mrs. Drake, standing at the shop door. He was quite startled, and accosted her; she herself was very much surprised too, when she saw Philip there, in that far-away place. "You here, Mrs. Drake," said he; "this is indeed most surprising! I thought you were at Sandy Cove, that far-away place in the west. How on earth do you come to be here?"

"I might ask the same question of you," she replied. "I have not been here very long, scarcely a month. I saw advertised this shop, in the papers, and about three months ago, a friend of mine, living in this neighbourhood, recommended me by all means to try and get down here, if I could; so, on seeing the advertisement, I bought this shop, through one of the agents here, and partly by means of a little money I had saved, partly by help of Du Toit & Co., though they didn't at first at all like me to leave their employ. But how comes it you are down here?"

"Oh, I am going up country for some shooting, where there's some real sport. I am then going back to Ventersdorp district, and ask Dora Swart to be my wife, and then return to England. "Oh! that reminds me to ask you, how you managed that bit of a job, concerning that confounded fellow Herman Staunton, as they call him." ("Though I know the fellow's *real* name," he said, half to himself.) "Did you get nicely rid of him, as I bargained with you?"

"Come inside, there are no customers now, and I'll tell you all about it. Outside, here, the people can hear, and it might be awkward, you know."

So saying, she led the way into the interior, a nicely fitted-up, though not very large, establishment, being a combination of grocery and crockery, with something of a general dealer's wares. As Herman leaned over the counter, she told him, in a somewhat subdued tone, what follows:—

"You see, that day you were with the party at Sandy Cove,

you remember? well, Dora and Susan Venter came up, and asked Herman to go back with them, and spend the evening at Brandfontein."

"So they did, I remember Herman's being there; and, confound him! he was making love to that girl the whole time, as both I and others could plainly enough see. Never mind, go on, what then?"

"Well, before that, I had received a message to give to Herman, to come and see old Mietje April, who was very ill, at Leeuwfontein. Of course, as I never gave him the message, he never went to see her; and, I can tell you," (said she laughing grimly), "the old 'Totty' was 'kwaai' (angry) with Staunton. Then, you see, I wrote to the parson at Ventersdorp, telling him how Mr. Staunton had neglected his duty, in failing to see old Mietje, and in going 'galivanting' instead. And I heard afterwards, that when she got better, old Mietje, herself complained; it was Mr. Staunton's duty, you understand? Not as schoolmaster, yet as catechist. And, as for his having assaulted you, Mr. Durville, I had mentioned that also (in a former letter though). So, one fine day, when Master Herman suspects nothing, what should arrive by post, but this letter here," and Mrs. Drake produced from her shop desk, near the window, a letter, addressed to Staunton, and bearing the Philipsburg post-mark.

"How did you manage to come by it, and to keep it?" asked Philip; "did the fellow give it you for a keepsake."

"Oh no; hé simply flung it away, in a rage almost, when he had perused it; so I just picked it up, when he wasn't looking, and kept it, by way of a 'souvenir,' you see;" and the evil woman laughed scornfully. "But read it aloud, please."

So Durville opened the letter, and read out, in a mock- clerical sing-song tone, the letter, which ran as follows:—

"H. Staunton, Esq., Sandy Cove, Ventersdorp.—Sir,— Reports having reached Mr. Newton, that things at Sandy Cove are not going on as they should, and that you are somewhat given to friivolous amusements, instead of doing your work; you are hereby requested to leave your present situation, at the end of the ensuing quarter. I have the honour to be, Sir, yours very faithfully, F. Osmond, Rector."

"And what did Master Herman say to that?" asked Durville, when he had had a good laugh over the contents of the letter.

"Say! he could scarcely contain his rage. He said someone had been meanly slandering him, without giving him an opportunity of defending himself. He asked me whether I knew who could be the back-biter; of course, I pretended not to know, and to be very indignant also."

"I suppose it's now three months that he has left?"

"Rather less, I think. Where do you think he was, when I left him?" said Mrs. Drake. "Why, Jacobus Venter, on behalf of his mother, engaged him as tutor for Hieronymus Venter, at Brandfontein."

"The deuce he did! Confound it!" exclaimed Philip; "why, he will still be near that girl. That's just the very thing, you know, that I wanted to prevent."

"No fear, now; she will never speak to Herman again, I think."

"Why not? why shouldn't she?"

"Because I wrote a letter to Dora Swart, giving such an account of Staunton, that she cannot possibly care any more about him."

"In your own name? Did you *sign* your name, I mean?"

"Oh no! anonymously," answered Mrs. Drake.

"Oh, then! I doubt whether Dora will attach much weight to it. She despises all underhand dealing, and such she would be very likely to suppose anonymous correspondence to be. Never mind. I'll win her anyhow. If I don't, why they say 'there's better fish in the sea than was ever yet caught.' But," looking at his watch, "talking to you has caused me to miss an appointment I had at my hotel. Never mind, the chap can see me to-morrow, instead. Well, good-bye! I must be off now."

"You will call and give a look in again, eh?"

"Oh yes, before I go I shall see you again. Good-bye."

And he was off. As he went along, he muttered to himself, "what a wonder to see her here! I wonder what old face will turn up next! My! she's a hypocritical old wretch; she deserves to be strangled. Never mind; I have made a use of her. Pity she's not on the spot yet; though, in that case, I might write to her, and make a like use of her against that other, and ever more dangerous rival of mine,—Jacobus Venter."

Mrs. Drake stood at the shop-door and watched his retreating figure, as he strode down the lively street, saying to herself, "Ah! my fine man, *you* shan't have Dora either. True, I have helped to oust Herman, or tried at any rate. But then that was to satisfy my own dislike to Herman; I never liked him, drat his high church piety. I know he thought me a hypocrite; he said as much, and little thought I heard of it! I made a good thing of that Durville too; five pounds for my share in the plot. Well, that's better than nothing, at all events. But don't think *you* shall have Dora, if I can help it," said she, apostrophising the figure of Durville, just as she lost sight of him, as he turned a corner, far down the street.

The wicked have no friendship "inter se;" though they do sometimes seem to help each other; yet it is but selfish assistance after all; and the treacherous friendship is a very poor reed to lean upon.

CHAPTER XVI.

"BEATUS ILLE, QUI PROCUL NEGOTIIS."

THE pleasures of a country life have been alluded to by poets of all ages, in all climes. The idylls of Theocritus, the odes of Horace, the sacred book of "Ruth," the "Elegy" of Gray, the "Deserted Village" of poor Oliver Goldsmith,—these and many other idylls, pastorals, &c., show how poesy drinks in deep draughts of inspiration, from pastoral or agricultural scenery. Three lines of Gray's "Elegy," for example, are worth while thinking of over and over again, as an exquisite picture of rural scenery, as it is found in greatest perfection—in England. I allude to these lines:—

"The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,

"The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,

"No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed."

I do not know whether all would quite agree with me; but, for my part, I think these three lines form the most inimitable word picture in our literature. They could almost be transferred to canvas! And then the contrast! Here, amid rugged elms, you have the heaving turf, 'neath which many a toil-worn sleeper is waiting for the Adoption. In yonder farm-yard stands a shed, from which the swallow twitters: what an apt "onomatopoeic" word! The cock crows from yonder dung-hill. Far away in the distance, the deep-mouthed hounds are baying. But all these sweet rural English sounds utterly fail to awaken the silent dwellers in "God's Acre," that truly English trim-kept, daisy-canopied spot, so different from our disgraceful cemeteries in this Colony, of which about the worst are those Somerset Road "dead yards," of Cape Town. Mere yards, without romance, or association; mere Golgothas, or places of skulls; standing disgraces to a most unromantic Town Council.

In this country, rural scenery assumes a wilder and more pastoral aspect. There is little cultivation, and what corn fields or orchards there are, are isolated, and have really the character of being mere oases in a great stretch of dun "veld." The spire, that peculiarly English adjunct to a country landscape, is absent, or, if to be found, only in some far distant village. And yet, once get thoroughly into the spirit of Cape scenery, and

there is much to admire, much to move the heart of a true poet. Those who have once travelled across a wide "karroo"-like veld, beneath a gloriously fresh and clear South African sky, feel a something, they know not what,—a melencholy, yet sublime sensation, arising out of the very vastness of the otherwise monotonous landscape.

On the farm too, vast as a farm generally is, in this part of the world, life is absolutely luxuriant, from the great freedom and variety nature revels in. And Brandfontein was no exception to this rule. Not very far from the home-stead, half-an-hour's walk in fact, and you were as lonely, as free from art, as unconfined by the petty cares of civilization, as though you were far away in the wilds, instead of being in a settled district of the Colony, near Cape Town. Far in the distance, a herd of ostriches, wild, would be seen running; whilst ever and anon would start from under the shade of a large oleander-like bush, a bounding dukker; whilst again the slow gyrations of "aasvogels" (or vultures) overhead, would denote the death of a sheep or ox, perchance in some neighbouring hollow. Nearer the house, rows of casks placed at intervals under the large clumps of bush, answering the purpose of bee-hives, yielded regular supplies of golden nectar, such as the gods of Olympus might have coveted; only, whilst ransacking their sweet contents, beware of the proverbial sting, and also beware of that large "elephant" moth, or 'bee-moth,' that flies out suddenly, felonious intruder that he is!

One fine summer afternoon, in the reaping season, Herman, long installed at Brandfontein, as tutor to Hieronymus, was going round with Lourens the "voorman" (foreman), Hendrick Temmers, the "Stalmeester" (groom, or stable master), a half-caste, Hieronymus, Cæsar, and a few others. Herman carried tinder, the rest carried plates, dishes, &c. To an observer on the verandah, they appeared every now and then, in various directions, in a sort of procession; and the said observer would be rather puzzled, if new to the place, or its ways, to know the meaning of it all. They were, then, on a honey-gathering expedition, going round from cask to cask, collecting the stores, and now and then getting stung by an only-partially stupified bee. As they approached a hive, Herman would strike a light, with a steel and flint, over a "Hottentot tinder-box," then set fire to some old rotten rags, and creep down so as to be able to insert the light and smouldering lint into a cask. This would stupify most of the bees; some however, not quite senseless, now and then got under the cloth over his head, and stung him on the neck.

"Now," says Temmers, "daar is de last honig" (there is all the honey),—"there is the last honey,"—"nou daar is nie

metree" (now there is no more); "laat ons tot de huis kom" (let us to the house come). And, as they now walked to the verandah, from the hive near the garden, thus completing their round, Hendrick Lourens turned round, and perceiving Cæsar quietly demonstrating to himself the peculiar flavour of the honey, calls out, "Moe nie! jij jong schelm" (must not! you young rogue), "zal jij al de honig eet?" (shall you all the honey eat?) At last, they have gained the "kombuis" or kitchen, where they all deposit their burdens on the table. Mrs. Venter, with her 'kapje' (hood of South Africa) on, is chopping up liver for the hounds, and, on their entrance, holds up her hands with delight, as she thinks there has not for a long time been such a rich gathering of honey. But, on seeing Hendrik the "voorman," her delight is a little clouded, for ought he not to be on the land, superintending the reapers? "Hoc kom" (how comes), she exclaims, "hoc kom" (how is it) Hendrick, "jij is nie by de land?" you are not in the field (of corn)." He explains that Jacobus told him he might knock-off a little earlier this afternoon. This does not quite satisfy her. "Is Jacobus 'baas hier' (master here), 'af is ek baas?' (or is I mistress)? she asks. "Wacht, ek kry hem, toen hy huis toe kom (wait, I'll catch him when he comes home). That is, 'I'll get him when he comes home!"

Meantime, Herman and Hendrick "voorman" (overseer,) mount their horses, and gallop over to Leeuwfontein, to look after the sheep, under Izaak's charge. They find all right, and Izaak wide awake, and taking an interest in his charge. This being the reaping season, there are not so many shepherds; therefore, it behoves them to be all the more watchful and careful. They then visit old Mietje; she is glad to see them, but upbraids Herman for not having obeyed her call, last time she sent for him, months and months ago! It is the first time, since he left Sandy Cove, that she has seen him! "Meester! hoe kom (tutor how comes), I sent for you, and you came not? I was very 'kwaai' (angry), I can tell you."

Herman and the 'voorman' both explain that it was through Mrs. Drake's not having given the message to Herman. She seems satisfied with the explanation, and offers them a cup of coffee, which she is now making. They accept it, and offer her, each, a 'span' of tobacco, which she receives with pleasure, for conversion to snuff, of which Mietje is very fond. Turning to Herman, she abruptly asks him whether he has seen that 'noytje' (young lady), at Rietfontein lately. Herman gets rather red at that, and asks her how she comes to know about it?

Hendrick laughs, and says, "dit oud vrouw, zy weet al dings; zy is een hex," (this old woman, she knows all

things, she is a witch), and Mietje, just as abruptly, bids him beware of Jacobus. "My dochter was hier de ander dag, (my daughter was here the other day), and told me she heard from 'Salome' (Jacobs), that Jacobus was there last week."

"What, Jacobus Venter,—de sieur? (master)" interrupts Hendrick. "Ja! hy gaat vry (he goes a-courting; he goes to court?)"

Herman makes no reply to this, and, in another moment, having bid adieu to the old woman, they were on their way home, taking their route round the land, and past the shepherds' houses; off-saddle at the stable, leave their horses to the charge of Temmers, and proceed to the overseer's own room, opposite the western wall of the yard, or "werf," and just on the verge of the declivity leading down to the garden. "Will you have a 'sopje' of brandy," asks the "voorman," and on Herman's assenting, he pours from a "vatje" or demijohn, a measure of the reviving fluid, amounting to a "sopje" or "small sup."

"Ach" (ah!) exclaims Hendrick, with a deep-drawn sigh, expressive of pleasure, "het is bayie lekker; beter dan de ander; de ander was nix werd" (it is very nice; better than the other, the other was nothing worth.)

"Where does this come from?"

"I got it last time I was at the dorp; from Du Toit & Co."

"I say, Hendrick, do you think it is true that Jacobus goes to see Dora Swart, at Rietfontein?"

"What is 'true,' I don't 'verstaan' (understand) English so well."

"'True' is 'waar.' 'Verstaan jij?'"

"Ja; nou verstaan ek" (yes; now understand I). No, I don't think it is 'true.' That old 'vrouw' can lie plenty. Zij kon baie leug' (she can much lie).

"Then wherefore did she tell me so."

"She thinks it will make you 'kwaai' (angry)."

"Halloa," exclaimed Herman, seeing for the first time since his entrance, some leaves of tobacco hanging from a beam of the roof; "waar kry jij dit tabak? (where got you this tobacco?)"

"Van my broer, by Buffel's Vley," (from my brother at Buffel's Vley.) "Maar de bladen is nog-nie droog," (but the leaves are not yet quite dry), reaching down a bunch.

"It looks very fine, Hendrick; still there comes better in the wagons from George. Shall I tell you how to make it smell and taste like 'golden leaf?'"

"How," asked the 'voorman' (overseer,) seating himself again on his 'kist' or chest.

"Steep it in sea-water, and then let it dry in the sun. So I have been told, and I tried it once too."

"I say, Herman, you musn't let the young 'kerel' (fellow) Hieronymus 'verneuk' (cheat) you so much with your lessons. He comes to you, and says his mother, or Jacobus, or someone, wants him to go and help to count the sheep, or reap, or go looking for oxen in the veld; but he lies; he just wants to be free from lessons. And he is too 'wijs.'"

The last word used to puzzle Herman. He thought it meant "wise." So it does in Holland, but, in our 'Kaapsch taal' (Cape dialect), it means saucy or impudent! He therefore remarked, "Nay! hy is nog nie baie wijs." Meaning he was not yet very "wise."

"Will you come and help with the reaping to-morrow; plenty of new wine on the land, you know; 'lekker' (nice) spree too. Will you come. Mrs. Venter will be glad; 'jij kon bitje holiday hou' (you come bit holiday hold,) for a day; 'verstaan jij?'"

"Why! I'll see what the old 'noy' (lady) says about it; and Hieronymus will be all the better with his lessons, if I give him a holiday. Men say in English, 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' That is, Hendrik, 'al werk zonder spiel maak de jonge bitje verrot!' (all work without play, makes the boy a bit stupid)." This was a rather free translation, it must be confessed, but it gave a really good notion of the meaning of the proverb, nevertheless. By the way that word "verrot," literally "rotten," is used in Cape Dutch to signify "stupid" or "incapable," or "awkward!" It is very expressive, and offensive as well, and is sadly too much used by the plain-speaking South African peasantry.

"Almagtig!" said Hendrick, as he went outside, "the sun is 'onder' (down), 'het is bayie laat' (it is very late). 'Lodowyk' (Louis!)" he shouted to the squint-eyed nondescript "herder," with an old "kaross" dangling on his back, over the remains of a soldiers rooi "batjie," which had, by some means or other, found its way into his possession, and a very untidily sown pair of veld shoes on; "Lodowyk! is de schaapen by de kraal?" (are the sheep at the kraal?)

"Ja! answered Lodowyk.

"Tell Casar and Wilhelm to bring the others in. I now go down to count. 'Kan jij ook opreken' (can you also up-reckon?)" to Herman.

He wasn't asking Herman whether he could *reckon* merely. Being a "meester," Herman of course could; that would be taken for granted. But he referred to what was coming presently; the operation, namely, of counting sheep as they run pell-mell, helter-skelter, all in a heap, into the kraal; and none but Hottentots and a few Boers and overseers (the latter specially), can manage the job, without making a mistake.

When they presently reached the kraal, below the south wall of the "werf," and near the "land," the gate of the sheep-kraal was opened, and first Cæsar drove in a bell-goat, who led the flock. Once the goat was in, all the sheep follow, rushing in three or four abreast, confusedly. Without moving his lips, but just keeping his eyes steadily fixed, as he stood a yard from the gate, sideways, Hendrick counted them. Herman tried to count also. At last, all being in, and the gate closed, and fixed with an upright bar of wood, Hendrick asked Herman, "hoo veel schaapen" (how many sheep)? Herman answered six hundred and eight. "Nie" (no), answered the overseer, "jij is nie regt. Cæsar, hoe veel?" (how many). "Six hundred and twenty-one, sjes honderd een en twintig," answered that boy confidently, and saucily too. "Yes, you're right, but you are too wijs."

"You see how hard it is count right," observed the foreman; "a meester *must* make a mistake. A man must the sheep 'bayie' (often) opreken, before he can reckon them up right."

The darkness was now rapidly advancing, and they went up to the house, to prepare for the evening meal. As they entered the house, they found Hieronymus having a dispute with his mother; he having, contrary to her mandates, taken the gun from its place in the hall corner, and been duck-shooting. The overseer sat down on the "rustbank" (soaf), and, whilst table was being laid, played on the concertina, that truly national instrument of music, some of those sweet and plaintive old airs which Boers have often told me were played when their grand-fathers were boys, so that they must be very old tunes, and it would be interesting, if possible, to trace their origin. "When I go to the dorp," said the overseer at last, when he had finished playing, "I shall get a new 'orrel' (concertina) at Du Toits; as this is old, and a bit false."

Supper being over, they all sat and chatted in the "sall," (hall), some on chairs, some on the "rustbank" (sofa), underneath a portrait of the celebrated racer, "Eclipse." "Hendrik," said Mrs. Venter, "you must not let that man, Arend Cobus, be so lazy at reaping. This very morning I watched from the stoep there, and I could make him out very well, and he was just doing 'nix' (nothing). He is a great 'schelm' (rogue) at shirking his work, and you must look well after him. And you, Meester, don't allow that boy, I mean Hieronymus, so much time to himself. Only think what a lot of trouble I have with him! this very evening, for instance, I expressly told him not to take that breech-loader of Jacobus'; well, directly I had entered the 'Kookhuis' (cook-house), to see what Saartje was after, what should he do but just take that gun and go shooting 'duykers' (bucks), towards Rooi Klip

Fontein. If he does so again, why, upon my word, I'll take the sjambok that hangs in the 'kantoor' (office), and give him once for all, something that will give him excellent cause to remember for the future what I have repeatedly told him."

"What time did you say he went out?"

"Some time after you all came into the 'kombuis, from honey-collecting."

"Mr. Staunton, have you heard from Dora Swart lately," asked Sannie Venter of Herman, as she was playing with a kitten, under the timepiece, for want of anything better to do, perhaps, just then.

"No," replied Herman, "have you?"

"Yes. Salome Jacobs was here, on her way to the bay, to see her Aunt, and she told me her mistress was going to the bay next week, in which case she will probably call here. And now, what else, think you, she also told me."

"What?"

"Why, that Dora said she never would speak to you again."

"Impossible," said Herman, and he looked quite incredulous at so startling an assertion; "she could never have said that!"

"Het is waar" (it is true), as true as you are sitting here."

"It cannot be; absurd; I know her too well for that. None can be more content than Dora is. Besides, what possible reason can she have had for renouncing me so abruptly?"

"Why, I don't suppose Salome would have any motive for telling a wilful falsehood in that matter."

"What occasioned Dora to say so? do you know or have you heard?"

Salome declared she had, to use *her* words to me, "een brieu gekry" (a letter received).

"Received a letter. Was it *then* that Dora, who has never shown any ill-feeling towards me, gave utterance to such abrupt language?"

"So Salome informed me, I am sorry I told you, though, as you evidently do take it so much to heart."

This was a sore trial to Herman's equanimity; but, the more he strove to conceal it, the more acutely he felt it. He next tried to persuade himself it was all chaff, or, if true, a mistake of some sort. But the more he resolved the matter in his mind, the more he became convinced that there was at least a spark of truth in Salome's report. So he sat still and moody, listening to the concertina played by Hendrik; yet the melody, plaintive as it was, soft, sweet, and low as the breathings of the zephyr upon the Eolian harp, failed to soothe

him; till presently, when a stirring old tune succeeded, his spirits rose triumphant over his moody Saul-like despondency, and he muttered half-aloud, "perhaps there may be an evil agency at work against me; but by heaven! I shall trace it out some day, and then, ah!" and he clenched his teeth bitterly. "I suspect one, where he is though I am not aware. If it be *he* that has written anything about me to her, better for him had he never been born, if ever I get hold of him. Slanderous cur! with his seeming-candid face, making him all the more dangerous!"

"Look (kyk), Mr. Staunton," whispered Sannie to Susan; "how 'kwaai' (angry) he seems; did you ever see him looking so angry? You may depend upon it he has something upon his mind."

"My magtig! yes," replied her sister, looking; "what can be the matter?" "Perhaps something I told him a little while ago," replied Sannie.

"Meester! said Mrs. Venter, from her arm-chair at the upper end of the hall; "come and sit here, if you please, I want to ask you something." He obeyed, and she went on, "How comes it, you have been a dweller here so long, and yet have never told any one of us where you came from, where you were born, who your parents were, or such matters? There seems to be a mystery, somehow, hanging over you," looking kindly yet anxiously at him,

"Why," replied Staunton, "as I think I told you once before, there are special reasons for my reticence in keeping my previous life in the dark. You must not, if you please, allude to the matter again, since reminiscences not by any means pleasing would be recalled to my memory, all to no purpose."

"Nothing bad, I suppose?"

"Oh no! you must surely know me better than to suppose there has been anything *morally* wrong."

"But you can at least say what part of England you came from?"

"I must decline to afford you even *that* measure of information. You see, Mrs. Venter, one question might lead to another; if I answered one apparently harmless question, I should gradually be led on to answer more, which I might, for sundry reasons, find rather awkward."

They were interrupted at this point by the entrance of a servant with a tray, on which were handed round sopjes and glasses of egg-flip, after drinking which comforting beverages, they all retired.

In the morning, Herman held lessons for Hieronymus, as usual, and in order to give a slight insight into his method of

teaching, I shall select one lesson, a reading lesson; premising, however, that Staunton was not a regularly trained and certificated school-master of the latest type, hot from examinations before awful boards, and brimful of dates and populations, yet, he differed quite as much from the old-world ante-railway 'dominie' of the George III. good old school; still more, he was far superior to the fast-disappearing 'meester' of our rural Batavo-Africander peasantry.

Gray's 'Elegy' was the lesson; after Hieronymus had read it carefully and slowly and distinctly and articulately through, Herman said, "What is the meaning of 'curfew'?"

"A kind of bell-tolling, as you explained the other day, in the lesson on English History. William the Conqueror established the curfew."

"Yes. But now what is the derivation of the word?"

"I think you said it was from 'couvre,' cover and 'feu' fire."

"For what purpose was it rung, then?"

"As a signal to the Saxons to put out their fires."

"Yes. It is no longer rung for that purpose. Still, the evening toll of the church bell, in England, rung at the same time the old Saxons had to put out their fires, has kept up its ancient name, corrupted into 'curfew.'"

"What is the meaning of the 'knell.' I know what 'toll' is. It is to ring a church bell slowly, mournfully; as at a funeral at the 'dorp' (village), the Dutch bell is rung very slowly and sadly."

"'Knell' means much the same as 'tolling.' It comes from an old Saxon word, 'cnyllan,' meaning to 'beat' or 'knock.' 'Toll' comes from the *Welsh*, 'toll' to strike, and is similar to the Persian word 'talidan,' to 'strike.' Now, this explains how, when the Saxons and Jutes and Angles invaded England, they borrowed such words as 'toll' from the British (or Welsh), who were there before them. What is the meaning of the word 'lea,' over which the herd of kine winds its way?"

"I don't know."

"No wonder. It is only in England that one would be at all likely to hear the word. A 'lea,' then, is a 'meadow,' 'laid' with grass or leaves. It comes from the Welsh word 'lle'; but some say, from a Saxon word, from which we also get the word 'lay.' It is kin to a French word you know, meaning place. Think."

"Oh! yes. It sounds like 'lieu.'"

"Yes. But what does 'herd' mean?"

"A troop of cattle."

"Yes. The word also signifies, 'he who leads the cattle'; like the 'Dutch' word, 'herder.' Shepherd is the 'herd' of 'sheep.'

"Why is this Elegy said to be written in a country church-yard?"

"It was composed, not written, a hundred years ago, by Gray, a famous poet, who was standing once in a churchyard (which in England is also the graveyard), at a village called Stoke Poges."

"Have you ever been there?"

"Yes; when I was rather a little boy, my mother took me there. Young as I was, I yet remember the "ivy-mantled tower." A creeping plant, with beautiful leaves, called ivy, covers it, as a woman is covered with a mantle."

"Shall I say my South African Geography lesson now?"

Yes. Give me the book. Here? very well. What people did the Dutch find here, 200 years ago.?"

"Hottentots."

"Did Van Riebeck treat them as slaves?"

"No. He commanded the settlers not to molest them. What does 'molest' mean?"

"To hurt, injure, trouble. Where did the Dutch, then, obtain slaves? From the island of Java. Battas, a tribe of Malays, were sent here as convicts. They were 'Islams' or 'Slems,' or Mohammedans. Also from the east and west coasts of Africa. And also from India."

"Yes. Very few from India, though. To this cause we owe our mixed population in the western province. At Sharon for instance."

After school they used first to go and sip coffee in the "voor-huts" (forehouse), then go for a walk through the bush, or down to the "land," now it was reaping season. On the way, Herman did as every schoolmaster, or tutor, who looks upon his work as something more than slavish mechanical toil, and rather as good, real, Christ-like work, should do; that is, on their way, he would point out all those various objects of interest, in botany, zoology, or mineralogy, so abounding in the country, offering themselves to the observer's eye at almost every step.

It was pleasant to go and assist in the reaping of the "land," and hear the songs of the black and brown reapers and gleaners, echoing the notes of distant "bokmakeries" (birds so named from their cry), and sip wine out of a calabash, for the overseer always had "vatjes" of wine down to the field; whilst the glowing African sun shed his genial warmth on all around.

This afternoon, they reached the midst of the field, where the reapers then happened to be working, just as Salome Jacobs, coming from the Cove, came up, and Herman asked her about Dora Swart, and whether it were true she was angry with him.

"Ja! het is waar" (yes! it is true), answered she, rather saucily, contrary to her usual wont.

"How comes that?"

"Zy had een brief gekry." (she had received a letter.)

"Who sent the letter?"

"Ek (ik) weet nie," was all the answer she gave, and with many a 'dag' to the reapers, she wended her way to the house.

Pleasant it was to take the sickle and, reaping a path through the waving crops, hear the snatches of Dutch conversation that now and then fell on the ear, from the unsophisticated Hottentot. Still more interesting was the tale told, as they rested and smoked, on piled-up sheaves, by Flores January, an old man, who had served in former Kafir wars, in the "Hottentots rifle corps." How they reached an English officer, whom the Amakosas had tied to a tree, for their children to practice their "assegais" (spears), upon, by way of a target (diminutive toy-assegais, of course). A present of a span or stick of boer tabak, always elicited a tale from old Flores, of moving hairbreadth escapes from flood or assegai, either original, or previously gleaned from an old "kamarade" (comrade), long since at rest under the green sward of Kaffraria. And jolly it was too, and truly rural, to leave the reapers awhile, climb over the western fence, tearing their breeches perhaps, and collect "vrouwetje" schulpats (female tortises), or go over to Rooi Klip Fontein, and store their pockets with sweet succulent Hottentot figs, growing so luxuriantly about there; then go home and make fig "komfyt" of their fruit, behind the kennel, where they made a blazing fire of dead "yellowbush" branches, and "doorboschjes," whilst ever and anon the growling of hounds, or the musical singing of the "hondjes" (puppies), and the occasional low of kine from the grass "kamp," lent a rustic accompaniment to the crackling of the fuel. I forgot to say that, to make the komfyt, they had an old iron "pan," and skulls of deceased oxen made a rude impromptu fire-place.

When the komfyt was made, young Cæsar or Wilhelm or Izaak, was sure of it, as an "aasvogel" scents a dead sheep in the hollow; meanwhile Herman would relate to Hieronymus some stirring old feudal story, like "Sintram and his companions," so much more inspiring to a boy than a hundred histories of Johnny Goodchild (or such modern trash about good boys who never *wet their socks*, and go to glory for it.)

How much more noble a life than that at the Cape Town dealer's, with all its unattractive hopeless monotony of vulgarity! Well might Horace of old say, "Beatus ille qui

procul negotiis," happy is he who is far from shops and shoppiness, and cringing and smirking, and lying and commerce, and formal hypocrisy; away in the open virgin country, amid nature's own glorious handiwork, where boys can grow up away from townish snobbery, and precocious vice and roguery, and can be "manly" without, like town lads, degenerating into "mannishness;" as a *wimesake* of the great Dean of Saint Patrick's said at the South African Liverpoolian Association, for supplying the Kafirs with socks and bibles.

CHAPTER XVII.

RIETFontein.

It is a calm peaceful day. All Nature is alive, and all around, the hum of insects and the melodious songs of birds, and every now and then the crowing of "chanticleer" (suggesting to a religious mind the saddest story of falling away from loyalty ever recorded), the distant lowing of kine winding along the side of a spruit, that, issuing from the crags of rocky Rhenosterkop, meanders along down the gentle grassy descent, past many a busy honey-stocked hive, past many a shady melkbosch, here and there partially choked with papies (reeds) and palmiet (of which Cape Town followers of the Arabian Reformer and Arch-Imposter manufacture their curiously peaked conical head coverings), and past many a little oasis of everlastings, till it reaches the distant silver dancing vley, where springers have been netted this morning for the delectation of the homestead; all these interspersed with the soft Lydian-like strains of the hardly heard orrel, or concertina, played, Panlike, by the lazy herd to his charge, form a grand natural Te Deum to the great God, who in Nature shadows forth dim, yet lovely, images of that eternal sabbath so longed for, hoped for, prayed for, and *worked* for by every good and true man!

All around is calm indeed! No foreshadowing, as yet, of that terrible tragedy so soon to stir the pity and commiseration of a whole district. No one can predict, from the sunshine, the tornado so soon to burst on all the fair landscape, and bring devastation and confusion, where, a few hours previously, lay a beauteous picturesque rural scene.

Dorothea sat in the shady verandah of her guardian's homestead sewing; and, as she was thus pensively occupied, she presented a rare type of the most ideal, almost Murillo-gipsy-like phase of womanhood. Her raven tresses, neatly and simply braided in a Spartan knot, knew no meretricious Parisian coiffure, but would have satisfied the Apostle's injunction as to

the "outward adorning" of modesty. Her dress was simple, yet tasteful; no paste-jewellery bought of that innocent race of German Jewish traders, whose seductive invitations to "buy a vatch" were not so well-known *then* as *now*, since diamonds on the Vaal, and the great railway works now in progress throughout the colony, have caused a greater influx of those unsophisticated scions of the most wonderful race in the world. She might, and to many did, very well pass for a Franco-Batavo-Africander, from her features; certainly she did seem a "child of the sunny south." But there was also, as Charles Lamb has said in his most genial "Essays of Elia" (quaint name), a "Jael-like depth of lustre in her fathomless eyes" (I do not quote exactly), that seemed to denote at any rate an Oriental, if not a Jewish, origin.

As she sat there, intent upon her eminently feminine employment, in a naturally graceful attitude, found in all Eastern descended people (witness the Malays and Cingalese of Cape Town and Port Elizabeth), her eyes, so full of intellect, and redeeming by their soul-full expression the charge of insipidity so usually attached to merely sensuous beauty, were ever and anon raised to the footpath that winded round the spur of Rhenosterkop, on which a horseman was slowly and leisurely walking his probably-tired steed. Too far to be plainly discerned, he was yet, evidently, by his attitude, and broad-brimmed hat, a Boer, one of a surviving class more than any other similar to our Puritan and Cromwellian forefathers in manner and mien. (See what says a great historian, who has visited us.)

As she now and then glanced at the figure thus approaching, evidently to the house, a transient smile played on her ruby lips; not an ill-natured one though. Perhaps she guessed who it was. As he descended the rise, and crossed the rippling spruit by a rustic bridge, he might be more plainly made out. He was lost to sight for a moment behind the scheur (shearing house), but speedily emerged into view, passing by the orchard, and then for the first time, an observer might have seen and remarked upon the exceeding richness of the highly decorated zadel (saddle) of his horse, as well as have been amused by the prancing and caracolling of the steed when he came before the verandah. A Boer, and a young one too, he was, his features composed to a sober serious incapable-of-laughing gravity, a splendid ostrich feather pluming his bran-new felt hat, a most awful tremendous flower-designed waistcoat, coat of best broadcloth. He evidently came determined to appear a gentleman of the very first water. But, alas! what's the use of fine clothes if bought at a "ready made" country shop, instead of being cut and fitted out by a tailor? His clothes, somehow,

didn't fit him; he evidently felt uneasy in them. That was the fault! Otherwise he was, what most Cape young Boers are, a very decent demure fellow, with no doubt many sterling qualities, inherent in the Dutch character. He was, probably, far superior to any second-rate Cockney "snobocrat" in *real* good breeding, the good breeding, I mean, springing from good principles and goodness of heart.

Having requested permission to off-saddle, in accordance with Boer etiquette, he did so, assisted by a juvenile Sharon-bred Ethiop. Then he came up, and held out his hand, with a demurely uttered "dag" (good day). Dora led the way into the "voorhuis," and a dusky damsel brought in coffee and rusks. His first remark, in reply to Dora's very profound remark that the "dag" (day) was very "klaar" (fine), was only "yah, het is een baije mooi dag" (yes, it is a very fine day). Then he sat silent, intent upon the cool floor, shining with recently-laid-on "cow-mist" (dung). (Those who have been in a Boer's house, know how they "smear" the floors, which are often, but not always, made of old ant-heaps pounded.) Then he volunteered the remark that he had undergone the process of catechising and "aanneming," or confirmation, and had partaken of his first "nachtsmaal," or sacrament; this precedes matrimony amongst the Boers, and therefore Dora knew what was coming. He next told her what she knew before, that his father had given him a small stock of five hundred sheep, and fifty "boks" or goats, twenty of which were "witte bokken" (white goats, Angora goats), and other stock, by way of beginning in farming. By careful farming, he could, he said, afterwards increase them to as many thousands. (Many a "Boer," in this land, boasts of from five to eight thousand sheep). He then asked her what she had, and on her telling him, he, without any preliminary romance about the matter, dispensing with all European notions concerning courtship, perhaps remembering some "spreekwoord" or proverb about the cup not always reaching the lip in a great hurry, calmly, soberly, and imper-turbably, spoke of "huwelkys," or matrimony. All she answered was, that her guardian was absent at the Dorp, and she must ask her first.

Without moving one muscle of his face, he got up, offered his hand, went out, and mounting his horse, galloped away home.

She resumed her seat, and recommenced her temporarily-abandoned sewing, now and then glancing at the retreating figure on the mountain path. "What an unromantic set!" she thought; "they ask for a wife with the same matter of fact business-like coolness with which they would buy any article at a village 'winkel' (shop). There is no sentiment about these

Boers, at all; and yet, I have always heard, they are very very staunch to their church, and, go where they will, never fail to carry their religion with them. I have been told that, even on the great Krokodyl River (Limpopo), they have established a church, the most northern pioneer of the gospel in this heathen continent. What their ancestors always have been, an obstinate, self-willed, persevering race, forcing the very sea to retire, and stubborn amid the fury and storm of Spanish persecution, they are yet; they are the hardy 'voortrekkers' of civilization, and as such I honour them, and cannot sympathize with the remarks about them. And yet, I should not like to become a partner to any of those dull, isolated people, living amid soulless vegetative monotonous surroundings, no high aim, no theme of conversation, save 'geld vee, schaaps, wagens' (money, cattle, sheep, wagons)."

As she thus thought, the sun was sinking, and she expected her guardian home soon. Presently, as the lovely little "avond bloemetjes" or evening flowers, unfolded their petals, a cart drove up, and out-spanned, and her "so-styled mother" was once more at home, a comfortable motherly, intelligent looking type of a "vrouw" (woman). They two were soon sitting down to supper, ("tea" as a meal is not recognized by the Boers). The old lady brought the post, which had arrived at the Dorp, and there were three letters for Dora. She put them by to read afterwards, when she should have more leisure, for it was a peculiarity of hers, that she liked always to read her epistles, whether billets-doux or not, alone, in her chamber, and undisturbed.

Her "mother" was rather flurried and put out. During supper she complained of having been insulted at the village, by someone, who had told her that some third gossip had called her an old "verneuker" (cheat), for having kept her wool and angora hair in reserve till all, or most of the wool in the district had been bought up by Du Toit & Co., and then of having asked an extravagant price, at the end of the season for "clip." Dorothea told her never to mind, that it was no use fighting in the dark against such slanders, which no one could ever stop; in short, simply to take no notice whatever of the report, but to treat it with silent contempt, and thus refute it. "Only think," said she presently, "Piet Gildenhuys was here to-day; he came to 'vry' (court), and told me about what stock he has from his father, and proposed to me; but I referred him to you, so he left; I dare say he will come again, but no fear of my ever accepting him."

"Jij is regt, Dora," said the lady, her eyes sparkling with momentary displeasure. She spoke in Dutch, as she could not help doing, when she was at all excited or displeased, it being

so much more fluent on her tongue. "You are right, what would he have with you? Does copper want to unite with gold. 'Geld en huis' (money in house) is he, precious little 'geld' (money) there will ever be in his 'huis' (house). I don't at all like the way that family (I have heard) once treated a 'meester' they had."

"What was that?" asked Dora, intently gazing.

"This. Old Geldenhuys once brought home a friend of his, a neighbouring Boer; very proud and 'hoogmoedig' (high-minded) he was too, this visitor. Well, they took no notice of the poor 'meester,' who was a German, and neither of them even greeted him. So, at dinner, when the tutor was asked to say grace, he made up a long prayer, that God would turn the hearts of these proud men, and endue them with humility, to notice a poor 'meester' (tutor), and not refuse to gripe hands with him because they were rich, and he poor, but be kind to him, and treat him more like a Christ-like man," and not as a "zwart schepsel" (black creature).

"And what did the old proud-hearted men think of that?"

"Why, the old fellow, Geldenhuys, looked at the 'meester' long and sternly, and then said, 'You schelm' (rascal) if ever you pray like that again, I'll 'sjambok' (beat) you!"

"A most abominable way of treating a tutor," said the younger, indignantly; "and was that said before the 'kinders' (children)?"

"So I was told, but I am not so sure."

"If it was said before them, nicely they'd respect him afterwards!"

"I hear Piet takes after his father in pride. So don't you ever have anything to do with him. Rich let him be, but riches may make themselves wings, and fly away; then what remains, if there is no goodness of heart? By the way, have you heard from Durville lately?"

"No, I haven't," answered Dorothea.

"Don't have much to do with him either. I do not, myself, trust him too far. But how came he to be a 'meester' at Buffel's Vley yonder, since I hear, he has such a rich father in England?"

"Did he never tell you? It was for the fun of the thing. He had heard so much of South Africa, as a field for sport, that he determined to try it. At the same time, he wished to be permanently occupied, as he is of an industrious disposition; then again, his father only makes him a certain allowance, on condition that he is, on the whole, usefully occupied, and not merely sporting and hunting. But, lately, he has come of age, and receives a larger allowance; so he has taken an extended trip into the Free State, by way of the Eastern Province, being

of course more independent now. So he told me, before starting."

Here, to their astonishment and surprise, Salome came running in, with tears in her eyes, and extremely agitated, exclaiming, "O noy! O noytje! who do you think is by the 'stals' (stable)? He gave me this 'brief' (letter) for you. But how could he come here? I am sore 'bang' (afraid) that he will kill me! The 'schelm' (rogue) has come back before his time is out at the Cape Town Breakwater! He must have run away. Remember how I was witness against him, though not in the 'kantoor' (court)."

"Who are you speaking of? Who is it?"

"Does 'noytje' forget that bad man, Brickels, who was sent away to Cape Town for swearing false in court?"

"Oh! now I recollect; but are you sure he is here?"

"Yes! my 'eigen oog' had hem gezien; hy is nou by de stal' (own eyes him seen, he is now at the stable)."

"I think I'll go myself, and see;" and Dora went, and in a few minutes returned, saying to her guardian, "it is he. He says that, for good conduct, he has been let off before his time. Only, I don't believe him; his looks give the lie to what he says."

"Hy zal my doodslaen (he will kill me), said Salome, for what I told about him."

"Nie! hy weet nie wie had vertel voor hem" (no! he knows not who had told of him), replied Dora (that is, "he knows not who told of him)."

"Let me see what is in this letter." Having opened it she found therein a message from old Mietje, who stated that she was 'zoo baie' ziek, ik denk ek zal vergaan' (so very sick think I shall die)."

"Salome! Salome!" she cried out, and the 'meisje' came. "Go and see Brickels (don't be afraid, he won't hurt you); and tell him he must let me know who wrote this letter. Mietje couldn't have written it, if she is so very sick as she says she is; then, again, it is not her handwriting, though it is bad enough as it is."

In a few moments Salome returned, and informed her mistress that Brickels had insisted upon it, that Mietje herself, and no one else, had "hern de brief gegeven" (given him the letter); that he knew nothing as to who wrote it; and also, to satisfy them still further, that he was again in full employment, at Brandfontein, as general help on the farm.

So Dora sent a verbal message to Mietje, that she would come and see her the day after the morrow; meanwhile, as it was late, Brickels slept in one of the "pondoks" (huts) for labourers, situated behind the orchard, and above the bridge.

When she had kissed her guardian, and bade her "good night," she retired to her own room, a tastefully decorated boudoir-like apartment, looking out on a slope, at this time white with the flocks of milky-white geese that cackled themselves to sleep, one of them always remaining on guard as sentinel, to watch against the predatory attacks of that deadly foe to geese, the sly 'muishond,' an animal of the weasel tribe, and akin to the ferret.

Opposite her couch, and against the beautiful papered wall (a fine contrast to the usual bare walls of most Boer "slaapkamers" (sleeping-rooms), hung a finely-worked picture in embroidery, of our Saviour, amid the lovely lily-decked meadows of the Holy Land, surrounded by his disciples, pointing out the lilies, and comparing them to the wisest of Oriental monarchs "in all his glory." This had been her own work (and I wish all our rural Sannies and Katrinas would take the hint, as regards industrial ornamentation), and was really a very creditable performance, and very pretty in effect. All round hung pictures (after Teniers) representing life in Holland, kine, cattle, canals, and boers drinking, and other such sweet, homely old Dutch scenes. Directly over her couch was a very pretty copy (lithograph), neatly and tastefully framed by Ashley, of Cape Town (who has left off framing pictures, and taken to framing voices to harmony); it represented an old German lady, with saxon-faced children, listening to an old gipsy, or Zingara or Bohemian fortune-teller, who has with her two lithe dark-eyed Oriental-looking little girls, one of whom holds a tambourine; in the back-ground is a German forest or woodland scene. One of the gipsy children bore a striking and whimsical resemblance to Dora herself. On a table, also neatly arranged, and covered with a plain but tasteful sombre-coloured green cloth, lay a number of books in Dutch and English; a large bible, illuminated, in the former language, also the poems of Joost van Vondel, and of Jacob Cats; and, in English, Keble's Christian Year, the beautiful Anglican Prayer Book, and a nicely-got-up copy of Goldsmith's Poetry. "Give me a man's handwriting, and I will tell you his character," say some clever Christians in London; but I say, "give me a person's apartment rather, surroundings." These, more than anything else, declare, and eloquently, a person's mind. The dull mind of a peasant is too often reflected in the dulness of his bare unfurnished unboarded apartment.

She sat down, and took out her three-last received letters, and opened them; but only after staring well at the address and postmarks to see where they came from. Some persons have that sort of idiosyncrasy in them; they can see much better inside, where the letter was written, but they do, for unknown

reasons, prefer the method of outside inspection. The first bore the postmark of Colesberg, and was from Durville. Part of the letter ran thus:—"This place is situated in a quarry-like place amongst the rocks, and I don't like it at all. A person had formerly told me Colesberg was the 'leelykste plaats in de wereld'; but I never thought it would turn out to be so ugly as it really is. It is most frightfully hot too!"

And again, further on, was this caution:—

"For God's sake, have nothing to do with that fellow Herman. You seemed to me to have a predilection for him; but, if you only knew of him what I know, you would spurn him from you, as you would a snake."

In speechless indignation, she struck a match, and set it on fire, envelope, letter, and all; and trampled on the burnt remains, saying aloud in truly Elizabethian ire, "Even thus would I trample on the writer, so meanly, so foully, to insinuate anything against him; I cannot, I will not, believe a word. It is a false, malicious lie!"

"She sat down and looked at the next. It was from Mrs. Drake. A part, towards the middle, read thus:—

"And now, dear Miss Swart, you will be surprised to hear that Durville saw and spoke to me the other day. I was surprised to see him in our city; more surprised than delighted, I can assure you; for I never liked that candid-looking fellow. He is to candid-seeming to be really true of heart: he quite overdoes it. He can't take me in! Only think, he seemed to believe it was quite an easy matter to get you; it shows how much he values you! He wanted me to help him; I'll see him hanged first! Don't care for him; he was, I have been told by Jack Morland, courting his sister, at Riebeeck, just about the time I spoke to him. A short courtship, forsooth! only three days he had time to do it in. He stayed at Riebeeck no longer than that."—I have omitted most of this letter. When she had read this, Dora laughed, and thought to herself, "One slanderer back-biting another! Serve him right too. She's a precious creature though! I strongly suspect she had a hand in getting Herman away from Sandy Cove. I never trusted her too far."

The third letter was merely an invitation from Sannie Venter to pass a few days at Brandfontein.

After these, Dora knelt down, and prayed to him, who alone ever "lightens our darkness," and guides us through the "silent watches of night," nor allows "ill dreams" to "molest those whom, being His beloved, He gives sleep," and, having thus committed herself unto him, fell into the deepest soundest of slumbers, protected by her special guardian angel, happily unconscious how soon she should receive the dread summons to

another unseen world, that sooner or later must come to all alike, peasant or king.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DEAR PRICE FOR SWEET FREEDOM.

IN order to explain the circumstance which so alarmed poor Salome, I must go back a few days in my narrative.

Hieronymus and Herman were sitting in the little school-room, that had, by the way, a sunny northern aspect. The boy was writing out, from memory, the history of the early colonization of the Cape, by Van Riebeeck and his company; for Herman was one who held the very peculiar idea (to some), that the history of his native land, though it be only a poor Colony, should be taught to a boy before any other. Presently little Cæsar and little Wilhelm came to the half-door, which, being the upper half, was seen, and Cæsar, with his usual impudence, sang out, "Heronymus, Heronymus!"—so he pronounced the name,—"Brickels is again come from Cape Town!"

"You lie, Cæsar; he can not come; mister Government shall not let him come. Majtig! jij kan baije leug!"

"Loop weg, Cæsar! Wilhelm!" said Herman; but just as the young hopeful sons of Africa were moving away, Jacobus Venter, who had the previous day returned from a trip to some distant farm, came up, and, seeing those boys there, said, "You young zwart schepsels, what are you doing here by the school-room? Where is your work, have had food to day?"

"Yes, answered Wilhelm, sulkily."

"Oh! you *have* had your food, have you? Go to your work at once then: hoor? loop!"

He hastened their exit by the ominous crack of a whip in his hand. Entering, he observed to Herman, "You see, Mr. Staunton, what a trouble these people are, from Sharon, not only these youngsters, but the grown-up people also. When they come into the 'Kantoor,' to reckon off, oh! they must have their 'geld' to the very last 'oulap' (penny); but when you come to watch them working, how little they do! They must have the very best of bread and fish and mutton; oh! nothing is too good for them. Eating and drinking are the only things they do well, and right well they do it too. It was not so in the old slave times. Then the beggars had to work, and no mistake about it; then they were civil to you. Now they are a great deal too impudent."

"Freedom is as yet new and strange to them," observed Herman. "You must give them time to develop the virtues

of liberty; as yet they have not got rid of those old taints of slavery—lying and laziness."

"Those mission stations, however, you must allow, are the curse of the Colony. The blacks living there, or at least going there at stated seasons, are able to combine, and keep up the rate of wages; whereas, amongst these stupid farmers round about here, there is no combining, no public spirit whatever."

"But," said Herman, "you must compare these Hottentots and slaves, or descendants of slaves, with what their fathers were, as Van Riebeeck found their progenitors; then you will allow that that these German missionaries have wrought an immense amount of good. We must not consider what they have *not* done alone, but also at what they *have* done. Not only mark their sins of omission, but also their virtues of commission."

"By the way," said Jacobus, looking at what his brother was writing, "you should not let him devote so much time to this sort of thing; more arithmetic, that is the chief thing. There is nothing comes equal to the power of ready reckoning. He will find far more use from *that* than from merely knowing of the early colonization of this country."

"But," answered Herman, "the chief question, in education, is not what will be of most worldly use, as reckoning (though I admit the value of that), but there is something higher to be arrived at."

"What is that?"

"Why, the complete drawing out of the higher faculties of both mind and soul. With many people, the only question is, what education will *pay* best; they imagine reading, writing, and arithmetic sufficient to fit their sons for clerks in some store; but they forget that, though valuable and even essential, these things alone are not enough. A boy should be so drawn out, his faculties rendered so keen by higher studies, that, after leaving school, he may be able to continue his own education, by himself. This is lost sight of, especially in *colonies*, where society is young, and has to begin by aiming at the material, the substantial; neglecting the higher metaphysical, poetical views of life. Witness the difference between Ancient Athens or Modern Edinburgh, or Oxford (with their higher aspiration, after something beyond mere bread and meat and trade), and such places as Cape Town, or Ventersdorp, and you will at once see where colonists "fail."

"Well, after all, the end of life is to make money, isn't it?"

"No. God forbid! Making money is a good thing in its way, if the money is destined for a good use, such as almsgiving, founding missions, or schools, or churches for our sparse

isolated population; but the mere making of money, and commerce, has selfish tendencies. That is the reason why, the other day, I upheld war to be a good thing in one way; namely, that it rouses men out of their deadening covetousness, and calls forth all their latent courage, endurance, and patriotism."

Jacobus, making no further reply, went to his office (or "kantoor"), and sat down at his desk, thinking. (This office, by the way, opened out at a recess, on the north side of the house, which recess was formed by the projecting verandah, and the right wing of the building; still further to the right, and on the same side, was the little school-room). He sat still, apparently in a brown study, or reverie, for a long time. At last, as though a thought had struck him, he suddenly roused himself, and, opening the desk, took out a letter, which he read and read so often and so attentively, that he must have got it by heart almost. He muttered to himself, "Strange idea of Durville's, this." Don't the fellow know that I want the girl myself? And does he think that, for a paltry sum of £80 sterling, I am going to undertake such a very perilous work. The deuce knows I am willing enough, only were it not for the chance of such a crime being discovered. Discovered, pshaw! I'll take care of that, however. An accident of some sort; well it might pass off very well."

And then, as though he had not read the letter often enough, he again perused it, and having done so, fell into another reverie. Whilst thus engaged, I may as well give an extract from Durville's letter, (for from him it was.) It read as follows:—

"The offer I made in my last letter, I now renew. Only, this time, I increase it to £80 sterling. I may even make it more. Only rid me of that canting hypocrite, Herman, who, for all I know, is the only obstacle in my way, and I would do anything, almost, for you. You need not do it so as it can be discovered. An accident, a fall down some pit; oh! I have it! An instrument would serve your purpose. Have you none in your power, whom you might induce by both threats and rewards, to do the business for you? Well, I'll leave it to you. What you said, as regards your twofold office of J.P. and Field-cornet, doesn't much signify; on the contrary, by exerting yourself to discover the perpetrators of the crime, you will even be less open to suspicion than otherwise. I think, by the bye, you once seemed to have some thoughts of Dora yourself! so I surmised, and was also informed by certain persons. But don't you delude yourself with any hopes in that quarter, old fellow! She told me once, that, if she ever hated a man's character, it was yours. She said she didn't hate you per-

sonally; that would be un-Christian; but she *did* seem to dislike you very much. Of all men living, you would have, I should say, the very worst chance. Now, as for myself, the difficulty of obtaining her arises solely from the fact that, as I suppose, she really likes Herman; though she liked me before she knew him. Well, do your best in the matter,—and, adieu for the present.—Yours, &c., P. D."

Having indulged in a brown study for a long time, Jacobus suddenly started up with the exclamation, "I have it! I have it now!" and, opening the door which communicated with a passage, leading to the kitchen, he shouted out peremptorily, "Anna! Anna! I want you in the 'kantoor' (office);" and on the appearance of that swartly damsel from the culinary realms of heat, he asked her, "Anna! waar is de voorman (where is the overseer?)." She said he was at the land, reaping, and Jacobus told her to send the "stalmeeester" (groom), unless she could find another messenger, to go and fetch him at once.

She went, and, in about twenty minutes afterwards, Jacobus and Hendrick Lourens were earnestly conversing together. The issue of this conversation was, that Jacobus told him (not as employer, but in the double legal capacity of "Vreede regter" or J.P.; and also of Field-cornet), to take some of the Hottentots with him, and go at once to the 'Kopje.' (copse, or little hill,) near Rooi Klip Fontein, and seek for that runaway Brickels, and bring him up in charge, as soon as possible, to the house. For Jacobus had heard that he had been seen in the neighbourhood that day; knew also that Brickels' time at the Breakwater was not up yet, by a year or more; and more than suspected him of *running away*. Moreover, it was his duty, in his legal capacity, to apprehend all such runaways as an attentive perusal of the pathetic addresses of Government to constables, J.P.'s, F.C.'s and other such limbs of the law as (anyone may find, in that exceedingly well-got-up and romantic paper called the *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*) may serve to show to the meanest and dullest capacity.

Well, the "voorman" (foreman) went to the land, selected four of the strongest "boys" here (remember that here, as in all old slave countries, blacks are called "boys" whether men or not, as long as they are males; just as in Horace, you find slaves are called "*pueri*"), and having mounted them on horses, taken from the "well-horsed stables of this district rich in horses, well girt by the sea;" (Vide Sophocles, "*Oed. Epi Kol*"); and, having also taken good care to select a very good steed for himself, away they all galloped, Hendrik keeping a firm good seat in the saddle, but the blacks holding on in a loose yet bold, but apeish fashion, laughing and screaming

and joking at the bit of fun they were going to have. In a few minutes, as they rounded the north-western corner of the corn-land, they met Izaak crying, under a bush. They stopped a moment, to hear his complaint, that Brickels, whom the lad had known well formerly, had met him, with his sheep, near "Rooi Klip Fontein" (Red Cliff Fountain), and, having given him a couple of good "klops" (boxes) on his "oor" (ear), had woolly walked off with the fattest "hamel" (wether), a slag-hamel (slaughter sheep), and taken it away; the boy knew not exactly where, but he indicated the direction by a gesture, saying, there ("daarzoe"). On Hendrik's inquiring the reason of the most unnecessary boxes on the ear the youngster had received, Izaak said he thought it was because, on first seeing the fellow, he had cried out in wonder, "Allah wereld," and added "Brickels! waar kom jou aan?" (whence come you?) Probably the man had taken umbrage at the lad's recognizing him so very easily, as he could easily enough have taken the "hamel" (wether), without much resistance on the part of such a small "herder" (shepherd) as Izaak.

Hendrick galloped on to overtake the men, who were now somewhat in advance. One, Nicodemus, was before the others, and presently, they saw him beckoning, and pointing to a bush, making a gesture to be "still" and quiet. On their reaching the slight "hoogte," or rise, where Nicodemus was standing, they saw in a bush, not far from the Red Cliff, beneath which was the fountain, the indistinct figure of a man, hardly seen, as bushes, there growing high and rather dense, partly obscured him from their gaze. Afraid the man would see them too soon, which they wished to avoid, they made a very circuitous detour, going far round the "kopje" (hill), behind the cliff, so as the better to come upon the man unawares. They succeeded, and, in a few minutes, having dismounted and tied down their horses to a bush stump, crept softly behind the bush, and saw Brickels (through the interstices) quietly devouring "carbonatjes" (carbonadoes) of mutton; close by him were the fast-dying embers of fire, with the cross-sticks, used in cooking carbonades, yet standing over them.

He evidently began to hear something, for he started, and looked suspiciously at the opening. Fearing to give him time to escape, they suddenly ran round and seized him. He struggled desperately, and, drawing a short dagger-like knife, struck out fiercely, and wounded Cobus on the wrist. However, they succeeded in wrenching the weapon away from him, and, holding him tight down, they securely bound his arms behind him, by the thumbs, and then his legs, and helpless, yet glaring fiercely upon them, like a baffled wild beast, they bore him

to the place where they had left their horses, and strapped him fast, with "reims" (strips of hide) to the back of one, crossways, over the saddle. Then, two of them leading the captive's horse between them, Hendrick bringing up the rear, they made their way slowly homeward. As they entered by the southern gate of the yard, all the women and boys were present, staring with wonder, not altogether unmingled with pity, at the unfortunate, yet guilty, supposed runaway convict. They lifted him off the horse, just as Jacobus came up; he ordered them to take him to the "zolder," or attic, or loft, over the stables; then he himself locked the man in.

At night, about nine o'clock, Jacobus went and unlocked the door of the stable, of which he had been careful to keep the key, and saying to the restive horses, "Eh now, be still, will you," as they kicked the stones impatiently (whilst in their dreams perhaps), went up, with his dark lantern of horn, by the ladder. He did not see Brickels at first, but on proceeding to the further end, found him lying behind a heap of rushes (used in binding corn-sheaves), and spoke to him. No answer at first, and, on stooping down, he saw the man was sleeping heavily, all bound as he was. Jacobus waked him up.

"Halloa! Brickels! hoe gaat het nou met jou?" (how goes it now with you?) he exclaimed, shaking him by the shoulder. The man woke up, and tried to rub his eyes, but his fetters and manacles (reims) reminded him where, and how circumstanced he was. "Brickels," repeated Jacobus, "hoor. You have, like a stupid 'gek' (fool) as you are, come back here, to your former place, after running away from the Cape Town Break-water."

"I didn't run away," interrupted the rogue, "Gouvernement (Bestuur) laat my vry kom."

"Government let you come free, eh! Don't you believe I take that sort of yarn for granted! What for? for good behaviour? They wouldn't let you off quite so soon, in any case."

"Is it in the 'courant' (newspaper)?"

"No, not come yet. It will be here, by post, day after tomorrow."

"Are you going to send me to 'tronk' (gaol)? or give me up?"

"I can, and what is more, I ought to. But, listen to me. On one condition, and one only, will I let you go, and make out that you broke away by night. Do you hear?"

"Ja, ek hoor; ek verstaan" (yes, I hear; I understand).

"In the first place, if I send you back, you will get 'bajie straf' (much punishment)." So you will be glad to get away to-night perhaps?"

"Yes. I shall be 'gelukkig' (quite happy)."

"I dare say you will. If I let you out to-night, mind, it is upon one condition. Don't think to 'verneuk' (cheat) me; if you do, I'll set such a lot on you, you won't be able to escape."

"Well, what is the condition!"

"Kyk," said the other, sinking his voice into a whisper, after having suspiciously examined the apartment, though the door was locked; for even "walls have ears," and little "owls" may tell tales. "You knew Herman Staunton?"

"No. I suppose he came here after I was sent away."

"Yes," said Jacobus thinking, "long after. You are right. However, in order that you may recognize him, I will describe him to you; he is the 'meester' here to Hieronymus. Before he came here, he was at Sandy Cove, as 'predikant,' you would say; in his church, a catechist, a sort of 'diaken' (deacon). 'Verstaan jij' (understand you)?"

"Yes, I understand. But all that was before I was sent to town."

"Never mind; I'll manage you shan't mistake the man, when the time comes."—Still in a whisper; "I hate that fellow; yes, I can tell you I hate him with all my whole soul. For why? Because I love that noytje,—you know her—Dorothea Swart, of Rietfontein."

"Yes, I know her. A 'mooi noytje'" (a nice young lady.)

"Well. So he, as long as he lives, stands in my way; you understand? I want to get rid of him, and you must do it for me."

"O God! I a murderer!" cried Brickels, his eyes rolling fearfully. "Is that what, bad as I am, I must come to, to gain my freedom? If you don't let me go now, I shall tell of your offer, to the magistrate."

"Do so; they won't believe you. Where are your proofs?"

"Well, to come free, I will. But, gracious! it is very hard."

"Never mind that. My plan is this. I'll let you out now, and, as quietly as ever you can, saddle one of the horses, and gallop away to that old 'hartbeeste' house, the other side of old Mietje's. Never fear her, if she sees you; she is only an old woman; besides, you can make up a story, if she makes any remarks. Only, don't let others see you. 'Kneehalter' your horse, and let him and you both knock about those high downs there, near the precipice; only be careful no one but Mietje sees you. Here is some money to buy food of her. In the daytime, before the sun is under, I will come myself, and

give you a letter. Just at sunset, catch your horse, and gallop off to Rietfontein, and give Dora a letter I am going to have written in Mietje's name, asking her to come and see Mietje, who (I'll pretend) is very sick; to death, in fact. No one will touch you there, you know. The men here would not have touched you; but I told them to."

"But what has this to do with killing Herman?"

"Hush! still! the wall has ears. She is a most kind-hearted girl, you know of old, and will not fail to come, at any poor sick person's call."

"Kind-hearted! It was through her advice that that girl Salome went and told of me, what she had heard me saying in Wessel's canteen. I'll pay her for it."

"You'll just leave her alone, you rascal! Touch her, and see what I'll do, when I find you out, as I am sure to do."

"Well, all right! What has all this to do with Herman Staunton?"

"I was going to tell you. When she goes to see old Mietje, I am going to ask him to go with her, from this place. She must take this place on her way, you know. While she talks to old Mietje, go with him to the Bushman's Cave. You may persuade him: as he's fond of seeing out-of-the-way places. If you can't, why try some other plan."

"You may depend upon me, Mynheer."

"Wait! I'll first make you free from the reims." So saying, and drawing a knife from his pocket, he cut the man's bonds. Then he said, "Hold! don't go yet; I have a good plan. I'll go and saddle a horse, down below, and mount him myself, and ride away to the gate the grass 'kamp'! So you, see, if any of the 'volk' should hear the noise of the hoofs, and look out, they will think it is I, going to look at the porcupine holes, as I often do. At the gate, I shall wait for you. About ten minutes after I start, do you steal softly down, and go out, and take your path, to the further 'kamp'-gate, and you will have the advantage of a shorter path, if you climb over the fence of the corn-land, and take a short cut to the corner; you know that there you will be very close to the gate, and you had better climb over the further fence, and join me outside. Then gallop away at once, past Uitkyk, so as to be clear of Sandy Cove, should any one be stirring. But there is very little danger; only sheep-stealers and jackals will be about, if any at all."

"I well understand;" and he obeyed the directions. In an hour's time, he had been well on his way, and presently passed Uitkyk (or outlook), and in another twenty minutes, by a rugged stony path, arrived near Mietje's pondok, where a "rush-light," shining through the one small pane of the tenement,

showed that Mietje was awake. He got off his horse, which Jacobus had made over to him for the occasion, and knee-haltered him, then turned him loose on the "veld." It was a fine starlight night, but cold, as a breeze from seaward, moistened and chilled by the southern ocean, passed over the black downs. Shivering, and drawing his "veld-komabaars" (taken from the "zolder"), around him, he walked a few minutes, until he had reached the foot of the limestone rock, half-way up which was the cave, opening out to a terrible ravine, rent in olden convulsions of nature. A steep stony path, along a narrow and dangerous ledge of rock, barely visible from below, and hardly affording sufficient footing for two persons to pass abreast, conducted to the cave, which sloped gently down, a good way into the interior (the bowels of the rock). Up this the "slim" adroit Hottentot made his way, and, having gained a further corner, lay down, with his "komabaars" tightly wrapped around him, and, having struck a light, smoked his pipe, and thought, thought, thought; dreadful images of terror every now and then flitting before his crime-tainted yet deep soul. The devil seemed to come before him sometimes, with horns, hoofs, and all other attributes, derived from half-educated talk, and from pictures (which will repent Satan as Pan, or a Satyr, and not as Gustave Doré does, a fallen angel, beautiful yet dreadful from pride and malice). Now and then he started up, as, at the dimly lighted opening, he fancied he saw that dread of all Hottentots, a ghost. It was only the waving of an ivy-like creeper, stirred by the strengthening breeze; but truly, 'tis "conscience makes cowards of us all."

"Yes," he thought, in Dutch, "yes! I will do it, dreadful as it is; I will gain my freedom! Yes! at any cost. And not only will I make away with *him*, but with *her* too. She is a wonderful young lady, it is true! But, wonderful or not, angel as she is, I hate her; and, by God! If I am to be a murderer, why not kill two as well as one? Besides if they are together, and I kill Herman; say now, if I shove him off the ledge yonder, and yet let *her* escape, why she is a witness, and they will make the search for me doubly hot. I remember her well, she is so much loved by all, that the last man in the district, yes, the last woman and child, will hunt me down. As for running away from the Breakwater, oh! they won't mind that, nor take such pains to find me; they'll surely leave that to the constables, or field-cornets; then, it is a good chance for me to escape, if I only disguise myself. Stay! there is not much danger yet! the Government newspaper comes only once a week to this place, or even to Ventersdorp; and the boss said it would be here in about two days."

He knocked the ashes out of his now-smoked-out pipe, re-

plenished it from his pouch, and lighted it again, from the tinder-box this time. Having, after some toil, gained a second smoke, he proceeded in his ruminations, now and then, as much-thinking people often do, ejaculating aloud.

"I remember well, and I'll remember it now, to *her* cost, who told that nasty Salome Jacobs to inform against me. Her duty, was it! She thought it was a very short path to heaven, did she? Did *her* duty, as the gaoler was kind enough to tell me. I'll send her to heaven quicker than she bargained for, and that by a path down the precipice, and see how quickly she'll go that way. Why, it will be faster than by those great wagons drawn by fire-horses, they are talking about at the Cape!"—And he laughed aloud to himself, letting the pipe incessantly fall out of his mouth, the ashes scattering themselves on the hard black floor of the cavern. "Never mind! I have smoked about enough;" and he reclined his head on his elbow, listening to the distant surf; which roared and dashed everlastingly, as old ocean always does, laughing at the puny passions of men, as 'twere, and defying all human art to control its vast, yet calm energies.

It roared and moaned, and the breeze whistled and howled in an undertone, through the cave, bearing on its wings, now and then, as an accompaniment, still more faintly heard, the hooting of some owl in the bushes above, or the distant cry of some night-prowling jackal. He got up at last, and looked outside. Below, was an awful gulf, at the far bottom, showing the stars fitfully reflected in a black pool of stagnant water. Awful abyss! so soon, alas! to receive the mangled remains of two human beings, suddenly and swiftly sent, by 'unseen inevitable fate,' some hidden Nemesis, to their dread account, to be awaited in that silent realm of Hades, "without the lyre, without the songs of Hymen, and free from the gales of all manner of storms."

But *he*, the murderer to be! alas! thrice alas for him! Far more to be pitied than his destined victims! They go to await the "joyful advent" of Christ, our Saviour, *then* our Judge, in the sure hope of eternal happiness; but *he*, Brickels! oh! what a dreadful shrinking from the reproachful glance of ghosts! What shivering and trembling, what throbbing of the brain, and maddening fear, shall be his portion, in all his future life! In the next, God alone knows!

"I can't help it, I *must* do it!" as he slowly gropes his way to his lair, and falls asleep; from which heavy slumber, he starts up, ever and anon, in nightmares and phantom-troubled dreams.

Meanwhile, how fares one of his victims, his *own* peculiar destined victim? Guarded by watchful angels, sleep sits lightly

on her beautiful features; a calm trustfulness, even in slumber, in the full power of the protection of Him, to whom her last words have been addressed, leaves its impress on every lineament. None can see her, without envying her child-like unconsciousness, as depicted on her composed countenance. And yet, what a dread summons to her is so soon to come! Not unprepared though; good works, good words, loyalty to the Crucified One; *these* are her witnesses against the dread advent!

CHAPTER XIX.

“GO! BY ALL MEANS! SURELY!”

“SALOME,” said Dorothea, as, with riding whip in hand, and ready for the excursion she had meditated, she stood by the front of the homestead, her favourite horse restlessly striking his hoofs on the ground and eagerly sniffing to be off, “when I am gone, forget not the ‘arme vogeltjes’ (poor little birds), referring to the Cape canaries, chirping in their pretty cages in the verandah; “give them their food regularly, and supply them with small stones, for, don’t forget that they have no teeth, and that, to all birds, stones are necessary to grind their food, as I explained to you before. Good bye!” and having given a parting kiss to her guardian, she mounted, and the horse, glad at last, after the (to him), inexplicable delay, to be off and away, soon took her past the orchard, and away to the hills which separated Rietfontein from the Flats. Then over those plains, gay with wild geraniums and clumps of Hottentot figs, and here and there, scattered like solitary landmarks, lonely melkboschjes (milk bushes) and doorn bushes (thorn bushes), past the small upland salt-pan, with its curiously adjacent fresh-water vley, the latter adorned with a stately group of red-winged, white-breasted, gracefully curved-necked flamingoes, past a lonely arid wilderness of sand, with nothing but a stunted “rhenosterbush,” half parched to death, to relieve its bare monotony; past a heap of bones, which local tradition declareth to have been the remains of the last horde of Coptic descended Bushmen, slain seventy years ago, by a commando, under Arend van Wyk, the grandfather of the owner of that distant orchard-enclosed white farm house that Dora passes on the left, a romantic oasis-like spot, contrasting beautifully with the wilderness around; past a Kopje of rugged stony appearance, covered with bush, where the children of the aforesaid homestead are busily storing their pockets with besjes (berries), only ripe when kept a day or two in jars, when they

become of a beautiful red colour, inviting the eye as well as the appetite; past another more verdant klip (rock), the summit of which having gained, she sees below her, more to the right, the glistening cool brook, gurgling so pleasantly, which issues from Rooi Klip Fontein, and winds along like old-famed Meander, fertilising the plain; also, she beholds (not far now), the castellated looking surroundings of Brandfontein homestead, where, after a delightful sunny morning’s gallop, she at length draws up, and enters the hall, where Mrs. Venter kindly receives and welcomes her.

In a few minutes after, Jacobus enters the school-room and says to Herman, “Mr. Staunton, would you like to go with Miss Swart to see old Mietje? she told me she would like you to go with her only just now, when I spoke to her in the hall. I would go, by all means, were I in your shoes.”

“Of course I should like to go; by all means! surely!”

“Well, then you will have to be ready soon, as she will start in ten minutes’ time, as she is anxious to get there. Hieronymus, you can have a holiday now; go, by-the-bye, to the grass kamp, and, just at the corner of the second ostrich kamp, where that heap of stones is, you will find Nicodemus digging up some of those confounded disseldoorns (thistles); tell him I want him at once; then go up to the old pondok (hut) on the Sandy Cove road, and see what Wilhelm is about, as I met some of his sheep straying as I came back from looking for Brickels, that runaway schelm (rascal).”

To explain this, I must mention that when the morning came, very early, succeeding the night of Brickels’s liberation, Jacobus went up to the stable door, and made a tremendous hullabaloo, screaming out, “Hier! Nicodemus, Arend, Cobus, you black schelms, Brickels is away, hy is weg,” and despatched a lot of them, himself leading the way, by the totally opposite route to that by which he knew Brickels was gone. Off they galloped, nothing zealous, merely enjoying the fun; after two hours chase, having failed, of course, to light upon the spoor, they returned. Jacobus afterwards, to make matters more safe still, made a fine row with the voorman (overseer), unjustly attributing the whole matter of the escape to his carelessness and want of caution in not guarding the door. Of course, this was all bosh, and Hendrick merely threatened to go away from the place if Jacobus said much more; reminding him that the land was baije breed (very broad), and that there were baije ander plaatsen (many other farms) where he could easily find an equally good, or even better engagement, as voorman. As his services were really both valuable and valued, Jacobus desisted accordingly from thus most unjustly and foolishly reproaching him.

But I am digressing. In the hall, Herman, to his own pleasure, found Dora in conversation with Mrs. Venter, and offered to go with her, if she liked it. She said "Yes, she would be very glad indeed." (In the country, for a young man to go out, for a long walk or ride, with a lady, is not looked upon in such a light as town readers may suppose.) In a few minutes, Herman having borrowed one of the best horses in the stable, they were off. At Sandy Cove, they stopped a few minutes at Jack Hopkins' cottage, who invited them to drink some "Cape tea," which he had that morning gathered; at the same time, he wanted to learn more about the news he had heard of Brickels' escape. "Oh!" said he, contemptuously, "why should Jacobus bother his head about that fellow. He has very likely got his release. If he had run away, do you think he would be such a fool as to come prowling about here, his own place?"

"But," remarked Herman, "supposing he had been regularly released by the authorities, in that case, why should he come prowling about, and sheep stealing, when he could safely enough have shown himself openly?"

"Depend upon it," said Jack, "he was ashamed; or, he got shy, just as he about reached your place yonder. A man who has done wrong, is often only seized with a sudden fit of shame on *neuring* the persons who are aware of his fault; not till then; you understand? Take another cup, Miss. How do you like the flavour? I went rather far to get it; up on the hill behind Uitkyk."

"Oh! it is very nice," said Dora, "much better than what we get from the hills about our place. But, do you know, we must be going now, as Mietje is very probably expecting me. She is very ill, I hear!"

"Mietje ill!" exclaimed Jack; "I'm blessed if she's anything of the sort! Why, she was here, this very morning, to sell her cabbages among us fisher folk down here; and, what's more, she carried back on her shoulders two very fine 'stump-noses' she bought of me, besides small fish in each hand. They were heavy enough 'stump-noses' too, a fine haul; never had a finer. So she can hardly be sick, can she?"

"But," said Dora, wonderingly, "I received a letter, not indeed written in her own hand; indeed, she told me once, to use her own words, 'I cannot write my own name.' Strange, isn't it. May not be a little mistaken, Jack?"

"Not a bit of it," decisively; "for I saw that old native with my own eyes; else they were bewitched. Only I don't believe in that sort of foolery; although, when I was in England, quite a lad, I remember my poor mother used to believe in witchcraft, and all that sort of thing."

"Very strange. However, I shall see, when we get there."

"What part of England do you come from, Jack?" asked Herman; "you have never told me yet, all the time I have known you."

"From near Hull. Do you know that part?"

"No. Except that Robinson Crusoe was born there, wasn't he?"

"Yes," replied Jack. "Only, he was no real man. However, in the graveyards near there, you will see on the tombstones, the name of Crusoe very frequently. I read the book, when I was a boy, and my mother used to tell me, there really were lots of Crusoes thereabouts."

"Very likely, Defoe knew of that fact, of there being people of that name thereabouts, and took advantage of it, as a name for his hero, so as to add to the likelihood of the story."

They bade adieu to Jack, and, after showing them a shorter cut to Mietje's, by cutting off the "veld," so as to keep well to the right of "Maryville Point," thus making their journey shorter by a mile nearly, he wished them a prosperous trip, and went to his left-off employment of mending his "seine," or large net. They took a different road, indeed, from that taken by Brickels, the previous night; but they had wished to take that route, partly because it was pleasanter, partly to have a look, and see how Sandy Cove was getting on.

Ascending a gentle rise, they looked back. The scene was not a very lively one. There was Jack in front of his cottage, mending his net diligently; on the beach, were black and brown fisher children running up and down, and chasing each other about, the noise of the shouts faintly borne to their ears. Out, on the bay, was a sail-boat, lazily gliding along; beyond, was a glimpse of open Ocean. Further on, they had a view of "Maryville Point," where the remains of an old hull, and an anchor standing up out of the surf, attested an old shipwreck.

"I have never heard why this was called 'Maryville Point,'" said Dora, "I always meant to ask, on my visits here; somehow, I always forgot."

"It is so called, after an American vessel, called the 'Maryville,' of Boston, wrecked here some years ago. All hands perished; not one was saved."

"It must be a dreadful thought, so many, a whole crew, launched into eternity, thus suddenly; no time given them, no warning!"

"A lesson," said Herman, "to us, to be ever prepared. Even when no great danger exists, apparently, yet there is a chance of one's dying. A man may escape an earthquake, and then be strangled by a hair."

"Look, here we are, just close by Mietje's! There she is, do you see her? How well one can see, in this country, with its clear sparkling atmosphere!"

In a few minutes, by dint of hard trotting, as far as the rather rugged nature of the country would allow, they had reached the door, and greeted the old woman, who was just coming in from collecting of fuel, obtained from the dry stunted vegetation of the veld just around. She seemed pleased to see them, and her greeting was very hearty. "Almagtig! you come so far, for an old woman to see!" And she invited them to sit down within, whilst she made a blazing fire on the low hearth, over which, from a hook suspended from an iron bar across the mouth of the rude chimney, she soon hung a kettle, and commenced boiling coffee and rye for her visitors. She talked much, in guttural cracked tones, and said: "Mr. Staunton, I see you are courting this young lady. Yes! she is a nice young lady. I am very glad you are come to see me, black as I am. See," she said, "my skin is black, but my heart is white," pointing to her arm. "And how goes all at Brandfontein?" she asked, looking at Herman.

"Oh! very good."

"How goes it with Nicodemus?"

"Oh! all right; only he was hurt yesterday, in helping to catch Brickels."

"So I heard at the Bay. The rascal! I think he will come into prison again."

"Look here, Mietje! I have brought you some nice tea; not bush tea, but real English tea."

"Thank you, thank you, you are the best young lady in all Africa."

"But how is it you had a letter written to me, saying that you were very sick? so sick, you were like to die almost!" asked Dora.

"I sick! who brought you the letter? It lies! I never was sick."

"Why, last night, Brickels brought it; I think he told Salome that Jacobus Venter had sent him."

"Very curious," said Herman; "why, Brickels was captured by Jacobus' orders, and made his escape in the night. How, on earth, could Jacobus have sent him? There must have been a trick somewhere!"

The old woman held up her hands, and turned up her eyes, in perfect astonishment. Not one of them could comprehend the matter. No wonder! Mietje handed them coffee (and rye) in two clean, though cracked cups, and, whilst they are engaged in drinking and talking, I will describe the interior

arrangements.—A small apartment, with one truckle bed, shaded off by an old curtain, in the further corner. An old round deal table, much the worse for wear, a chimney place, and three chairs, and a low stool complete the inventory. The only window in the apartment, low-pitched, is all broken, and stopped up with rags, all but one pane. On the table lay the whole stock of books the owner possessed, namely, a Bible, Catechism, and "Gezang Book," all in Dutch. The door, as is usual in the country, is *double*, and the walls are beautiful illustrations of the "Leaning Style" in architecture. No ceiling; the roof is open to the apartment; from the rafters depend rows of "biltong," or dried flesh, legs of pork (she had pigs running about in the thick bush behind, with yokes on their necks, to keep them from straying) and bits of shrivelled-looking boer tobacco, for making snuff, of which Mietje took a great deal.

After awhile, the old woman fell into the customary habit of talking about herself. She recollects the old slave days; telling how the old Dutch masters would not let their slaves go to the same church; also, how, when a missionary came to her master's farm, the other side of Philipsburg, where she herself was born and bred as a slave to one Bezuidenhout, the old Boer threatened that, should he again come to teach Freedom to the "zwart heidens," he would strap him to a wagon-wheel, and lay his stoutest "agter-os-sjambok" on him well! (The hind-ox-whip is the "sjambok" used for the *hind* ox in a wagon, and is therefore shorter; but it is very strong and cutting.) She told also, how they used to throw heavy things at their slaves; and even stood up, in her excitement, to illustrate their application of the "sjambok" (a whip, made of "seacow" or rhinoceros hide), to recreant slaves.

She then asked them whether they would not have more coffee; they replied in the negative. Just then, the lower door was opened, and Brickels entered. They started, for his appearance and expression were by no means improved by his forced sojourn at the Cape Town Breakwater. With a civil "dag," he asked Herman whether they would like to see the cave, as he thought it would be a great curiosity, and, if Herman gave him a couple of shillings, or so, and some "tabak," he would be willing to show them the path thither, as it was known to very few. This was quite true; and Brickels had, of old, for a "consideration," shown the cave to visitors from Sandy Cove or the neighbouring farms. But Herman replied in the negative, saying he had been there previously, having accidentally, when out sporting thereabouts, discovered the place for himself. He asked Brickels how he came to be *there*, after running away; but Brickels made no reply, and walked

sulkily away. They did not notice *whither*, but simply sat still and talked.

At last, Herman looked at his watch, and asked Dora whether she would like to see the cave, as there would be a couple of hours to spare, and they could return, by a shorter route to Brandfontein; as it was to be nearly full moon that night, they could return after sunset. Of course, she would have to remain *there* that night, and could return home on the morrow. Dora replying in the affirmative, and as there was no time to lose, they bade adieu to old Mietje, and untied their horses, at the stump; and rode up to the mouth of the ravine, only ten minutes' trot from Mietje's.

CHAPTER XX.

"By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes."—(Shaksperc.—"Macbeth.")

THE Bushman's Cave, so called by tradition, though none of those remarkable and unique savage paintings, so strangely scattered throughout South Africa, from Tulbagh to the Malutis, showing the wide habitat of the race in former times, when they were probably lords paramount of this portion of the great mysterious continent of Africa, were found there, was yet, in many respects a remarkable locality. About a mile from the curved outline of the surf-beaten coast, lay a range of hills; a huge chasm, torn by old convulsions of pre-historic ages, and very deep, allowed a brook to pass out into daylight, and to flow into the sea, a half-mile south of "Maryville Point." This chasm was completely hidden from the eyes of those who passed close to it; the reason was, that a dense, high, and tangled bush completely obscured the mouth. You might, indeed, discover it more easily, by actually climbing up the hills, from either side, and looking down; but that would not enable you to get to, or even perceive, the cave itself; as I shall explain. Just where the stream issued through the bush, from its hidden recesses, was a small, hardly-perceived opening, by creeping through which, for only a few yards, you found yourself at the *back* of the tangled bush, with its numerous creepers, such as monkey's rope, and at the entrance to a ravine, the bed of the stream, and surrounded on either side by a precipitous and lofty wall-like rock. As you ascended the stream, by stepping stones, which sometimes slipped away as you trod on them, so that you would, were you not very careful, have many a "capsize" into the water (only a foot deep

however); the precipices on either hand both seemed to become higher, and to approach more closely; it became darker and darker, as you advanced; and, indeed, no living thing loved the place, except owls and noxious night-loving things. Ten minutes, with two young and active people, conducted them to a place where the stream expanded into the deep wide black pool I have mentioned; here, also, the hills on either hand, though still as precipitous as before, expanded a little. On the northern side, about half-way up, was the cave, to which two pathways led, one from the pool, very steep, and dangerous, another from a spot higher up. (The rock was, I forgot to say, of limestone.) The second, leading by a circuitous path from a sort of "kloof" (also little known), was that used by Brickels on a previous occasion. Dora and Herman, from their route, would have to go by the first, and more dangerous path.

"Oh! what a wonderful spot," said Dora, as they carefully (yet slipping now and then), advanced up the stream, by stepping on those rather loose stones so thickly bestrewed in it; "yet how lonely and fearful it is! I never saw such before! They say scenery has an effect on the mind; I am sure this, were I alone, would drive me mad! This is, indeed, well fitted to be the abode of one of those Jinns we read of in the Arabian Nights; were not our country and age both a great deal too prosaic."

"I agree with you there," replied Staunton; "It is, indeed, a romantic place. Do you see that cleft up yonder, opening from the top, and wedge-shaped? Well, how awful a position, in this lonely place, for one to be in, who should accidentally fall into it, from the summit. He would be in a most hopeless plight, jammed in its wedge-like cleft, unable to get out, above or below!"

"Awful, indeed!" said she, shuddering at the sight and idea combined.

"I have heard," he said in a low voice, "from a farmer, once, a fearful story connected with precisely such a cleft as that. I think it was somewhere in the Zwartberg range, only I am not sure. A farmer, with his son, were out hunting; by some mischance, the son fell into just such a remarkable cleft, from the summit. There he was, mangled in his descent, jammed hopelessly in, screaming for the succour that the father could never give, as it was all precipice above, precipice below; no hold for hand or foot. Seeing his son's hopeless position, knowing he *must* perish, and that too by a sad lingering death, what did the father do?"

"What could he do?" said Dora. "Dreadful!"

"Levelled his gun, and shot his son dead, to put him out of his misery. Was not that right?"

"I don't know," said Dora, shuddering. "In the abstract, it was wrong; but the end justified the means. Where human misery is exceedingly great, and human aid unavailing, extreme measures must be right, because necessary. Shall we have to scramble up this pathway? How steep and slippery!"

"I'll stand behind you, in case you shall slip. Keep well to the side away from the edge."

Without accident, after five minutes slow careful climbing, the ledge of the cave was reached. Dora stood, shuddering, at sight of the deep chasm, with the dark black-looking styx-like pool below, over which old Charon might have ferried the souls of departed aborigines, so awful, so destitute of light, at least the full light of day, more especially at this time, when the now setting orb of day, and of joy, and glad life, was rapidly departing. Nothing of life, save a solitary prickly-scaled "Jacky," or some light-hating blinking owl, moping and blinking under a bush on the other side, just above the pool.

After leaving the cottage, on the failure of his scheme, Brickels had gone straight back to the cave, to consider what to do next. (He also wished to get his pipe and tobacco, left behind there, inadvertently.) He sat deep within, meditating, quite obscured from view, being in a far corner of the limestone cave, under a projecting time-worn ridge, which formed a complete and hidden recess. "I must give it up as a bad job, and be off, after I have caught the horse, at once. He shall never see the horse again; by night, I'll be off and away, far away; I'll go on till I am at the other side of the great mountains, and then hire myself as a shepherd to some farmer or other."

He heard, at this point, faint murmuring of voices from below, but he was not sure. Cautiously advancing towards the ledge, he looked over, lying on his chest, and barely extending his head, just sufficiently to enable him to see directly below: but he saw nothing, nothing but the still silent water. Conceiving his own imagination had deceived him, he as cautiously drew back, when, happening to look down the side-path, he saw, in the distance, two persons advancing up by the stepping stones. Looking more attentively, he at length perceived them to be Herman and Dora, and their voices also gradually became more and more audible. It was just as Herman was telling the sad story above, that the wily Hottentot quietly drew in. "My God!" exclaimed he inwardly, "this is lucky; now, I'll have them. Verily! they are coming up here; he is going to show her the cave. Well done!" and the rogue and ruffian rubbed his hands, and chuckled, as he withdrew again to his convenient nook within, from which, unseen, he could see, "*invisus spectat.*" "I must be as still as a mouse in the

church," said he, spitting on the floor. So there he crouched, expectant, in dim ambush, like a "veld-spinnikop," watching for a dragon fly, or other insect, unseen and unsuspected by his luckless prey.

"I can imagine," said Dora, "how a poet of Byron's temperament would revel in a gloomy scene like this. It is truly remarkable. I did not dream that the Colony had such romantic gloomy recesses, so near to us, at least. Why, it would be even worthy of Scott's genius. The 'Vale of St. John' could hardly be more romantic."

"A castle perched on yonder crag would have that effect of contrast between Art and Nature, only wanting here, to complete the landscape," said Herman.

"Oh! surely! a grand feudal airy-perched stronghold. How convenient a site for disposing of captives! Once in that deep pool, a weight attached, and all would be a hidden mystery, till the Day of Doom."

"I promised, Dora, one day; and surely we shall never have a better opportunity than now; to tell you the unreserved truth about my own life, and what share Durville had in my misfortunes."

"Oh! by all means do! I will listen, and not interrupt you with a single question," exclaimed she.

So, his arm round her waist, and she, in loving confidence, leaning her splendid Roxana-like head on his shoulder, a beautiful couple, undivided in life, and alas! so soon to be undivided in death, they sat near the edge, whilst he told her the sad story of his misfortunes, and Durville's share therein.

"And did he really play such a wicked mean trick upon you?" exclaimed she at last indignantly, through her tears of sympathy.

"As I live, it is true. I have rather understated than exaggerated." She asked no more, but sat moodily pondering on what had been told her. At last, she said, "I feel an awful presentiment of something near, about to inflict some evil, I know not what."

"Nonsense!" answered he; "it is the effect of this weird gloom upon your imagination," said he, looking round, and seeing nothing.

"I thought I heard a noise, and a breathing, as of someone near. Did not you!"

"Oh! it was only Fancy! Fancy can play wonderful tricks sometimes. I have known a red cow, with a white upright stripe on the side, frighten half the Hottentots at Brandfontein, one night. They called to me to come and, 'look, there's a ghost,' and, indeed, it had the appearance of being one. I was puzzled myself."

"God, surely, does not permit phantoms to walk the earth. After death, all is a peaceful, restful, waiting for bliss."

"Yet, we have the Witch of Endor raising Samuel's ghost."
"That was for a special purpose; and before the coming of —"

She said no more, but shrieked, as, without a moment's warning, propelled by a sudden push from behind, Herman fell down, down, down, once dashing against a projecting crag, till he reached the pool, half in and half out of which he lay, a lifeless corpse!

"Wretch, Villain!" as she, turning round, saw Brickels; but she had no time to say more, as, with his hand clutching her throat, she essayed to scream; but no scream came, only a low gurgling sound, becoming fainter and more faint, whilst her features grew blacker and more black, and the eyes started in mute appealing agony, to the ruffian, who had no ruth. Only saying, "what had you to Salome told," he, by a sudden moment, flung her also over the edge, where her already-lifeless body went to join that of the other.

Looking over, he perceived Herman's body, lying with the head in the pool; further on, lay *hers*, the last mute appeal for mercy indelibly stamped on her even-now-lovely features. She lay further in, and quite in, the dank liquid mass, her dress slowly moving with the slow motion of the sluggish pool.

Yes! there they lay, and presently, the stars shone out in all their silent majesty, and the silvery moon, "queen and huntress," shone in full, over that dreadful mystery in that lonely spot. United once more in the spirit—what lie there are merely the cast-off slough of sinful humanity.

And the owl screeches above, the 'dassies' play about in rocky gambols, the jackal starts on his sheep-devouring expedition, and all nature else is asleep. Save only those twinkling heavenly bodies in the firmament, no one sees, no one knows the awful hidden mystery of that horrible pool!

But he, the murderer! fares he better than his victims? No! The doom of Cain is his! he is now the branded enemy of all mankind! An outcast from society, he may wander far and near, but never more find rest, nevermore sleep! For dream, inspired by that long-done and long-past deed, shall invade his slumbers. Even awake, has Heaven, pitying and avenging that murderous deed, no dart potent enough to reach the adamantine breast of the most embrazoned villain, far more of Brickels, compared to some, a mere novice in the deeper walks of crime? God alone *can*, and He *will*, some day, touch the secret spring of that cell, where conscience at present slumbers, and where unspeakable horrors lurk!

PART THE THIRD.

THE DISCOVERY.

CHAPTER XXI.

THREE YEARS AFTERWARDS.



SOME years after the above, Ralph Whittaker was sitting on his stoep at Green Point, admiring the weather and prospect, and sipping coffee; all around was well worthy of his regard, being very pleasing to the eye. Below the stoep was the well-kept and rather spacious garden, and bearing, at the proper season, respectively, lovely groups of calceolarias, petunias, hyacinths, roses, and other flowers, the scent from which was balmy in the extreme. From this garden, surrounded by a low wall, half a dozen steps descended into a neatly bordered footpath, conducting, down a gentle descent, to the high road, which was now lively, with its various sounds of wheels and hoofs, caused by the occasional passing and re-passing of carriages, cabs, carts, and tram-cars; which noises were also varied by touching melodies, played on that exquisitely refined instrument of music, the fish-cart horn, by semi-oriental purveyors of delicious Cape snoek. Beyond, stretched the common, covered with rich luxuriant grass, beautifully verdant after late showers, and enlivened by various groups of grazing cattle, dotting the wide extent of field, from the beautiful vley, to the Amsterdam Battery, built in old days, semi-feudal, yet looking on the Modern Docks, in an age of Progress! Scattered here and there, are batteries of lesser note, and the powder magazine, with its red-coat sentinel amid rural green; The palatial and Christian structure of New Somerset Hospital is side by side, cheek by jowl, with the Convict Station; Sin and Misery architecturally typified! A glimpse of the end of

ocean-defying Breakwater, the deep-blue stretch of bay, backed by lovely green slopes, again backed by the rugged blue heights of Winterhoek and Schurftberg, a partial view of a forest of masts (indicating what a wise and paternal Government have done, by means of Docks, to prevent any recurrence of the awful wrecks of 1864), now gay with bunting and flags, complete a landscape, excelling in beauty, and most charming to an artistic eye.

Well then, Whittaker was admiring, and feasting his eyes with, all this. But, as it seemed, other matters of reflection would now and then force themselves upon his mind; for every now and then, he would take a letter from his pocket-book, read it, and replace it; having a perplexed sort of half-frown upon his brow, as though the contents puzzled him, or caused him some annoyance. I shall describe his outward man in as few words as possible.

He was really not much beyond 30; but some thought him older, a good deal, on account of, I suppose, a certain gravity of demeanour, not often seen in men, before more experience than is often gained at 30, has subdued the more hopeful buoyancy of extreme youth. His hair was auburn, complexion florid, figure stout, but wanting in muscular activity. In height, he was about the average.

He had only been a month in the Colony; had come for a change, so he told people, when they asked him why he had come to the Cape. Educated in England, he had, after steady persevering devotion to the classics, gained high, though not the highest, honours, such as Alma Mater rewards her duteous children with; in plain English, he had gained his M.A. degree. He had many good and high qualities. In the first place, Ralph was a steady devoted adherent of the grand old Church of England, a High Churchman, without, however, going to such lengths in his opinions as some very "ultra" Ritualists have done. In the second place, he had a sound discriminating taste in literature, prose and poetry, having not read merely, but thoroughly marked and digested, as well, those great works of England's standard poets, novelists, historians, and essayists, which have raised our language to an eminence, equalling, if not surpassing, that of Greece of old, in her palmiest days of philosophy.

Nor had he neglected controversial divinity, English and German, positive or scholastic, of which his library contained a rare selection, in either tongue. Whilst at the University, he himself had contributed essays on various themes, controversial, ethical, critical, to various magazines; in certain quarters these had received no small mead of praise. Having added that Ralph was a bachelor, I may resume the narrative.

As he sat there, sipping his coffee, and taking in with pleased eyes the scene before him, perhaps also pondering over the contents of the letter in his hand, whatever they were, the partially-seen stoppage of a tram-car, and the guard's whistle, arrested his attention, and he soon beheld a figure alight, who would be, judging from his getting off there, coming to see him. If Ralph supposed thus, he was not mistaken, for the passenger who had alighted opened the gate, and slowly walked up the footpath. As the visitor approached more nearly, a sudden gleam of recollection seemed to dawn upon Whittaker, for he hastily jumped up, and almost ran to meet the visitor, whom he shook warmly by the hand, in English fashion; not as Boers do generally.

"How goes it with you?" said the new-comer, a tall, well-made, brown-tinted, fair-haired young fellow, with an Africander appearance about him, evidently a country gentleman, by his handsome felt hat, with a feather in it, and overdone dress, in some respects.

"I am very glad to see you, Piet Venter; yes, very glad. Come inside. You have not forgotten our school days in England. How is it you have come to town? Didn't expect to see me, eh?"

"Why, yes. I received your letter at Philipsburg, so I knew you were here, and where to find you," said Piet, entering the dressing-room, after Ralph.

"Let me see, you have been back long, haven't you?"

"Yes, some few years. I left long before you, you remember. On my return to Brandfontein, I found a hearty enough welcome; but, goodness, the place seemed to be going through several acts of a most terrible tragedy."

"Have a cup," as the servant brought in coffee.

"Thank you. Why, as I was saying, I never heard of such a to-do in all my born days. There was a tutor, one Herman Staunton, I think, along with his 'hartje,' or sweetheart, were both killed, in a nasty den-like locality, by a scoundrel of a runaway Totty, named Bricksels. All this happened a month before my return."

"Did your father return?"

"No. He stayed in England, and died there, after lingering a very long time at Brighton."

"How did you spend your time at Brandfontein?"

"Oh! I farmed for a long while steadily enough. Afterwards I had a quarrel with Jacobus about the inheritance, a 'roezie' we call it. He presently went to settle in Natal as a cotton-grower, or sugar-planter, where he has succeeded pretty well. For myself, when the Diamond Fever broke out, I had long been on 'togt.'"

"On what?" asked Ralph.

"On 'togt.' A man buys a wagon, and loads it with all kinds of things, which he then takes up the country, bartering his goods for horns, karosses, ivory, or whatever pays best. I had been on togt for several months, when the diamonds were first discovered. I happened then to be in the Transvaal. I had been up to the Zambezi, pretty far! and bartered away guns, ammunition, &c., in return for a fine load of elephant's tusks, which I took to Port Elizabeth, and sold to the various firms there for £1,500. I loaded up at the Bay, and trekked to the 'Fields,' where a large population had begun to settle down. As I had quantities of breadstuffs, I soon made my fortune, besides the money in the Standard Bank, at Port Elizabeth, which I had gained for my ivory. I bought a claim, pulled off my coat, and set to, like a slave, to see whether Dame Fortune would prove as good to me in the diamond line. But she proved fickle this time, for, after four months, I found none to speak of; so I got discouraged, like many another digger before me, and returned to Brandfontein, to recommence my farming career, which pays far better in a sure and certain way; nor is it so risky as that most perfect of mere lotteries, diamond seeking. Besides, my mother had written, and begged me to come and look after the farm for her, though she had, certainly, a first-rate overseer, Hendrick."

"Take another cup?"

"Yes, thank you. How nice your garden looks!" looking out of the window. "But it is not quite so spick and span as some I saw as I passed along on the car."

"You have larger ones down the country?"

"Oh, my! yes! twenty times as large," answered Piet, who must, indeed, have been exaggerating here, as Brandfontein had no real flower garden, only a vegetable patch, for water melons, peas, cucumbers, and so forth. "But your garden looks rather less trim and 'taut,' as a sailor might say."

"Well," answered Ralph, "there must be, as far as possible, free scope left for Nature to develop; not too much of artificial stiffness. Lieu Tchen, a Chinese writer, has said, 'Symmetry is wearying, and ennui and disgust will soon be excited in a garden where every part betrays restraint.' Quoted by Humboldt, in his 'Cosmos.'"

"Shall we have a smoke now?" and Whittaker handed his sealskin pouch over to Piet. "Try a pipeful of this bird's-eye and shag; you have no such down the country, I imagine?"

"We generally smoke 'Boer,'" answered Piet. After a few puffs, he exclaimed, "Excellent! what a divine aroma! Where do you buy it? I must get some before I go back."

"I get it at Harrison's, the best tobacconist in town."

"Choicer stuff is, most surely, and without a shadow of doubt, not to be had, whether for love or for money."

After a few moments, Ralph said, "Don't you find it very dull work, living on an isolated farm, away from society, and, what is even worse, cut off, in a measure, from the ministrations of religion?"

"Not so much as you seem to think. As for society, not many days pass without one of the neighbouring Boers coming over to track the 'spoor.'"

"To do what?" asked Ralph.

"Track the 'spoor'—the footsteps of a missing animal, such as a horse, or ox. The farmers, and Hottentots, especially, are very expert at following up the 'spoor,' or traces of anything; for days, for miles, they unwearingly keep up the tracking, till they find, at last, the missing animal. It is similar to American backwoodsmen, or Indians, being on the trail."

"I understand now," observed Ralph. "But how are you situated as regards your Church, the Dutch Reformed, I suppose?"

"Oh! we are very close to Ventersdorp, our district village. We go there by cart most Sundays, certainly at 'Nachtmaal.'"

"What is that?"

"The Communion, Lord's Supper. On such occasions the village is crowded, and the day preceding, or following, are like a fair in England, almost. Many a village in this land is scarcely inhabited except at 'Nachtmaal' season; the Boers have houses there which are empty almost all the rest of the year."

"I do not approve of religion and trade thus joining hand in hand," said Ralph. "And yet, I have read that the Boers of South Africa are staunch adherents to their Church, and, however far they may trek into the interior, never fail to carry God's word with them, and even to establish churches in the so-late a wilderness."

"True," replied Piet, "In the Onderland, I have often known Boers who raised the Psalm every morning at sunrise, surrounded by family and servants; this even when on a 'trek.' And, at Cradock, at a cost of £45,000 sterling, they have succeeded in erecting a church to which South Africa furnishes no parallel."

"How about education? Is the ignorance of Boers, the 'crassa Minerva,' so great as travellers represent?"

"Why, in regard to education, we are neither much better nor worse off than the average. Ventersdorp has two schools, one for whites, one a mission school. Then again, in our district, we have three schools at Sharon; this mission station has done, on the whole, much good amongst the Hottentots."

Time it had ; it has now been founded sixty years."

"I should say," observed Ralph, "that what the farmers want of education, in any country, is a sound practical sort, not dealing with *words* only, but *things*. Let those destined for rural pursuits have a sufficient acquaintance with, and insight into, the laws of Nature; let them learn botany, geology, agricultural chemistry—something in fact beyond mere 'word-shops,' as Lytton calls schools."

"I quite agree there," answered Piet. "Another thing; why *must* children, in colonial schools, be condemned for ever to learn out of primers from England? What can puzzle a Boer child more than to read in a lesson book of harvest homes in August, and of English urchins kicking the football at Christmastide, when, all the time, he feels most confoundedly knocked up by the heat, and is so fatigued that he cannot find the heart either to learn or to play, with any energy or pleasure? There should be primers like the 'Kinderbybel,' a book written for Africander children. But," looking at his watch, "I must be off now, I have an appointment in town."

"Where are you staying?"

"At the 'Commercial.' Good-bye for the present. I shall see you again, as I have some business to transact, before my return home."

"Not with men of the 'long robe,' I hope?"

"No," laughing; "I am of the sailor's opinion, who, when asked the difference between an attorney and a solicitor, replied, 'the same as between a crocodile and an alligator.'"

They shook hands, and Piet descended the steps. Having reached the garden, he turned back, as though a sudden thought had struck him, and said to Ralph Whittaker, who stood on the stoep, "By the way, should I leave without again seeing you, I may as well tell you *now* that we should like to see you down at Brandfontein, in the shearing season, say next month. Mother particularly told me to ask you down, knowing from me that we were great chums at school, in England. Will you come?"

"Very well; I'll write and let you know."

"So. Then I'll send a cart to Philipsburg, to meet you; you will have to go by post-cart from here to Philipsburg, which is about half-way to Ventersdorp."

"How far is your farm from Ventersdorp?"

"Let me see," said Piet, mentally calculating, and reducing hours to miles, "about 12, I think; six miles go to an hour, though eight miles, if it be a post-cart. You see, you can't turn hours to miles so very accurately. In this country, there are so many turnings and windings through kloofs, round hills, that the actual distance varies very much from the theoretical,

as gleaned from a map-scale. Good bye, for the present, then. I intend to walk back, by Somerset Road."

"If you had rather walk than wait for the tram, you will find it a preferable route by the Common yonder," indicating with his forefinger. "Keep between the Amsterdam Battery and the Cemeteries there, and enter town by the road past Sailors' Home. You will then have nice turf, instead of a dusty road, most of the way."

"Thank you," and Piet went on his way, Whittaker watching him down the path, until he had disappeared from sight, on the road.

Resuming his seat on the stoep, Ralph read his letter again. As it is a privilege conceded to story-tellers to know the contents of a private epistle, as well as to pry into other people's secrets, I shall employ this privilege to the reader's advantage, and gratify any possible natural feeling of curiosity to know what it was that so interested Ralph, that he should a second or third time peruse it. The epistle was to the following effect:—"I was extremely glad to read your nice, kind letter the other day, especially as you so highly speak of your present abode. More still am I pleased to learn your undiminished attendance upon the ministrations of our Church, and that there are so many excellent clergymen in your neighbourhood. You said you were fond of taking long walks into the country. Very good for your health; but, dear Ralph, take care of wild animals and nasty Kafirs, whatever you do, as I should feel anxious were you to run any needless risks."

So little is the Cape known! A statesman at home once wanted to know why the Governor at Cape Town could not step over, for a little talk, to see the Lieutenant-Governor at King William's Town! No wonder, when a novelist, like Grant, can speak of a Kafir chief's "great place" consisting of a three-storey palace!

Towards the conclusion, the letter became interesting.

"You know, when I last wrote, we had received no tidings of your poor long-missed elder brother. You were *very* young when you last saw him, and can, I dare say, hardly remember his features. He took after your deceased father; like *him* he was, in broad expansiveness of brow. You are more like *me*. Since my last, a gentleman has been to see us, and said something which, if true, will prove of very great importance to us. This gentleman, an elderly person, had known your brother in Bombay, just before he was missed. He says that, a few months ago, an educated Hindoo came to Bombay, after a long journey as far as Cabul. By the merest accident, my informant had come across him. In the course of ordinary conversation, this Hindoo mentioned that, whilst at Cabul, he heard that, years

before, an English gentleman, named Wipitter (no doubt, Whittaker), had been murdered by a chief of the Rukhsani, a wild tribe of Beluchistan, I think. And such a description of the murdered man had been given, says my kind informant, as to leave little doubt of its having been your poor brother, Reginald Whittaker. The alleged reason for the murder (as given to the aforesaid Hindoo) was that Reginald had married Eodah, I think, that chief's cousin, with whom the murderer was in love. Steps are to be taken to discover the truth of this strange story; perhaps the general Government of India may be induced to interfere. Should any more be discovered, my informant has promised to let me know. He has now started for Bombay.—I am, your fond mother,

“SYLVIA WHITTAKER.”

CHAPTER XXII.

A TRIP INTO THE COUNTRY.

ALL, who know the Cape at all, are aware what a “peculiar institution” here is that most wonderful machine, the Cape post-cart. A light *box* on two wheels, with seats for two in front and one behind (a mere ledge, the latter), including the driver; more adapted for use than for ornament; it keeps on for hundreds of miles, its rapid dashing trot of eight miles an hour, with only an occasional stoppage of barely ten minutes in perhaps as many hours. Provided with constant and ever-ready relays of drivers (and changes of vehicles at post towns,) it does its work of letter-carrying rapidly and well; but the luckless passenger must hold on tight, for, if spilled out, the driver won't wait to pick you up, no fear of that!

Tired from the eternal monotonous jolting in one of these conveyances, Ralph Whittaker got off, and stretched his limbs, at the Philipsburg post-office, and, having shown his ticket, and secured his portmanteau, asked, and was shown, the way to the best hotel, kept by Elliot. It was close upon dusk, and of course Ralph was glad, in a short time, after due ablutions, to sit down to an excellent tea, in a nicely furnished airy apartment, just beneath a large engraving, representing Charles Stuart on his trial before a lot of very grim-looking Puritans. After he had discussed a third cup of well-made fine-*aroma'd* coffee, the door opened, and a coloured man entered, who presently civilly informed Ralph that he, Abram Volkers, had been sent to fetch him down to Brandfontein; “and what time would ‘baas’, like to start in the morning?” The “*kar*” *en twee paarten*” awaited Ralph's leisure in the stable-yard of

the hotel. Ralph said he had not yet quite made up his mind (speaking good Dutch, learnt on the voyage), but would inform Abram that evening, further, on.

After the manner of coloured folk in the rural parts, Abram asked for a “*bitje tabak*,” which Ralph gave him; also for a “*sopje*” of brandy, which Ralph ordered for him. And then Abram retired, probably to scandalise Ralph's appearance to the “*meisjes*” and others in the kitchen.

Mr. Elliot came in and asked whether there were any other accommodation Ralph could wish for. He having replied in the negative, Elliot asked him if he had been in the country before. “No,” said Ralph; “and as far as my first impressions go, I am on the whole pleased with my journey down. The novelty of the thing, perhaps! But how ill-peopled! How few houses one sees, all the way from town to this!”

“Yes,” said Elliot, “the country is sparsely populated; very much so! Still, in many respects, it has progressed very much these last few years, especially since the discovery of diamonds near our borders. This village has, since then, actually doubled its size, and we have had great improvements. Our lately-erected Dutch church, in size and architectural effect, is next to Cradock Church only; you saw it as you came in, eh?”

“What, that large stone edifice with lofty spire, and but-tresses?”

“Yes. It has cost eight thousand pounds. We have yet to get the clock and organ put up. A curious feature in this church is, that it has no pulpit, but a ‘tribune’ instead.”

“Similar to the tribune in the French assembly?”

“Yes, just so. It gives the preacher more scope, more freedom of action.”

“Should I stay part of the morrow, what sights are there; what are the *lions* of this place!”

“The church, the warm baths, and the well-laid out public gardens.”

“Well, I am not sure. I wish to reach Brandfontein in the afternoon.”

“Then, you must start not later than eight, to-morrow morning. It takes nine hours to reach that farm; I know that place well,—Venter's?”

“Yes.”

“If you go by Sharon, rather than by Ventersdorp, you will save the distance, and do it in little more than eight hours.”

“Then I shall. Call Venter's man and, tell him, please.”

Abram was called, and told when to start in the morning; he then retired.

"You would find a rich intellectual feast in our gardens, were you to stay a day over," remarked Elliot. "They are very instructive."

"As instructive as the Kinder Garten?"

"Quite. In this way. Numbers of plants are to be found there, such as the olive, which might advantageously be introduced into the country generally. At Venter's, and such sea coast farms, you will find them eating imported "sardines à l'huile d'olive," when all the time the sharks are chasing thousands of sardines into the little rock basins, where even boys catch and devour them. But they have no olives, or they might export, instead of importing, the fish."

"So might the mulberry tree, and silk cultivation, be introduced into this country, were there only public spirit enough," observed Ralph.

"It has been tried at Stellenbosch and Uitenhage; but somehow or other, I don't know why, the matter fell through. Want of funds, or public spirit."

At eight in the morning, Ralph was rattling away over the bridge, that spans the now cooling streams issuing from the baths, on the beautiful pine-clad slopes of the huge black mountain, standing so curiously isolated from any range; past many a humble cottage, the smoke issuing from which in dense clouds indicates the early breaking of fast of labour's hard-featured sons; right away into the veld pure and simple. Ralph felt and enjoyed vastly the rapid motion, and the exhilarating life-renewing breeze, with its rich stores of ozone, so cheap to all, and yet so unappreciated! It was truly glorious, he thought, this rattling over the hills, down into deep dingles, up again, down again, now catching a glimpse of distant white homestead, peeping out from its orchard-surroundings, then turning a "kopje," and losing sight of all dwellings of humanity, now scattering a playful flock of snowy angoras, then passing a tardily-progressing span of bullocks, dragging the lumbering, yet admirably-jointed Cape wagon to distant seaport.

And then the chat and gossip of Abram! Such a droll interlarding of Cape patois and doubtful English! What a rich vein of humour the fellow had! what scandal! what gossip! about everyone at Brandfontein! Why Ralph knew the faults and failings of everyone there, from "baas" to "voor looper," and that before seeing the place! One story Abram told was not so bad. It was as follows, reduced into pure English:-- "There were two fishermen at Sandy Cove, Hottentot half-castes, candidates for the diaconate at Sharon. Their "pondoks" were adjacent. One night, each in his own hut, they were loudly praying, on their knees, to the edification of awe-struck

natives. Presently one of them stopped, and sang out to the other, "Yes! Jonas! but where are the five "rooibek" you took from my hut yesterday?" The other was taken aback, for the said fish were hanging up behind his back."

Such rude stories served very well to beguile the way. But Ralph, in the middle of another tale, interrupted the man, to ask what that range of mountains was, towards which they seemed to be going. Abram informed him it was the range running from Ventersdorp to Sharon, and that they were going, there! yonder! pointing out one extremity of the range. Up and down, jolting and pitching, and shaking, now over rugged stones, now over heaps of sand, thinly covered with clumps of rhenoster bush, scattered like hair on a bushman's head; here and there, a scarlet geranium, lifting its head, affords a splendid variety to the monotonous dun brown of all around. Past a stream, so called, dried to a dribbling thread of water. Here and there, far and near, are scattered, at intervals, those great solid black domes, erected long ago by industrious swarms of those insects, held up of old by a wise Eastern king, and poet, and philosopher, as the brightest example of industry. At last, after half-an-hour's outspan, and an hour's hard trot, whilst the mountains, so mysteriously blue and caverned and ravined, loom nearer, and reveal their gorges, now seen to be gay with vegetation. Now appears a brown unburnt-brick round structure, the interior floor black as pitch; this is a sheep kraal; then, first the thatched roof, then the many windowed walls, so bare and white in the glare, then the broad "stoep" or "loggia," shaded with its six limes in front; a long green cool verandah; and there they are, at Mackenzie's. The old Scotchman, hale and hearty, in his not-yet-forgotten rich Northern brogue, greets Ralph heartily, and bade him into an oak-paneled apartment, gay with coloured engravings of Loch Lomond, Views of Auld Reekie, and old feudal scenes of bye-gone and stirring times—times when his ancestors drove many a Lowland bull to their Gaelic fastnesses, and raised many a grim coronach for the fallen! A good chat and a hearty cup of coffee of divine aroma, refreshes Ralph very much. Meanwhile, Abram, having had his at the "kombuis," is now leading the tired sweating horses up and down the werf, as he converses with the "stalmeester." From the jerks he gives with his head, in the direction of Ralph, now and then, he seems to be talking of him, perhaps scandalizing him a little; who knows?

A kindly good bye! and off again! In an hour's time, the spur of the now-gained mountain is rounded, and, turning a huge outlying "kopje," a large village of huts, with a great white church, standing like an enormous ecclesiastical giant amongst a myriad of dwarves, and they are in Sharon. They

stay not, but trot, trot, trot, through the village, between rows of densely-peopled huts, with swarms and swarms of children of all shades from pitch-black to dingy-white; large productive gardens, up by the foot of the mountain; a corn windmill beyond these, and the slope leading to the open country again, before them. On and on! the horses striking fire from the hard flinty road. "What is that place, with large clumps of trees, near yonder queer-looking mountain?" asks Ralph. "That," answers Abram; "oh! Rietfontein;" and now appear, in the far distance, huge lines of unbroken ranges of sand hills, marking the coast. Having gained a height, Ralph perceives ships, on the great blue Sea! To the left, Ralph thinks he sees something like a castle; only he knows it cannot be one. He points it out to Abram.

"Brandfontein!" "wy zal baije zoon daar kom; (we shall very soon there come), voor de zoon is zoo laag;" (before the sun is so low) indicating the point in the sky referred to, with his finger.

On approaching nearer, Ralph sees that what so whimsically resembled a castle, is merely a range of modern buildings on a plateau. On and on goes the cart, on the farm now, and Abram greets a shepherd boy shouting at a stray sheep. It is a younger brother of Caesar, he has a string of "schulpats" (tortoises) in one hand, which will furnish him with "lekker eyers" (nice eggs).

"Eh! young 'verrot-kop,'" shouts Abram, cracking his whip at him, "kyk, waar de schaaps is;" but the lad only grins, and calls him old "Uiuvslesch" (Onion meat), in allusion, probably, to some local tradition concerning Abram.

In ten more minutes, they have passed the old windmill pump over the well, and once built there by Kearns, now alas! dilapidated and unserviceable, from the gear of the piston being out of order. People are standing under the green verandah-roof over the stoep. Who are they? Whittaker thinks he can make Piet out by his figure; the others, he concludes, may be the mother, brothers, and sisters. The cart ascends the rise, passes along the street formed by labourers' huts on one side, and the western wall of werf on the other, then past the stable, from the roof of which chanticleer crows, and juvenile Ethioplings exercise their shrill lungs. Ralph was pleased and interested by the novelty of all he saw. Soon, the cart entered the yard, crossed it, and drew up at the hall-door, where the family, having gone to that side of the house, are all present to welcome Piet's old friend in England. Hieronymus, now a young man; is there; so are Sannie, Susan, the old lady, and Piet. They receive the new comer warmly.

Our old acquaintance, the "stalmeester," as happy as ever, hurries up to help outspan, and hear the news from Abram. And Abram has a roll of Heidelberg tobacco for the groom, and many messages from swarthy Philipsburg "ooms" (uncles), and "tantas" (aunts), and "neefs" (nephews).

Soon Ralph, sitting on the old "rustbank" (sofa), is as much at home as though he had known them all for years. Coffee and viands of all sorts attest a solid welcome, and Mrs. Venter's manner shows great warmth, toned down by real old Colonial good-breeding.

Next morning, as Ralph is looking out from the hall-door, gazing on the vast "kamp" and "lands" stretching away to the southward, he proposes to Hieronymus to go and look at them. "All right;" but first they go to the "Schaarhof," or shearing house, where scores of gossiping Hottentots, on their knees, are busily shearing sheep, which, as they escape from the shears, much lighter, spring unaccountably over the threshold; whilst the overseer notes down each man's name, as he finishes a sheep. Every other moment, is heard, "een voor Piet" (one for Piet), "een voor Jozua" (one for Jozua), "een voor Abel October" (one for Abel October), and so on; the men getting paid, for each sheep, one penny. Now and then, just as at the land, the overseer serves out young sour wine out of a "vatje" (little vat), or demijohu, into a calabash. In an adjoining apartment, two boys are engaged in chasing and catching the sheep as they are wanted; often being thrown over by the large strong Merino or Rambouillet rams.

They go past the kennel, where, through the half-open door Ezaa and Izaak are seen, one giving the hounds meal and water, and another whipping the noisy greedy brutes back, as they approach the trough, before the mixture there has been sufficiently stirred. Down the steep path, amid high creeper-entangled bushes, to the gate of the first ostrich camp, where Ralph, seeing some fine birds, far off, grazing quietly, wishes to go up and view them more closely.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RURAL SIGHTS.

"DON'T go," say Hieronymus, "they 'shop' (kick), like mad, and, I can assure you, one kick from that bird yonder, with its immense claw, would be no joke. Their claws are quite capable, when darted forward, in the act of kicking, of ripping one open." So saying, he opens the gate of the gras-

kamp or grass-camp, and closes it behind them. In groups, scattered far and wide, white patches dotting the green plain, are thousands of recently shorn sheep, basking and grazing in the genial warmth.

"What a vast extent of camp," says Ralph, "is it really all enclosed?"

"Oh! yes. Far to the other side of that hill, where you see that boy sitting; its Wilhelm, the lazy rascal! I'll wake him up, when I see him afterwards."

"And all this too, is it enclosed corn land?" looking over the bush fence.

"Yes; all enclosed. If you like, I'll take you by this path, it leads to the gate at the other end, opening out to the open country.

"I had heard," said Ralph, "that farms in this colony were notorious for being *destitute* of enclosures."

"Mostly, they are," replied Hieronymus. "All the way from here to Philipsburg, you will see no other farm fenced in as this one is."

"Has the fencing been done all at one time? or has it been gradually proceeded with?"

"My father commenced, and left off, then on again. When I was a little boy, my father pulled down the fence on the other side of that 'kopje,' and carried a new one twice as far out, so as to make it broader." He illustrated his meaning by indicating with his forefinger; but as I cannot do so, the reader must make allowance for any want of clearness in my narrative, regarding the important topic of fencing.

"You have fine gardens," as they proceeded, "so I understand."

"Gardens!" and Hieronymus laughed derisively. "Yes! if you can call a patch of watermelons, as far as from here to that horse's skull yonder, on the bush, why yes! we have a fine garden!"

"Why, Piet, your brother, told me something about fine gardens about here."

"You mustn't take all Piet says for gospel."

Ralph made no reply to this, and they walked on in silence, and soon came to the gate on the other side of the "kamp."

As the boy opened the gate, and Ralph came through, he remarked, "You speak good English and express yourself well. Where were you educated?" Instead of replying, the youth, having his gaze intently directed to a distant pool, near which grew two or three stunted willows, suddenly exclaimed, "Alamagtig! there goes one of the birds; how on earth can it have got out? There must be a gap somewhere, made by one of those lazy shepherds, who forget to make it right again.

"Then, you must excuse me for a short while, as I must go at once and have the bird driven back. You will find it a nice walk, round the land, past Nataniel's house, you see it yonder by the stony hill, so round the corner-land. You can't miss your way, for the house is always a landmark; you can see it go where you will, it is so high." The youth was soon out of sight, and Ralph was left to pursue the road alone, for the present.

He took the direction advised, and walked along, admiring the dark masses of prickly "euphorbias" here, the clumps of "*wacht een beetje*" *doorns* near the pool, the basking and lively "klip salamanders," that, frightened at his footsteps, so nimbly escaped to the under-holes, 'neath the bushes. And he especially admired the contrast between the distant sandhills, so blinding white, with the soft violet and imperceptibly-blended gray of these hills (which the reader remembers!), promising almost some dark hidden mystery concealed in their recesses!

Now and again, a "duyker" or buck sprang out, or a hare, or solitary Cape peacock fitting before his gaze. The "koran's" solitary cry made the succeeding stillness the more impressive. Beetles hummed, bees buzzed, and distant "baaings" came from the lambs in the "camp" far away. Here and there, a great tree afforded shade to some goats under the charge of a now-slumbering "herder," a little black boy, taking it easy, in a reclining posture. These lazy fellows, say the Boers, make the best shepherds; an active fellow would be driving the poor things about so incessantly, they would have no time to graze!

He saw some splendid butterflies, one in particular of a very rare species, with black spots on a red ground, which he tried to secure. But the creature eluded him, and kept settling now on a marigold, now on a scarlet geranium, next on a fig, till at last Whittaker fairly got tired out, and resumed his walk.

Having come to the "klip," he ascended its stony height, and saw many scorpions about the loose stones. Also, above, a few rock-rabbits, or conies, or "asies." Arrived at the summit, he had a splendid view of the corn-land before him, and the green stretch of camp behind (which he had just come through). Further on, where the *fourth* ostrich camp joined the veld, he saw Hieronymus, he thought, with two men, on horseback, driving the huge escaped ostrich through the gap; presently, he saw them mending it by placing bushes over it in an inverted position. He also fancied he saw Hieronymus punching the lad's head, who then came up (but he was not sure it was so far).

Looking below on the other or western side, he saw that the

country was well wooded thereabouts, thick bushes forty feet in height, he thought. On looking attentively, he fancied he perceived a curious white object, he could not make out what, glistening through a slight opening in the thicket. He took no particular notice, being engaged in thinking; and his thoughts turned into words, would amount to something like this:—

“Well, upon the whole, I am pleased with Brandfontein. How kind and hospitable these rustic Africanders are! But what a bad system of farming! What acres of land left for mere pasturage, and apparently arable soil uncultivated! Owing to want of population, I suppose. What a fine lad that is; I wonder who taught him! He speaks English remarkably well, too!”—and so on, musing incoherently, on various subjects.

But presently that glistening white something again began to arrest his eye, and to excite his curiosity even. After surmising, guessing, wondering, he made up his mind to descend and approach the object, which he began to think did look not so very unlike *marble*, the little he could see of it. He kept his eye fixed on the attraction, so as not to lose sight, as he approached. When he had approached, he found it, that is, the white thing, was in a sort of “kraal” of inverted dead large bushes, ranged in a parallelogram, in what he now saw an open space of a few square yards, quite in the shade of numerous bushes, interlaced with creepers, bearing lovely scarlet and crimson blossoms.

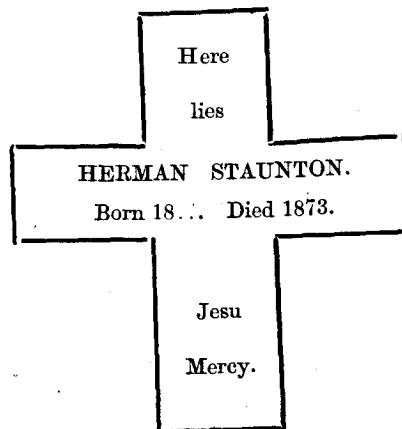
A small opening on the other side, gave ingress. It had a rude ill-made rustic gate, only secured by the tedious process of fastening it to the nearest bush (of the fence) by a “reüntje.” Entering by this, he saw something which startled him.

With reverence, alas! so uncommon! he took off his hat, and entered.

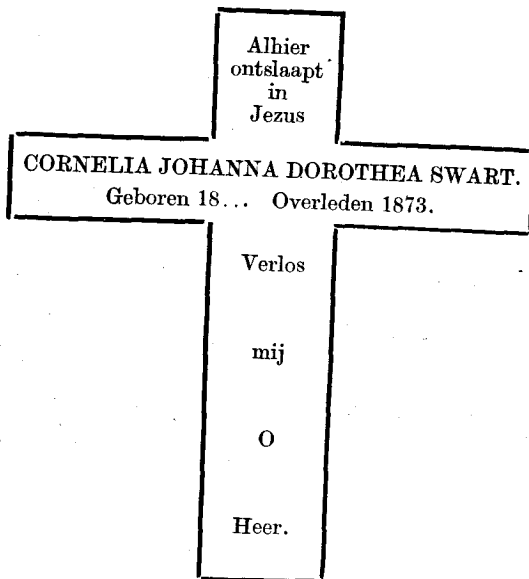
CHAPTER XXIV.

WAITING FOR THE ADOPTION.

Two rustic mounds mark where heaves the turf; side by side, in a sweet grassy spot, where many a purple bell-shaped flower, contrasted with simpler green clumps of sour figs, and again with yellow-flowered sorrel, and wide large-eyed daisies, attract the eye. At the head of each of these two mounds, was an upright rude Latin cross, painted white (emblem of the faith wherein they had died); on each cross was rudely carved, and painted in black letters, by loving hands, may be, an epitaph, striking from its simplicity, and contrasting strongly with the lying monumental epitaphs so abounding in some cemeteries; causing a parson once, in England, to write over the entrance to a churchyard, “Here *lie* the dead, and here the living *lie*.” Ironical, but how true! I am digressing, however.) On the right cross was this inscription:—



On the left, and even more rudely done :



I have purposely omitted all dates. The crosses were apparently carved hurriedly; for they were quite as rude as I have purposely drawn them.

Ralph sat down, and gazed long and musingly. "Judging from the names, they seem to have been of different races; one of English, the other of Dutch extraction. How came they to be thus buried together? However, I shall discover perhaps, when I reach the house. I wish that young man were here now; he might tell me. I am afraid he may be looking for me."

He stretched his limbs, and reclined on the soft turf, pondering deeply. How much more interested he would have been, had he but known who those two were!

There they lay, their bodies restored to pristine dust, and committed to Mother Earth; but their souls in Hades, "waiting for the Adoption," the great Easter Resurrection!

They sleep. The loorie trills, from distant bush, her sweetest lays, but they hear not. The tinkling bell of the passing flock resounds in rural melody, as the herd drives them to the wide

downs, but they hear not. The hum of busy gleaners, at harvest, ascends from the fat cornland, but they hear not. And the lowing of kine, borne by the soft zephyri, comes, but they hear not. And the busy ant, laden with far-collected burden of grain, for a thriving republic, crosses them, but they know not. And the jackal's wail, at night, proclaims the prowling ovicide, but they hear not. And the owl shrieks, in the dread hours of night, from yonder bush, but they hear not. And, on calm Sabbath mornings, the passing Hottentots, may be, raise the vocal song of praise, in simple, yet grand, Herrnhutter melody, yet they hear not.

Ralph thinks to himself of another tomb, in a far-away brighter better country. And from the Tomb, his thoughts rise to the higher pitch of unworldliness, and he ask himself, whether *his* life, his own life, be indeed a preparation for the inevitable bourne! Whether, in singleness of aim, in oneness of purpose, self, with all its clustering individualities, has indeed been lost in more full, more expanded sympathy, taught by him, who, once for all, has conquered the old-dreaded monarch of death!

As he ponders, soberly, earnestly, a sweet soprano voice, in the distance, strikes upon his ear; an exquisite well-attuned voice, singing a sweet hitherto (to him) unknown melody, which, borne by the pure breeze, floats along, now rising, now falling, in measured cadence. It becomes more full, and louder, intimating the nearer approach of the singer, and presently, behind the clustering natural arbour, he hears these words, which he mostly, having, as I said, learned Dutch, understands:—

"Uw nabyheid, Heer! alleen
Stelt myn arme ziel te vreên."

And, stepping back into the shade, he perceives a lovely tall maid advance, who, entering by the gate, comes up to that grave where *she* rests, and lays thereon an "immortelle" of variously-hued "everlasting flowers," placing it so as to hang from the cross at the upper part. Slightly brown, not more so than a Spaniard perhaps, her wavy hair, and well-cut features, indicate a more than semi-European, or may be, semi-Asiatic origin; so great is the diversity of races in our country districts of the West.

CHAPTER XXV.

"THEY CALL ME SALOME"

LONG she stands there, and gazes, whilst from her eyes drop thick tears, and a stifled sob now and then bursts from her.

And then she kneels down and prays (though no Romish prayer for the dead); prays silently and simply in surely-to-be-heard heart-spoken prayer. Long and abstractedly does she kneel, oblivious of all around.

At last she stands up, and, turning accidentally, sees Ralph for the first time. Confused and astonished, she modestly folds her arms, and looks on the ground.

"And who are you, thus at the grave of one whom you seem to have loved very much?" asks Ralph, to break the ice of awkwardness, I suppose.

"They call me Salome," she answers, in English, having learnt it at Rietfontein, from Dora.

"Whose graves are these? I have been wondering very much."

"The one *there*, is that of my kind mistress, Dora Swart, and I have come over this morning, on foot, part of the way; then I got a lift in Arend's wagon; I have come, as I often do, to honour my poor mistress, by placing these flowers on her grave. They will never fade, you see; so will she never be forgotten by all around."

"Whose grave is the other?"

"It is the grave of her lover; he was what they call 'meester,' or tutor, at this place. They had been together (several years ago now), to see an old woman called Mietje, down by the coast yonder; you see those hills," pointing southward. "Well, they went to see a dreadful cave there. No one ever saw them again, *alive*, I mean. Search was made in all directions, but no, their 'spoor' could not be found; till, at last, the 'voorman,' or overseer, of this place, who knows the cave well, went to look there, for a runaway convict named Brickels. Looking down, he saw, to his horror (it made him 'schrick,' I can tell you), what do you think? Why, deep, deep down at the foot of the steep rock below the cave, *these* two, lying in a pool of water, I heard, or *one* was at least. He could not take his eyes off, he said, for a long time. All the flesh, off both, was eaten by 'aasvogels' (vultures), (I think I heard)."

"What are 'aasvogels'?" I am an Englishman, only lately come to Africa; so I don't know, you see."

"'Aasvogels'?" Why, does 'mynheer' know anything about nasty fowls, that fly high up in the air, and see dead bodies far off, and then fly up and eat them. I forget how you name them in English. Stupid I am! after all the English she taught me."

"Oh! 'vultures' perhaps."

"Yes, that it is. I remember now. How forgetful I am. But I was never the same, since my poor mistress died. She was very, very fond of me, and taught me all she had time to.

And she was so kind to the poor Hottentots about Sharon, and other places too; oh! you can't think. The 'predikant' (preacher), said once she was like that holy woman in the Bible, who made coats for the poor. Stupid me! I even forget her name too!"

"Dorcas," said Ralph, smiling.

"Yes, yes, that's the name. Well, the parson said she was just like that woman, and that God would reward her in Heaven."

"But about what the 'voorman' (foreman), (you call hi-₁?) saw?"

"Oh! When he looked afterwards, deep, deep into the far corner of the cave, he found a 'tinderbox,' which he brought back, and many people remembered it was Brickels' (that runaway convict). So they think that Brickels was there, and perhaps pushed them over."

"But why should he have done that? Surely, not without reason, eh?"

"Well, you see, Mister, he might have pushed her over, because he was long known to have a spite against *her*. Then, people think he would push *him* over, because otherwise he would be a witness against him. Do you see?"

"But *why* should he have had a *spite* against *her*?"

"Because I once got him into Tronk," —

"What is 'Tronk'?"

"'Gaal,' 'prison.' He thought, and told others, that I had been told by my poor mistress to tell: he was quite wrong. She only used to tell me, in a general way, that it was the duty of all Christians, when they heard or saw anything wicked, not to hide it."

"But how did they know it was Brickels' tinderbox?"

"Why, his name was cut in very small letters, across the copper part."

Here the tramping of hoofs was heard, and Piet was seen on horseback, just on the path beyond. Looking hard through the bushes, he recognized Ralph, and sang out, "Holloa! Ralph, I have been looking for you everywhere. Hieronymus told me he had left you, and that I might find you hereabouts. It is nearly dinnertime, you know. Dag, Salome!—My goodness, Ralph, I never thought of seeing you talking to a girl like her! Come, that's too bad."

"I was looking at the graves, when she came up, and put garlands on," answered Ralph.

Piet instantly turned grave. "I am aware of that," said he; "It is a sad story, and mother will tell you all about it. Salome! go up and rest in the voorhuis; mother knows you are here. Heb jij noch gegeten?"

"No," answered she.

"Go up, and have coffee and food, at once, Salome. You have come a long way."

She went; and Piet asked Ralph what she had told him about the grave. Ralph repeated her words, as far as he could remember.

"It was a nasty affair, altogether, and I am glad I was not here, when it occurred," said Piet. "But come up, it is near one o'clock, and dinner time. I want to show you a couple of 'ratels,'—honey ratels,—I unearthed and shot, with bullets through their foreheads, (or rather the one on the nose settled one); they are ferocious brutes. Have you ever seen one? of course not. I'll show you them presently. Moch! I had trouble with them. Three of my best hounds bitten severely too! Oh! ratels are the toughest brutes we have, and are hard to unearth, that I can tell you."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PORTRAIT.

THE afternoon was spent in an excursion, on horseback, to a neighbouring farm, where numbers of farmers in their carts, with their "vrouws" and "ooms" and "tantes" without end, had gathered to witness, or take part in, the sale by auction of the homestead, furniture, "vee," sheep, ploughs, and all the various Lares, Penates, and paraphernalia of a Boer, who was just going to "trek" to the Free State, where Exeter Hall hampers no more, and philanthropy sleeps, or dreams, but does little, and where the lazy "swart schepsels" are *made* to work for the "Christian," whether they will or no. Du Toit, of Ventersdorp, was auctioneer; the "afslager," as the Dutch call him, at the Cape, moves in first-rate society, and is highly thought of. Perhaps a hundred people were moving about all the various rooms, now so topsy-turvy and desolate; whilst, outside, were farmers minutely inspecting the live stock. Four thousand sheep, in "kraals," fifty angoras, five ostriches, and a brood of young ones, unfledged, and looking as much like partridges as ostriches, when very young. A curious feature, to Ralph, as a new-comer, was the "bonus" and "strykgeld." With a bag of gold in one hand, the "afslager" walked about, peering into imperturbable-looking Boers' faces and saying, "fifteen hundred pounds! ten pounds for the man who bids fifteen hundred and fifty." This *ten pounds*, offered as an inducement to bid *higher*, is "bonus." A man, without a penny to cross himself with, may just *say* the "fifty," without

any intention to give a *bona fide* offer; if someone bids higher, he goes away, with his £10 *bonus*. If no one else bids higher, the things are his, and he *has* to pay for them; some men do get *bitten*, that way. Thus, every bonus, *except the last*, was a *free* gift. Ralph and Piet were much amused at the disconsolate looks of a very "*slim*"-looking young swellish farmer, who, having made a *sham* offer, for the sake of the "bonus," or inducement, had the goods in question actually knocked down to him, for which he had to pay a smart sum.

On the road, Ralph, after listening to an explanation of this very curious mode of auctioneering, expressed his opinion that the whole thing was nothing more or less than legalized gambling, which would have a very bad effect upon the minds of the people generally, both those who were engaged, and those who witnessed such transactions.

Piet disapproved, and, as he was labouring to prove his own ideas on the subject to be right, they arrived at Jan Smit's farmhouse, which, as a picture of Boer life, was not to be surpassed anywhere. They stopped here half-an-hour, and had coffee. The three ladies of the household had on hideous sun-bonnets, or hoods, which effectually hid their features from a too rude gaze, and were silently engaged in making sugar-bush-syrup. Jan himself asked Ralph, "where he was born, was he married, who was his father," and such like; not by any means rude questions, as understood by Boers.

On arriving at Brandfontein, towards sun-set, they had supper; at Ralph's request, Mrs. Venter related the story of the murder, whilst Hieronymus and Piet also listened, now and throwing in a word or two, perhaps, by way of comment.

That night, Ralph slept in Herman's old 'slaapkamer,' next to the schoolroom, but opening into the inside passage. As he undressed, he perceived a large "tarentula," or else "veld spinnikop," on the wall just over his pillow. Naturally disgusted at sight of the venomous intruder, he threw a boot at it, which made it suddenly retreat under the head of the bedstead. He followed it, pulling the bed on one side, into a large box, full of old torn books of all sorts, neglected scraps of writing, and in short a waste paper box; out of this he pulled some papers, in order to catch the spider, or kill it. He succeeded; on replacing the things, he noticed a whole sheet, written upon in beautifully small neat handwriting. It was as follows, and evidently part of a journal;—

"June 16th, 18—. To-day is the anniversary of my birthday. How long and how wearily the years seemed to have passed, since I last beheld sweet Kettlethorpe."

On reaching the last word, Ralph started up with surprise. "Strange," thought he, "that he should mention so obscure a

village as that! Still! pooh! may be, another place. Similarity of name!"

He read on. The writing became more difficult to read, and in places, nearly illegible. The journal continued:—

"I do so wish I could have those dear old country walks again, with mother, through green lanes, past rustic cottages, over the style, and away to Knaresborough, to see St. Robert's Cave and the 'Dropping Well.'"

Ralph fairly jumped up. "The same! Good Heaven, can this have been written by my missing cousin, Alfred Manners. If so, and no doubt remains, what was he doing here, and when did he live here, and, and,—but I can scarcely think. Very surprising! quite a romance! Still, I must not be too buoyant! Much will have to be done, proofs obtained."

He lay back, and puffed at his "meerschaum," as he always did, when in perplexity. At last a thought struck him. "What if it should be the same as that tutor, murdered here! What a frightful story for his poor mother to hear, as all the news of her long-missed son."—He looked at the leaf for a name; there was none. On searching the box for more leaves of the journal, he lifted up a book, out of which tumbled a faded photograph. He did not notice it much then, but afterwards, after having again reclined in bed, took it up, and gazed well at it. "Good gracious! more mystery still! Just like the portrait of my long-missed brother; the same open expansive brow, the very same peculiar expression of prompt brave hopefulness, in his portrait, so in this. What a lovely girl too! Almost Eastern! Ha! what's that idea that strikes me; this portrait resembles my brother *partly*; now, he married Eodah, and the issue would appear like this likeness! certainly! but where are the proofs? I must inquire; and, if necessary, leave for town as soon as possible."

So saying, he lapsed into slumber. When the crowing of the cock, the clacking of geese, the noise of shepherds' whips sharply cracking, as they wended their way to the veld, to look after the now unfeeced flocks under their charge, after having sipped their matutinal coffee, betokened the busy hum and stir of day, he arose, and, still having the overnight's thoughts busily seething in his anxious brain, after breakfast, he asked Mrs. Venter whether he might see her in private, on matters of particular moment. She assented, and, in the tastefully-decorated drawing room, he showed her the journal and portrait he had discovered, in his hunt after the venomous spider; and, further, explained to her what his reasons were for thinking, as the reader has seen, that both related to near relations of his, one a cousin, the other, possibly, a likewise missing brother (and niece.)

Having attentively examined, through her spectacles, the hand-writing of the journal, she called in Hieronymus, Sannie, and Susan, to corroborate her more than decided opinion, that it was Herman Staunton's. "Look, ma," said Sannie, "at the way he makes his capital T's; I can *swear* that it is Herman's. And look, too, at the peculiar formation of his S's. I am as certain as certain can be."

"And look," said Hieronymus, "at this letter of his, written out for me to copy. I have kept it in my desk, that he gave me. Compare this with the other; why, they are as like as two peas."

"Then, there is no doubt," said Ralph, "of this being the handwriting of the tutor, whom you call Herman Staunton, and whom I suspect to have been my cousin, Alfred Manners, whose poor widowed mother and mine are living together at Kirby Side."

"Quite certain, depend upon it, Mr. Whittaker," replied Mrs. Venter, looking earnestly at him, then taking off her barnacles, and wiping them.

"Now," continued Ralph, "please to look also at this portrait, taken by Walters, of Cape Town (who 'studies to please'; so he advertises). So I see on the back."

"It is Dora Swart's portrait," cried they all.

"Yes, ma," said Susan; "don't you remember her giving it him at a party one night, when he said he wished to fill his new album. The first night he was here. You recollect? We got him to come over from Sandy Cove."

"What, the murdered girl, sweetheart of him you know as Herman Staunton?" said Whittaker.

"Assuredly. As like her as can be; well taken too! only a little faded. Taken that time, you remember, Sannie, when she went last to town," said Susan.

"I have strong reasons for thinking her to have been my missing brother's child. He was missed in India. My mother, only a few weeks ago, wrote to me that traces of him had turned up. He had been killed by an Afghan or Beloochee chief, in revenge for having got married to Eodah, whom that chieftain wished to marry himself."

"But why think that portrait hers?"

"Because, first, it has striking features in common with an excellent likeness of my missing brother; secondly, the portrait has the appearance of being that of a half-Asiatic girl. Can you not tell me how to come at Dora Swart's history? I shall never rest until I have unravelled this mystery step by step, depend upon it. And, for this purpose, I shall probably have to prolong my stay in this Colony."

"Were I you," said Mrs. Venter, "I would first call on

Dora's guardian, her so-called mother, whom she esteemed as such, and loved accordingly, and tell her all your reasons, as you have just now to us. Next, go to Ventersdorp, and see a very excellent and most shrewd and skilful agent there, Mr. Marks; tell him all, without any reserve, and leave the matter in his hands, entirely. Depend upon it, if anyone can unravel the matter, *he* will. He has the advantage of knowing so many, in various parts, to whom he can apply for information, to any extent. That is your best course."

"Thank you," said Ralph, "I think I shall take your advice. Where is Rietfontein?"

"Come on the verandah, and I will show you."

They all went, and Mrs. Venter said, pointing out the direction, "You see, Mr. Whittaker, that curiously shaped mountain yonder; something like Mount Carmel, in Palestine, in shape? At this side, and quite at the foot, lies Rietfontein. At the other side lies Buffel's Vley, the owner of which has long returned from the Breakwater."

"And Durville, oh! such a nice young fellow! was tutor there," remarked Sannie flippantly.

"Durville!" exclaimed Ralph, catching at the name; "why, was he son of Richard Durville, Esq., who lives near us, in England?"

"Yes," said Susan, "he was. He came not far from Knaresborough; I remember the name, from Lytton's novel of Eugene Aram."

"Did he tell you so?"

"Yes; he told me one day, as we were standing under this very verandah."

"Good heavens!" almost shouted Ralph, in surprise; "that was young Philip, was it not, who, it has been discovered, threw upon my poor cousin the blame of purloining a Bank of England note for £5; having committed the theft himself all the time! Rogue, smooth-faced hypocrite, he must have been!"

"Why," said Hieronymus; "Herman, supposed to be your cousin, Mr. Whittaker, had a quarrel with him one day, and struck him down. I heard it from Jack Hopkins, ma."

"Then it is the same!" said Ralph Whittaker. "Alfred Manners, my missing cousin, is one and the same with Herman Staunton, your late tutor, murdered!"

"Ah, now I remember," said Hieronymus; "Jack Hopkins said that Durville threatened Herman with his revenge, for having struck him. Perhaps he got Herman murdered."

"Remember," said Mrs. Venter, "Durville was far away then."

"Oh yes," replied Hieronymus; "but, you see, he might

have employed agents to do the deed. Money will do anything, and he had plenty of *that* about him."

"Was this Durville at all fond of sporting?" asked Ralph at last.

"Very!" they all replied, in unison.

"Then it is he! he takes after his father Richard, who is one of the keenest at riding to hounds, in all Yorkshire."

"How very romantic! almost like a novel!" remarked the girls. "Oh! it is perfectly delicious! as good as a tragedy! I do so like mystery," remarked Sannie, gushingly.

Next day, Ralph Whittaker took his leave of the family, promising, if possible, to come again another day. He would go back by way of Ventersdorp; there he saw Marks, who promised to do his best in the matter; and Ralph promised him £100 sterling (and even more, in case of success), for his trouble.

Piet went with him, as far as the Dorp, and there saw him to the post-cart. Mrs. Venter, before starting, give him quite a load of "watermelon komfyt," "buck biltong," "ostrich biltong," and other Cape delicacies, made by herself, as well as a supply, in jars, of sugar bush syrup.

And so, with hope for the clearing up of the two-fold mystery, Ralph, perplexed and anxious as he was, and harassed in mind, yet managed to enjoy the drive to Philipsburg very much, especially as this was, to him, a new route, being *via* Ventersdorp, and, therefore, offering new points and attractions of scenery. He arrived eventually at Green Point, safe and well, and, *bodily* speaking, all the better for his trip, besides that he had gained some new ideas of the Cape, beyond what Cape Town furnishes. By the bye, I forgot to mention, he had learned from Marks, that Durville was still in the Colony, having purchased for himself a farm, in the Midland districts. Also, that Marks had received a letter from him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

COLESBERG KOPJE.

A FEW years ago, and who would have thought or dreamt of an exodus of Europeans, from the various States and Colonies of South Africa, to that dry parched barren region, inhabited but by slothful Griquas, mongrel descendants of Dutch and Hottentots, without any of the virtues of the former, and with most vices of the latter, of their ancestors? Still more, that, from far away lands over the sea, should come, in eager quest of a new El Dorado, far surpassing the old Spanish fabulous

and uncertain realm, the acute New Englander, the solemn deep German, the tall Swede, the hardy Oregon digger, the phlegmatic Hollander, and even the Turk and Laplander (in one instance), besides Arab priests from Port Elizabeth! From all parts, hurry wagons and carts; and footsore pilgrims plod along, having turned adrift old steady certain Trade, for uncertain dashing feverish Speculation.

On all sides, in these wonderful Diamond Fields, rich in the most precious of minerals, is heard that ceaseless buzz and hum so characteristic of labour on a large scale, and heard wherever multitudes are actively and eagerly working, in pursuit of a common object; that buzz and hum, continuous, unbroken, equally characteristic of all hard-working communities, from Birmingham to a beehive! And hard and constant indeed is the work going on all around! Strange scene in dull South Africa, land of the slow (tortoise-like in speed) ox-wagon, land of failure and laziness, and lack of speculation or energy. A new life awaits her! And from what an apparently insignificant cause; a little child, on a lonely desert-like border farm, playing with a stone, carelessly rolling and tossing, in its infantine joy, a pebble that thousands would work for all their lives to obtain!

And the most wonderful sight in the fields, nay, the wonder of the whole planet, is that far-famed dazzling mine of wealth, and of work too, called "Colesberg Kopje." No more mere surface diggings, but a real mine, a mine wonderful as well for its picturesqueness, as for its treasures!

Purchased for £6,500 sterling, from one De Beer, it was at first called by his name; presently, it was called "Colesberg Kopje," after a digging party from Colesberg. Its thorn trees, as a preliminary step, were cut down, and as much as £20 given for a single claim. The richest claims were at the "trap reef," on each side. And, for a couple of years, it was worked, and diggers got wealthy, and the mine developed, becoming deeper and deeper, till a huge chasm, a great beehive (inverted) of industry arose. From top to bottom of this chasm, are innumerable ropes, by which, up which, and along which, buckets and Kafirs, shrieking, singing, shouting, are whizzed along at terrific speed. Sometimes a bucket breaks, then arises a yell from the Kafirs, and, if anyone be ascending or descending, he catches at the nearest wire. It is simply a great quarry, intersected with a whole system of cobwebs (or wires and ropes). Buzzing, whirring, screeking, hissing, past your ears, would come the full or empty buckets, some bringing "stuff" up, others going down for more. And, on all sides of the abyss were numerous Kafir-occupied platforms, from which native songs and guttural execrations, in more than one language,

bewildered the auditor by, their Babel-like din. The natives, shining from perspiration, shook with their dancing the airy platforms, suspended, frail as they were, like Mahomet's coffin, though not so miraculously, between heaven and earth; whilst their buckets are filling below. Whiz! goes a bucket along the wires behind you, nearly striking your head. You turn nervously round, and lo! whirr! goes another at the other side.

And, at evening, the intense labour in a glowing African sun being happily accomplished, up numerous perpendicular ladders swarm the natives from a depth, some of them of a hundred and twenty feet. Some, again, swarm up the ravined torn sides, in nearly perpendicular ascent; lithe, active they are, more like apes than men, in agility. Diggers of all nations, one may say, under the sun, are hurrying to their tents, wearied, and some, on account of a few small finds, disgusted. The look of elation, again on the faces of others, proclaims their success. Then again, others, Kafir labourers have found, but, alas! for the employers, have kept, and swallowed perhaps, their precious finds, to the owner's loss.

As the crowds from below, and those from above, who were not below, all wend along to their respective quarters, a curious jingling of many languages is heard, some guttural, some nasal, others again with an Italian-like twang. As they get further from the claims, the crowd gradually breaks up, as one tent after another, and perhaps gambling booths (now suppressed), or canteens, swallow up their quota. Thus, as it advances, the crowd becomes thinned.

Two, however, have even further to go, than to that noisy canteen, where revelry is uproarious, and the orgies of Bacchus are fast commencing. So far beyond, that, by the time they reach their destination (a miserable wattle-and-daub hut, of one story, and without windows, only a hole for ventilation), they are quite beyond the vast majority; only a dozen of the crowd have further to go; the rest are all swallowed up.

It seems a strange place, that hut on the stony ground, for two such people to go to, for they are evidently gentlemen; one, a sprucely-dressed young man, the other, in off-hand digger's costume (wideawake felt hat, and corduroy, and no coat); the latter proclaimed to be such by his bearing: for carriage, not clothes, proclaims the gentleman. And the bearing of both displays that good breeding, which can by no means be assumed, being innate, or else acquired by those who, to a liberal and proper education, have added an innate sense of what is right and becoming.

As they near the aforesaid hut, they pause, and the digger says to the new-comer, "Well, what do you now think of the

fields in general, and of the "Kopje" in particular?"

"Why," replies the other, "I have not been here for sufficiently long time, to enable me to give a very decided answer to your question. My impression of the "Kopje" is, that, of all sights in the world, it is of itself the most wonderful, so to speak. Strange! that man, by his well-directed energy, can create so marvellous an artificial chasm as that! and what a variety of nationalities!"

"Yes," observes the digger, "but the thing won't last always, I am afraid. As the finds increase, diamonds must eventually lessen in value; the markets of London and Amsterdam will feel the effects, and react on us here! Companies, with large capital, able to buy expensive machinery, will one day monopolize the fields. Private diggers, as a rule, want either sufficient means, or sufficient enterprise."

"By the way," remarks the new-comer, "it is somewhat remarkable that Cape Town, usually considered so slow in commercial enterprise, by her Eastern "sisters," should have set so brilliant an example to the "Bay" merchants, as to have been first in the field with Transport Companies—halloa! what is all that row about, yonder, in that booth with a flag on the top?"

"It is a gambling booth," answers he of the loose costume; "more's the shame! I hear the present administration is going to suppress, with a stern hand, these so-called, and rightly named hells! The ruin to morals caused by them, to young fellows, is something frightful."

"But, to speak of a subject that now concerns us more nearly," said the spruce one, "what we were talking about when we met at the hotel; what sort of character had that young man, who was in the shop, you had, in Cape Town?"

"Very good, indeed!" answered the ex-shopkeeper, and now digger; only, as regarded the business, though he *was* useful in many respects; yet, from lack of early training, sometimes from a melancholy unworthy sort of absence of mind, coming on fitfully, he was not so *sharp* as I could have wished."

"You heard the sad news of his death?"

"I read of it in the "Argus," a fortnight after."

"And you recognized the name in the paper, as that by which you had previously, and at the time he was with you, known him?"

"Of course; otherwise how should I have known it to be *him*?" What was his real name? I do not inquire from idle curiosity; on the contrary, I have a *commission*, charged by those most interested in the matter, to do all I can towards elucidating the mystery, as to *who* he really was. We have reason, strong reason, for thinking that his name was but as-

sumed. A clue has been accidentally found; we want, if possible, to follow up that clue. You understand?"

"Yes, certainly," replied the ex-shopkeeper. "Well; I heard, after he left me, from a certain person, who seemed to have known him in England, that the name was *assumed*, which he bore."

"And that name was——?"

"Alfred Manners," replied the other.

"Alfred Manners!" exclaimed Marks, for he it was; "why, that is what my friend all along suspected!"

"Yes," said the digger, and curiously laughed; this man, whom I am taking you to see, has it in his own power to corroborate what I have just told you. Shall we proceed now? Look, there is the minister, good man, coming out of the hut. By his grave looks, I suspect all is over with the poor wretch!"

As they came up and saluted the minister, a devoted English church clergyman, he looked very grave, and, in answer to their inquiries, shaking his head, said, mournfully, "All is indeed over; the poor man's spirit has gone to its account. Whether he is forgiven is known to One alone. Though I have, myself, grave doubts as to the efficacy of a death-bed repentance, this dedicating of a whole life to sin, and giving merely the lees and dregs to God, yet, who shall presume to set bounds to the infinite mercy of Him, who has declared, by the mouth of Esaias, that, sins however scarlet, yet the sinner shall be made as white as wool?"

"Has he told you anything more, sir?"

The minister looked doubtfully at the new-comer, Marks; but the other assured him that Marks was directly interested in hearing the narrative, should there be any. The clergyman first asked them to step inside, and see the body; which they accordingly did.

On a rude pallet of straw, in a corner of the miserable dwelling, lay a bastard Hottentot, or "off-coloured Africander," as diamond phraseology has it, dead, and with traces of agony on his crime-haunted features, that made them shudder. Marks stepped nearer, to observe him more attentively; he had scarcely done so, when he exclaimed, "I say; why, I know this man; if it isn't Brickels! How came he here?"

"He has not been here very long," said the digger, or ex-shopkeeper. "He arrived on the fields, a beggar, in a state of semi-starvation, and destitution. Though not liking his features, which had something, I know not exactly what, forbidding in them, yet, being sorry for him, I at once gave him some food and some wine, and, as I required a hand to "sort," I engaged him. It must be a month ago, now. Two days ago he slipped

off the platform to which he had gone to see a Kafir friend of his; and, caught on the wire, it so turned his fall, as to cause him, instead of striking against the bottom (in which case he would have perished on the spot), to fall against a projecting ledge, against which he cut his head; a Kafir came up just then, by the nearest wire, providentially, and with wonderful adroitness, arrested his further fall; thus saving his life for the present. I had him brought here, and tended. By the way, where's that woman that ought to have been looking after him?"

"I dismissed her for a time," said the clergyman. "so as to hear the man's confession, which, knowing his end was near, he wished to make in private."

"Quite right, sir," observed the digger. "What was his confession?"

"Very sad! very sad indeed! Nothing less than a double murder, committed, he said, years ago."

"Where?" asked Marks, eagerly, catching at a sudden idea!

"At a place called 'Brandfontein,' I think," said the parson. "He pushed Herman Staunton and Dora Swart from off a cliff, as far as I understand him" (looking at his note-book) "I am somewhat deficient in Dutch, at least *their* 'patois.'"

"How wonderful!" almost shouted Marks. "Here have we been, a whole district, puzzled to know who, or for what reason, committed the crime on two most inoffensive persons! Very strange! I little thought, on coming up here for a pleasure trip, that I should make so strange a discovery, helping me in my *authorized* search for a clue to a great mystery!"

"But, sir," asked the digger, "did not this Brickels tell you *why* he committed so foul a crime?"

"I asked him," replied the clergyman, "but he complained of faintness at the moment; so I went to that old table there, and poured out some more of the lemonade, you so kindly supplied for his use,"—to the digger.

They passed shortly afterwards, and went to their respective quarters. Next day, a man in plain clothes was seen going about, inquiring for a man the name of Brickels, a semi-Hottentot, who had committed a robbery at a farm in the "Old Colony," called Zeekoegat, about fifty miles from Graaff-Reinet, and owned by the widow Vos, relict of Hendrick Vos, who had come up a few months back, from a district on the coast. Brickels, it seemed, had been "spooed" up to Hope Town. From there as intelligence received went to show, he had come to the Diamond Fields, where, as we have seen, he entered the employ of the digger above-mentioned. The constable, for such the inquirer was, at first failed to find any traces of the man so

anxiously inquired after, by that abstract thing called the law; accidentally he happened to ask Marks, who brought him to Brickels' employer.

"At whose farm," asked Marks of the plain "detective," "did you say, Brickels, who died yesterday (as you are informed by my friend here), commit that wholesale robbery of stock?"

"The farm of the late Hendrick Vos," answered the man, "whose widow lives there now. It is not known in what way Brickels disposed of the sheep stolen; difficult to discover, there having hitherto been found no traces of them."

Marks walked up and down, whilst the digger took the man to see the corpse of the long-wanted Brickels. He mused thoughtfully, with eyes fixed on the ground before him. At last he gave a low whistle, as men of a certain type will do, when an idea has struck them, relevant to any entangled matter which may happen to have puzzled their faculties. "Why," he soliloquized, "surely! if that isn't the name I have frequently heard Mrs. Van Sittert, Dora Swart's motherly guardian, mention, when talking of her old sea-side farm, on her visits to the 'village!' And now I recollect hearing Mrs. Van Sittert mention that Hendrik Vos had something to do with the finding of Dora Swart, after that shipwreck. True, I did not hear anything very definite. Still I am, somehow, convinced that, by inquiring of the Widow Vos, we *may* come to hear something more about the matter. Who knows!—My word! what's all this about?"

A large crowd of diggers, apparently of many nationalities, English, Africander, Dutch, Californians, together with native and Kafir sorters and servants, all equally excited, passed by, drawing along with them a Kafir, who had, it appeared, stolen and swallowed, in order to escape detection, a pretty good-sized gem, of some carats; it did not appear *how* many, but still a good many, rather more than the average. Marks had a difficulty in ascertaining, from the yelling and shouting crew, the full particulars. He only gathered that, whilst he thought "Baas" wasn't looking, the Kafir had sliely and quietly swallowed the diamond: that, however, his suspicious "baas" was looking down from *above*, and that the administration of an emetic (in imitation, perhaps, of old Roman epicures, in the days of Horace), had brought to light a valuable "find." The master's name was either unknown to the mass, or they were too excited to answer all Marks' inquiries.

They yelled out, some of them, that the swarthy "finder and keeper" should be tried before that impartial and equitable and rapidly-deciding judge, whose ubiquity is wonderful, he having been found in California, Oregon, and Australia, in an

inconceivably *simultaneous* manner; his name is well-known; it is *Lynch*.

Others, less excited, and more merciful, suggested that, perhaps, with all due deference to the "Lynchites" he (the native), should be tried before a *legal and constitutional* tribunal; considering that, perhaps, more regard to abstract justice would thereby be paid. At length, after a hot debate, vehemently carried on by both sides, the cause of order triumphed, and the delinquent marched to the lock-up, to be afterwards tried by the magistrate at Klipdrift.

Marks, when he left the now-scattering and dispersing crowds, noticed, in front, one, apparently an Englishman, who was even now swearing that that the "fellow" ought to have been tied up and flogged on the spot. At the same time, he was loud in denunciation of the British Law and Administration, asseverating, with an oath (profane man!) that, "had the Free State Government, with their stocks, whipping-post, and sharp swift method of administrating justice, been still in power, such an example would even now have been made of the fellow who had stolen, or rather secreted, the "gem."

"Who is that!" asked Marks, of a passer-by.

"That? I forget his name, but, I know, three days ago, he lost, rich as he was, nealy every farthing of his money, whilst gambling at one of these "hells." Pity they are in existence! The passion for gambling is so rooted in human nature, that no means of indulging in so fatal a pastime ought to be allowed, or would be, if the Government did its duty, and put them down with a high hand."

"I hear they are, shortly, going to be suppressed," said Marks. "Are they?" sneered the other, an intelligent, though dogmatic individual, of the English "bull-dog" order. "Time they were! It is rather high time to begin, considering the numbers *already* ruined by those curses to the Fields." And he passed on his way, leaving Marks to ruminate. He took his way to a restaurant, kept by an Italian-featured man, at which place he obtained some refreshment; and there, for the present, we may leave him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DESPAIR AND DEATH.

"CURSE it all! Nothing but loss, loss, failure, failure! Farming! no good; stock stolen by cattle-lifting rascals of natives, those pests to the Eastern Province in the old Colony! Speculation! why, the devil seems to preside over my destiny

there! I never seem to wip; others, with but half my cleverness and education, or with none at all, seem to get on in *that* line, whilst I!—Confound that fickle jade, old Ovid used to pester us with in school-days at home; she flirts with you, flatters you, buoys you up with hope, and, after all, the confounded coquette, fortune, with a turn of her old whirligig, upsets one in the mire of despondency!"

"And that fool, Jacobus, too! To go and die, in Natal, with that wretched old hypocrite, that sniffing old wretch, Mrs. Drake (why, how the dickens came she here?) to attend upon him. In what capacity? I'll read her letter again, and see if I can't make out, somehow, from internal evidence. But no! I have read and read her confounded epistle about twenty times I think, and she says nothing about the reason why, or wherefore, she went to Natal. Waited upon Jacobus, partly for the sake of 'auld lang syne,' partly out of Christian charity, did she! Very good, pious, heavenly-minded old beast!"

Lest the reader should demur to the linking of three complimentary, and one indifferent, adjectives to a decidedly uncomplimentary substantive, thereby causing a slight contradiction of epithets, resulting in a paradoxical whole,—I may, to defend myself, adduce the example of the immortal Bard of Avon, who, in a beautiful play, makes Juliet call Romeo by very *hard* names, qualified by very *endearing* adjectives; this was, indeed, the result of *contending* passions. In the present instance, it results from the union of irony and bitterness. In an ironical vein, he calls her "good, pious, heavenly-minded;" as he *gets to the noun*, he can hold in his hitherto-suppressed hatred no longer; the irony vanishes; and, suddenly he *plumps* down on a hot, angry, honest word,—"beast!" To continue the soliloquy, however:—

"Opened his chest, and rummaged his drawers, I suppose! Got possession of his desk, eh! couldn't find the key, eh! so I imagine, the good old soul broke it open. Of course, had she found any valuables there, she would not have appropriated them, oh no! not she! Oh, dear, no! Only found a letter! What a nice sell for the avaricious old hunks! Only, I think, she lies! the canting old hag!"—Then, after a pause:—

"Oh! the stupidity and the execrable folly of my having *written* to Jacobus; better had I come all the way to Brandfontein, and *spoken*, my design! And now, all is discovered! That old Drake (my secret enemy I half suspected her to be, all along,) has now found that dangerous, most dangerous letter, and now threatens to disclose the whole matter, unless I send her £200 sterling. Alas! why couldn't she, the venomous puff-adder, have discovered it, a month ago, when I had th-

means? I would have paid, and paid cheerfully, *that* paltry amount of hush-money. Paltry! No longer so. I am ruined! ruined by that accursed, most accursed, sin of gambling! That diamond turns out to be all "borax!" So says that Jew dealer. So the Kafir might as well have swallowed it, ay! digested it as well! After all, I doubt whether she has not already divulged the matter."

So spoke Philip Durville. He is changed very much; restless excitement, speculation, debauchery, have hollowed his eye, and blanched his cheek. He has no faith in anything now. Like Solomon, he has tried all things, all amusements, and found all to be but "*vanitas vanitatum!*" Nor has he either fate or fortune to blame; none but himself!

It was a calm moonlight night; the stars, in their many-twinkling majesty, were reflected in the "many-smiling" ripples of the Vaal, near Klipdrift. At a short distance was the half-abandoned river digging; half-abandoned, since "Colesberg Kopje" has eclipsed its fame, causing adventurous diggers to rush by hundreds to the last-discovered claims. Yet are many left for all that; and the lights twinkling here and there, the white sheen of canvas tents, attest a still resident population. Moreover, from the nearest tent, comes stealing the rude, guttural psalmody, from a lot of Puritanic old Doppers (or Reformed Boer's Church); or other Boers; from distant Transvaal farms, who have left stock for diamonds; abandoned the certain small gains for uncertain large finds. Presently, arises the prayer, loudly and fervently uttered, extempore, by some deacon or elder, beginning in good Dutch, and rapidly degenerating into Cape Patois.

The sound irritates Durville, as he gazes on the thousand-yards-broad old "Vaal," or "Yellow" River, so long and often seen by wandering Griqua hunter, or bushman, "*venenatis gravidus sagittis;*" who, with small bow, and arrow tipped with poison, prowled of old on its unpeopled banks, ignorant of the priceless gems that blazed, unseen by aught save the fabled "Genii;" things of "purest ray serene," but unknown hitherto to mankind.

The sound irritates him. In moody and downcast gloom, he paces down the bank, till he reaches a clump of trees, opposite a deep wide pool, where the silver-burnished waters eddy, and eddy in various small whirlpools, caused by the receding rocky banks, and prominences. Then back he paced, between the honey-combed claims, like a labyrinth of gravel pits. Every now and then, he had to avoid great piled-up boulders. Over the water glimmer the white tents of Pniel, a quiet solemn Dutch digging (contrasting with the then livelier Klipdrift.) Nothing breaks the stillness of the air, save

a distant bark from some moon-struck cur, amidst the distant tents. He passed a deep dry "sluit," or ditch, sometime used as a temporary "tronk" for the inebriated. No scene in old England could have been quieter than this!

Suddenly he clapped his hand to his fevered head (fevered from anxiety), and said, "Ha! so! what a capital idea! Won't she be finely disappointed! To disclose my letter, signed by me (or did I not just sign my initials, perhaps? I forget); and then, thinking to receive the hush-money! Not having received it, she will denounce me, by my own writing, of conspiracy against Herman's life. Confound Jacobus! He wrote me word that that Hottentot vagabond had overdone the business, and killed her too! Killed *her*; yes! I only wish I had that Brick—, what is his name?"

He paced up and down, then looked at the water. It looked so cool! so tempting! who would not almost like a plunge in, to die there, and rest! Or live perhaps, listening to the songs of river-nymphs! Again he gazed into the rippling, star-spangled stream; what an easy, nay pleasant, relief from the embarrassments of fortune. He gazed, with something like horror, at first.

"And yet, that letter I left at the tent, by the "Kopje," will explain who Herman was. Let my last act in this life be a good one! Though I believe none of that "bosh" about future rewards or punishments, yet I tremble! Why? Pooh! 'tis but an instinctive human dread of dissolution."

He tied, with a riem, a large stone to hang from his neck. Lest it might slip loose, he even took the precaution to attach another riem, or piece of riem, taken from under his cloak, he had on. Then, only muttering, "Dora! had you returned my love, you might have saved me;" he plunged into the stream, and sank, sank, sank!

The bubbles rose and burst, or were attracted to the banks; again and again, they rose, by twos and threes; the only signs of anything that had disturbed those placid yet majestic waters.

They never found his remains. A digger afterwards said that, from his tent, behind the trees, and apart from all others, he fancied he heard a sound like a distant plunge; but he was not sure. He had been restless and awake, and lay smoking his "cutty."

And the river flowed on, calmly, like Life after a tragedy; no remorse, no signs of what has happened. Innocent-looking waters! Yet concealing who knows what mysteries? And the imaged orbs of heaven fitfully shine from those still-flowing depths, and the stars (silent witnesses!), shine on, and at last the cock crows, and rosy-figured Aurora again summoned the

delvers to their El Dorado, and their sorting, and their washing, and digging (according to the "diggings" they were at). And boats ferried across from Klipdrift to Pniel, and men of all nations "came and went;" but those waters still "flow on for ever;" reflecting tents, and red rocks (on the banks), and thorn trees. But they vouchsafe no answer to whoever inquires what deep mystery they conceal.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MORE LIGHT.

IN the meantime, Ralph Whittaker was not idle. He had yet, up to this time, kept in the neighbourhood of Cape Town, receiving, from time to time, letters from Marks. On reading one, in which Marks had intimated his intention to visit the Fields, partly by way of a pleasure trip, partly by way of a change of climate, he at first felt a little annoyed, as, he thought, the matter of the investigation would be delayed. Another post, from the Fields, "advised" Ralph concerning the death of Brickels, also his confessing to the minister about the murder. This piece of information Ralph supplied to the Venters. Also, a later post informed Ralph that Durville was missing; that an investigation had taken place before competent persons, but that no clue could be arrived at. Again, another epistle from Marks, stated that a letter had been produced (by a former friend of Durville's, named Roberts); this man stated that the letter, written by Durville, and bearing his signature, had been left in *his* tent. The letter seemed to have been written by a man in a state of desperate hopelessness; Durville therein stated that he was so beset by difficulties of many kinds, that ruin was so closely and persistently on his track, that he was determined to make away with himself. That, moreover, they need not search for his body, as it would be unavailing, for he "should take good care so to kill himself, that traces could not be found, were ever so unremitting a search to be made." Moreover, the note told Roberts to communicate the fact that, an old acquaintance of his, from England, living some years back at a place, or farm, near Ventersdorp, called Brandfontein, and known as Herman Staunton, was no other than Alfred Manners, of Kettlethorpe, near Knaresborough (Yorkshire.) That Herman (so-called), had met him once near the Sands, and had struck him, on account of some old grievance.

Thus, two points in the "Compound Mystery," as Marks

called it in his letters, were established. For *Durville* could be identified easily enough, as regarded the satisfying his friends at home; and, certainly, *his dying* (one might say) declaration would be conclusive. Brickels' dying declaration, also, that he had murdered Dora and Herman (or Alfred), was conclusive; though "it was a pity," (wrote Marks) "that no witnesses, besides the excellent minister, had been present, so as to corroborate the fact as to the statement having been made by Brickels."

So far, good. The identity (supposed) of Dorothea with Ralph's brother's semi-Eastern daughter was the next point to be settled. And, even to this, a clue was not long wanting.

To divert his mind a little, Ralph assented to a proposal, one bright cloudless day, to make one at a picnic party, to be improvised by some first-class people, at Drakenstein, opposite the Paarl. The party proceeded by an early train, to the station, where, coming from town, one has, on the left, that curious isolated mountain called the Paarl-Berg, with its remarkable row, on the ridge, of rocks or boulders, called, at least two of them, the "Diamond" and the "Pearl," at the foot of which stretches, for miles, that most antique Huguenot-founded Rip-van-Winkle sort of long straggling village, whose churches, wine-stores, and houses, all white-washed, and causing the eye almost to ache from their glare, are interspersed amid beautiful green vineyards sloping away from both sides of the street; on the right, the Drakenstein (or dragonstone) mountains, high sierra-like, and (further up), crossed by a magnificent road, the engineering of which (the work of Ban), equals that of any European pass.

There, carts awaited them, sent by the hospitable proprietor of a Drakenstein farm, and on the plucky shaggy horses trotted at the rate of six miles per hour, through this Colonial well-settled Paradise; the most picturesque scene in South Africa perhaps! Rain had fallen a few days previously; from the mountains, innumerable cascades fell from every possible crevice or ravine. The scene was beautiful! The day splendid for "keuring," as the Dutch call "pleasuring."

Having arrived at the foot of the mountain, the carts were outspanned, and the horses "knee-haltered," and turned loose to graze. The party, consisting of town folks, a naval lieutenant from one of the men-of-war in Simon's Bay, a military captain of the 00th regiment, stationed in Cape Town, four or five members of the Civil Service, and some villagers of the "upper crust" (the *crémé* of Paarl society), soon broke up into groups of twos, threes, and fours; and, whilst the sterner sex commenced vigorously clambering up the mountain side, to try and reach the waterfall, the ladies, under the shade,

remained to superintend the "commissariat," attended by a few faithful "squires de dames." Through thickets of difficult, almost impenetrable, brushwood, did the climbers make their way, right manfully; ever and anon did they pause to rest, and gaze into the pellucid stream, that rippled down some tiny "ravine in miniature;"—cool *Rasselas*-befitting havens of sweet rural quiet and rest, and relief from urban worry and care! Most of them, tired with clambering, and with wrists aching from the grasping of tough-stemmed bushes and hard stones, began to feel fatigued; these were cheered on by the "Excelsiors" cheerily shouted from above, by those pioneers, the naval and military officers. And when, having gained the toilsome ascent, they gazed upon the panorama below, with plains stretching away into dim distance, here and there dotted with vine-producing villages, or wooded farms, backed by dim blue incomprehensible mountains, they had gained their reward, well worthy of such toil! Behind, overhead, was the waterfall, that leapt, and sparkled, and shone, and frothed, and foamed, in all nature's exuberance of delight! It fell, in thousand-fold spray, in myriads of spangled drops, into what Westmoreland rustics would call a "tarn," or high mountain pool. Green ferns, wet mosses, cool natural harbours, how sweet!

On their way down, to be rewarded for their toilsome climb, by the delicious aroma of coffee, pigeon-pies, "carbonatjes," and all the edible etceteras concomitant to a pic-nic, besides wines; such as Constantia, Frontignac, Hock (*hoc erat in votis!*) songs, flirtations with demure and Murillo-tinted Huguenot Africander "noytjes" from the Paarl; on their way down, I say, Ralph was engaged in conversation with the military man, a bronzed old warrior, sunburnt by the fierce glare of many an Indian summer, wearing the accustomed "puggerah," from habit perhaps. The reason, why Ralph and he had chosen each others' special company for the descent, I leave to those versed in pic-nics to discover. All such persons well know, how, at such festive ruralities, by a sort of magnetic attraction, "parties" will be drawn together, somehow; there being more freedom from artificial restraint on such occasions; less conventionalism, and more freedom of intercourse.

As they proceeded downwards, slipping now and then, tripped up occasionally by a link of "couch grass," or "kweekgras," Ralph happened to speak of what had happened at Brandfontein, just by way of conversation, partly in requital of a hairbreadth escape from a Bengal tiger, related by the captain, who had formerly been a great lover of Indian sports,—tigrine, bovine, porcine, and elephantine.

The captain was, in addition to military and sporting

qualities (what would have pleased Sam Johnson!), a capital listener,—a rare animal, that! For out of fifty who *talk* well, you won't find six who perform the less brilliant, but more useful, duties of a listener, with anything like success. How many interrupt you with questions most irrelevant! How many stare unmeaningly at you, whilst you talk, blinking like owls at the time! But the captain belonged to neither class; an intelligent readily-apprehending man; he listened, waited for a pause, then threw in some good remark, opposite and pertinent to the issue! How few such there are!

Well, the captain listened with intelligent attention, to what Ralph told him about the tragedy at Brandfontein, also what Ralph had heard from Marks. "Jealousy! that green-eyed monster!" said the captain; "from no passion do more tragedies arise, than from that! I think it is most fearful. In his greatest tragedies, the immortal poet, the English poet, makes *jealousy* the mainspring of the deepest crimes. Witness Othello, for instance; Iago, the deep, subtle, Machiavellian ancient, in order to gain his own ends, calls up the fiend of jealousy into play, knowing well how surely and effectually it will rouse all that is bad in the Moor, to action."

"A minor villain," observed Ralph, "would have employed poison, or the "stiletto." Iago is deeper, and knows of a more deadly weapon, in Othello's own passions."

"But," said the officer, "you have not yet told me the name of that girl who was murdered, and whom you described in terms so glowing."

"Her name was Dorothea Swart."

"Swart! Doesn't the name, in German, signify black. Certainly, in good high Deutsch, it would be 'Schwartz,' but, in the Plat Deutsch of Hanover, it *would* be 'Swart.' I happen to know German."

"Yes; and in Dutch also. But the name is an extremely common one, amongst the Boers of South Africa, and has, of course, no reference to colour. I am inclined to think that, originally, they *were* German. In an old ballad, of 'Martin Swart and his Germans tall,' we have the name occurring."

"By the way," said the captain, "had you ever any relations in India?"

"I had," said Ralph, rather startled; "why do you ask?"

"Because your name, common as it is, in England at least, reminds me of an old acquaintance in India."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and his name was Reginald Whittaker, an officer in the army, then stationed at M——. He was missed several years ago; in Afghanistan, I *think* I heard; but, you see, I

was absent, *in* India, but at another place, far distant at—S—.”

Ralph stopped, almost gasped for breath, and started at the other, with an expression of perfectly blank amazement.

“Good gracious!” said the officer, “are you ill?”

“No. But do you know, that *that* was probably, nay certainly, the poor brother of mine, who was missed years back. A short while ago, I had a letter from my mother, informing me of some information she had received.”

“Indeed!” interrupted the captain.

“Yes. And—”; but here they were close by the sward, at the foot of the mountain, where, under a sweet shade, a capital inviting “*dejeuner à la fourchette*” (or, as an Anglo-Parisian translator once rendered it, “dinner to the fork!”) was already spread. They two were the last, it seemed, to arrive, and numerous calls to “make haste, or they would get none,” decidedly hurried their progress.

Jokes were made, healths drunk, execrable puns perpetrated; (by the way, Johnson said, “a man who can perpetrate a pun, will pick a pocket”); songs sung, dances afterwards danced, anecdotes related, chaff indulged in, hunt the slipper (that cure for bashfulness!) “inaugurated” (as penny-a-liners *will say!*) and all the real fun of a pic-nic gone through, “*cum multis aliis*,” to mention all the ingredients of which entertainment were wearisome. And yet, though Ralph *did* join in the mirth, and took his full share in healths, songs and anecdotes, there was a restlessness within him, that made him long for the conclusion, when he might have another opportunity of hearing more from the captain.

That opportunity, so wished for, did not, somehow, occur, till, all concluded, carts inspanned, crockery packed in, “good-byes,” said to villagers, they at length reached the train, had taken their tickets (just in time), and Ralph had gone with the captain into an empty carriage, and they had it all to themselves. By the time they had reached Eerste River station, Ralph had told all the reader has heard, to the officer, and *he* had told Ralph that Reginald Whittaker’s wife, Eodah, had left a child, which, by an Indian Ayah (so he had heard), had been embarked in the good ship “Seringapatam,” from Bombay to London. The officer entered warmly into the subject, and agreed with Ralph, that the next thing to be done was, to ascertain whether Dorothea Swart,” so named, *had* been wrecked, when a child; if so, *where* and *when*.

As soon as ever Ralph, having parted from the officer, had reached home, he lost no time in inditing letters to Mrs. Venter, at Brandfontein, and to Marks, at Colesberg Kopje; instructing them to try and ascertain, respectively, from the Widows Vos and Van Sittert, the fullest particulars.

CHAPTER XXX.

A MIDLAND FARM.

A CART drove up to a farm in the Midland districts, not so very far from Graaff-Reinet, and not very distant from the road between that place and Beaufort West. It was drawn by four beautiful grey steeds. A wiry bushman, in his capacity of “achter ruyer” or “hind rider” followed close behind. In this vehicle was seated Marks and another, a florid-complexioned man, about forty, who puffed at his meerschaum, seated in a lolling posture, whilst Marks (who was an experienced hand at driving), drove. The bushman, probably not a pure specimen of the race, had two spare greys, I forgot to say. As they drove along, they saw naught around, as far as could be seen, but a monstrous plain; heard naught but every now and then, the solitary cry of the “*korhaan*.” Now and then a wild partridge escaped from her cover of isolated bush-patch, or a “*paauw*” (or Cape peacock), would walk along before, or a “secretary” bird be seen on the arid parched “veld,” battling with a snake, which it raised up into the air, and let drop the writhing victim on a stone, repeating the operation until it was dead. Now and again might a solitary ostrich be seen, stalking along, or a herd of beautiful, high-bounding “springboks” come galloping and springing,—a wonderful sight! Then, now and again, a large flattened puff-adder might be seen by the roadside, ready to spring backwards (!) on an unwary herd passing by.

All here was karroo, near its western limits; far eastward, could be seen the snow-crowned Sneeuwbergen (or their offshoot ranges), beneath which, unseen, and far off, reposed that shaded, well-watered city of orchards, and vineries, and orangeries, so aptly denominated the “Gem of the Desert!”

“You think,” said Marks’ friend to him, “that the Karroo is desert, don’t you?”

“Certainly!” answered Marks. “It seems so.”

“Well, you just see it after rains; in a few hours after a fall, all these plants, and “*mesembryanthemums*,” now so parched and dry, every bush in fact, begins to bud, and the flowers bloom, and grass shoots up, like magic.”

“I say, Jim, what’s that story you were going to tell me, about Jenner?”

“Oh, Jenner was a famous sportsman for jackal-chasing,

near Stellenbosch and the Koeberg, and all those parts. One day, when hunting in the Koeberg (I think it was), he arrived hot and thirsty and half-famished, having lost his comrades, at the farm of Theron. (He and Theron were well acquainted, and often paid each other visits). Well, when he came into eating-room, all were at dinner, just seated; so in he popped, with a "day, uncle!" seated himself, and grace began. You know how long Boer graces are! Well, every eye was closed, and, seeing a dish of some pudding or custard, with six peeled eggs within, tempting looking, he unobserved whipt them, one by one, into his mouth; he was ravenous, I suppose. After grace, the wife asked the children, each one, whether they had taken the eggs? Where were they? Of course, all denied having touched one. At last, a little nigger, who had been peeping from behind the door, came forward and said, amid shrieks of shouts and laughter, "Lady! Mr. Jenkins has been eating up all the eggs, when master prayed."

Marks laughed at the story, and, giving the hind left horse a cut, said, "I think I have heard a better one though, in the way of Boer stories. A rich Boer, *very* rich, had a daughter, named Elsie. Lots of chaps went to court her; but her father and mother always sat near her when they came, so what could they do. They were nonplussed! One day, the *poorest* of the lot of lovers gave the shepherd of the farm a drink of brandy, and told him what to do. So, whilst *he* and four suitors all sat there, "mum" and quiet, this shepherd, Booi, ran in, saying, "master, master! a tiger by the sheep," and out ran father, mother, and all the suitors, after the tiger; meanwhile, the "poor" young man proposed to her, and she accepted him. He locked the door, and when they returned, they all found themselves locked out. They knocked and knocked; no good! At last, the accepted suitor sang out, that he would not open the door, unless the Boer gave him Elsie; otherwise he might stay outside."

"And what did the Boer say to that?"

"Why, admiring the young fellow's pluck, he assented."

"A very good story, that."

They neared the comfortable homestead, where they were bound to; like a green oasis it was; orchards, gardens, cornland (in patches), but enclosed the last; at the huge one-storied white-washed many-gabled house, they drew up, amid a shrill chorus from many hounds. They dismounted, and requested leave, from the old "vrouw," on the stoep, with her hideous hood on, which she graciously accorded; and presently they were seated in the hall, nicely "smeared" as to the floor, with "mest" of cows, but bare and very unfurnished as to its walls. From the roof depended biltong, and karosses,

whilst, in a corner, were several old "roers" or guns, of most antiquated appearance. Coffee was served by a dusky damsel, along with hard rusks; and, seated on the "rustbank" or "settle," they rested, whilst shy Boer boys and girls came up to shake hands, which they did silently and bashfully, with the well-bitten thumb in mouth, after the manner of all children, in isolated places, all the world over, perhaps.

In the evening, before supper, the "pan" went round, for the ceremony of foot-washing, and was handed likewise to Marks and his friend, Jim Edwards; so you cannot call them "great unwashed," you see. They sat down, the "vrouw" at the head of the table, males on one side, females on the other. An enormous "punkah," a device of the "meester," kept the numerous flies off the food, which consisted of mutton, pumpkins, and quinces, and was solemnly and silently jerked down the throats of all present. A youngster came from somewhere else to say a long "grace," which he said mumbly and gracelessly; after meal, he was called to return thanks for what he had *not* received. No want of decorum was noticeable, even amongst the children.

After supper, a stalwart Kafir came in, breathless, saying, "Noy! drie schaaps gestolen!" The old lady arose, fetched a sjambok from a hook, where it had hung suspended, and thrashed him over the shoulders, abusing him meanwhile for a "lazy schelm," and "zwart schepsel." After which she sat down, and talked with Marks and Edwards, after explaining their names, occupation, &c., Marks addressing her in Dutch, asked her whether she remembered, at the former sea-side place, the wreck of a vessel, named the "Seringapatam."

Mrs. Vos, for she it was, looked surprised, answered "Ja!" and asked Marks what he knew about the matter?

He answered that a child, as he had heard, had alone survived that wreck. That she had been rescued by Hendrick Vos, her now deceased husband. That the child had grown up to a most beautiful girl, and lived with her guardian, her own cousin's wife, the widow Van Sittert, formerly the widow Vos, twice married, at Rietfontein, up to the time of her death.

The widow Vos replied that she was aware of all that, but that the curious thing to *her* was, why he should make any fuss about the matter. "De arme noytje is nou dood," said she. "Wie zal nou vraag van haar?"

Thereupon Marks exclaimed that she was supposed, or suspected, to be the daughter of a brother of a friend of his; in fact he told her everything the reader knows, concerning Whittaker, Brickels, the portrait, and even of "Herman Staunton."

She held up her hands in astonishment. When that had

subsidied a little, she told Marks how she had never forgotten the dreadful night of the "schipgebruikte," or shipwreck. How her husband had gone down in the night, only to see the great hull split upon the rock, and, amid a despairing shriek from the crew, irremediably dissolve into countless fragments. And how her brave husband, even at the risk of his life, breasted the waves in order to rescue a form dimly seen close to the dangerous rocks, that clung to a mast with despairing energy. How, when he had brought that one solitary survivor ashore, guiding the spar with one hand, swimming with the other and both legs, he found it was an Indian "ayah," with a bundle closely wrapped up in her capacious shawl. How having, with the assistance of some Hottentots, conveyed his lifeless charge to the homestead, the "ayah" died, in spite of all the remedies humanity could suggest; but the child, after almost all hope had been abandoned, came round (having been probably, more protected in its thick folds), and recovered. How she grew up a most beautiful child, and was baptized by the name of "Cornelia Johanna," after Mrs. Vos's own Christian name, and "Dorothea Swart," after the maiden name (Christian and surname) of her godmother (since dead). All this, and much more, did Mrs. Vos inform Marks of.

"Was daar eenig merk onder de kind?" asked he.

"Yes, there was. A curious thing, hanging on a chain, of small, neatly-fitted links of gold, it seemed, was suspended by the neck, and always suffered to remain there."

"An amulet, perhaps," observed Marks, to his friend. "What was the thing like?" addressing the widow.

She informed him that it was a *tooth*, set in a nut-shaped piece of peculiar hard wood, not of a sort usually found in this country; how fixed, whether by glue or paste of some sort, was more than she could tell.

Turning to his friend, Marks said, "A great step, perhaps, to the elucidation of the mystery. No doubt, the thing described is a *charm*; the absence of any imagery about it, is quite in keeping with Oriental, or, at least, with Mohammedan ideas."

"How about the tooth?" asked Edwards.

"Perhaps the tooth of a renowned Dervish."

"Was she of Asiatic origin, think you?"

"It is hardly a matter of doubt, Whittaker supposes. Her features pointed strongly to that supposition."

"What was the name of the shipwrecked vessel?" asked Marks.

"The 'Seringapatam,'" answered the widow.

Marks made a note of this. After having wished Mrs. Vos good night, they were shown to their "slaapkamer," or

chamber. When there,

"Curious," said Edwards, "the way Boers have their windows made, so as not to open! No ventilation!"

"Yes," replied Marks. "A doctor once told me that in case of fever, he was sometimes forced to break a pane. Perhaps two; one for ingress of fresh air, another for egress of foul air."

Yawning, Edwards observed, "At Graaff-Reinet I must 'make tracks' for Port Elizabeth. Will you come with me, and see the place?"

"Well," answered Marks, "it will be a good opportunity. I shall never be so near it again. Yes, I think I shall, and return to Ventersdorp by way of Cape Town, per steamer."

And next day, early, they were on their way.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A THRIVING SEAPORT.

How would the Pilgrim Fathers, the settlers of 1820, be astonished, were they, such as have not survived, to rise from the dead, and behold the dimensions and trade to which the proud "Liverpool of the Cape" has attained, after years of energy unmatched in the history of colonization! To see the Market Square, with its fine gas-lit Townhall, the reading-room of which is open to an intelligent *British* public to 10 p.m. English alone is heard all around. In absence of stoeps, neat pavements, slate-roofed buildings, the place is decidedly British. But, in one respect, it resembles an American place, slightly: the people are fond of loud talk about their institutions and "lions," such as they are.

The two-mile long Main Street, serpentine in its course, stretches away from the Townhall to the Prison at the breezy side of North End. This prison is of semi-feudal, semi-Elizabethan architecture. The Main Street is decidedly the finest, most bustling, best-paved street in the Colony; and the stream of wool-wagons, with screaming Hottentot boys as "voorloopers" (or "fore-goers"), leading the oxen is wonderful. The stores, too, are perfect exhibitions in their way, and contain all kinds of Boer requirements, from "voerchitz" to ploughs! from pianofortes to coffee! Half-way down the Main Street, to the right, is a Valetta-like flight of broad stone steps, leading, if I remember right, to Chapel Street; on either side well-built houses flank this curious "step-street." Mounting these, we gain the "Hill," a breezy plateau, quite a town of

itself, and adorned, above White's Road, with a miniature "Vley," surrounded by elegant villa-like houses. Not far off is an imposing towered clock-decorated building, founded by a former enlightened Governor for the education of youth. At the summit of Russel Road, on the verge of this plateau, is that bright gem of Port Elizabeth architecture, the Scottish Church. And, half-way down the sloping street, called Castle Street, and just above the square, is St. Augustine's (Roman Catholic) Church, with its fine altar of marble, and its deep sonorous bell.

Part of the "Hill" has large Fingo and Kafir locations, of beehive-like huts, whence "red" Kafirs issue of a morning, holding their "karosses" round their otherwise nude bodies, on their way to work at the beach. Go further, towards the Baaken's Valley, and you will see more; processions, perhaps, of white-painted, or red-painted, noble savages (quite Adam-like as regards tailor's bills), headed by their solemn-seeming witch-doctor (local). Sometimes, between those refugee slaves, the Fingoes (or "dogs"), and their former Gaika or Galeka masters, occur sanguinary fights, as that, notably, of Christmas, A.D. 1868: shame to the chief seaport of half South Africa!

Go down the Valley, amid tremendous "kranzes," or precipices, past numerous reaches, delicious spots for bathing, and you will find it opening out towards the town, at South End, numerous boats being moored hereabouts. Here, the river, contaminated, and, indeed, poisoned by the chemicals of your woolwash, is less pure than higher up. Close by is the Mohammedan Cemetery, with strange Arabic characters on its numerous head-stones of slate.

Entering Market Square by Union Street, we come once more to the Town Hall. Just at the corner two gentlemen are conversing with a Muslim priest, the gold pin in whose coiled hair proclaims him to be a Cingalese. The Malays at Port Elizabeth, their priests especially, are held in about as good estimation as white men. Two of a priest's sons have attended "Grey Institute" along with exclusively white boys. So the reader must not be surprised at the fraternizing of *this* priest with that banker, and that journalist, from "up country," who are engaged in conversation with him.

The beautiful red "minaretted" mosque is in view, towering up from Strand Street, whence, at canonical hours, the "muezzin" cries the "Hour of prayer."

A third person comes up, who, in the free fashion of this free-hearted place, breaks in upon the conversation, with—

"Do you know Edwards has just arrived from the Fields!"

"When?" asks the banker, a jovial, portly person.

"Only just now, with a friend, a stranger to me."

"Where did you see him?"

"At his house, in Russel Road; I spoke to him."

"Has he had good luck? Has he made his 'pile,' as our Transatlantic cousins say?"

"He won't say; like most diggers, he is very reticent on the subject of his 'finds.'"

"They are," says the banker. Turning to the richly-turbaned individual alluded to above, he asks him to step into White's Road, to be more free from the fuss around. They go, and the banker says, "What is that, Nanac Hossein, you told Mr. Jamison 'tother night, about what you heard when at Zanzibar, the other day, on a visit?"

"Oh!" says the Effendi (as his turban shows him to be), "from Murad Shami."

"I don't know. Jamison says you were telling him, when they were interrupted."

"Bismillah! but he had no right to repeat," says the Effendi, annoyed slightly.

"You know he's very talkative, and never can keep things to himself," says the banker, soothingly.

"By the Prophet's beard, no: that he can't."

"But, tell me, Nanac, what it was? The little I heard was curious. I won't repeat. You know that, yourself."

"I know. Well, it was this. When I was at Zanzibar, Murad Shami told me that, *many* years ago, at Bombay, where he was then living, a female, with a child, took refuge at his house. She looked very unlike (said Murad) any Hindoo, Muslim, or Parsee girl; with all her beauty, there was something of barbarism about her dress and manner. She knew a little Hindustani, and a little, very little, English; and stated that she had fled, after the murder of her husband, an Englishman, named Whittaker, in Beluchistan, of which she was a native."

"But where did she pick up English then?"

"Just what I asked Murad. From her husband. Murad said that, of all women he had ever seen, she realized *his* conception of a 'houri' of Paradise. Her beauty, though wild, was surprising, he said. Well, she said, her own cousin, a chief amongst the 'Rukhsani,' had murdered her husband, and persecuted her; for he had desired her as a wife long previously."

"And what did Murad do?"

"He entertained her, gave her money, and, on her death, soon afterwards, embarked the child and its 'ayah,' or nurse, on board the 'Seringapatam,' for London, to try and search out Whittaker's family, in the north of England. A most absurd scheme, though at Eodah's request, made to the nurse, when dying."

"Eodah!"

"Yes; that was the name of the refugee mother."

"What was the name of the vessel?"

"The 'Seringapatam.' I marked the name on my tablet, thinking, after Murad's relation, to trace out the matter."

They were standing now on the grassy plot, reaching from the Grey Institute to the edge of the plateau, whence could be obtained a commanding view of all the business portion of the "town below," as the Donkin's Pyramid inscription styled it, which was close by. In the Bay were fifteen or twenty vessels, waiting for wool cargoes.

"There he is!" exclaimed the banker, catching a glimpse of Edwards passing Hill's, the butcher, in Main Street. "I must go and see him. Good bye!"

They separated, and the banker, turning into Russel Road, descended into Main Street, and, walking rapidly up, found Edwards and Marks at the corner of Jetty Street. They presently adjourned, all three, to the "restaurant," for a "smiler." Whilst thus occupied, and during the course of conversation, Marks happened to be speaking of wrecks, and mentioned that of the "Seringapatam" as an instance of all lives being lost sometimes, or something of the sort.

The mention of the name "Seringapatam" struck the banker's ear, and he made inquiries of Marks, eliciting, gradually, the whole story of Eodah's child. "Why, that is the very story related by the priest!" exclaimed he. On being presently gratified with further details, the result was that they all went to the Effendi's house, in Strand Street. He received them very kindly, and, seated on an ottoman, related what Murad had told him at Zanzibar. Marks was astonished, and said that now there was no further doubt about the matter; Dora Swart was Eodah's child.

"What was the name of the vessel?" asked Marks.

"The 'Seringapatam,'" said the priest.

"Just as I have in my note-book, as Mrs. Vos related it."

"A quixotic scheme of the nurse's," observed the banker, "to attempt to trace Whittaker's family in a populous country like England."

"There has been a precedent," said Marks.

"What?"

"That of Thomas à Becket's mother."

"Oh, ay!" ejaculated the banker; "true. Did Murad tell you what she had, by way of ornament?"

"Yes," replied the priest. "A tooth of a holy Dervish, set in a piece of 'jugzaleh' wood, which, he ascertained, was a product of Beluchistan."

"Just so," said Marks. "Now no doubt remains."

After a glass of "sherbet," they said "good bye," thanking Nanac warmly. And, in a week, Ralph was informed of all. Marks embarked for Cape Town, by the following steamer.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"AMID THE TALL ANCESTRAL TREES."

ALL who have heard of the tragic story of Eugene Aram, which has formed the plot of an admirable work of fiction, by Lord Lytton, and the subject of a beautiful ballad, by Hood, will know of a pretty little country town, in England, called Knaresborough, celebrated for its Dropping Well, and the romantic St. Robert's Cave over the River Nidd. Nor is it very far from the Spa of Harrogate, famed for its mineral waters. From the high moors, near the latter place, may be seen, on a very clear day, the sky-reaching grandeur of York Minster.

Leaving the town of Knaresborough, after glancing at its museum of curiosities, petrified by that perpetual shower, the Dropping Well, and keeping along the river Nidd, we come to a bridge; crossing this, and holding to a rustic path, that leads through clover-fields, on which herds of kine are grazing; over a stile, through a hedge-encircled field, gay with primroses, fragrant with beds of modest violets, down a green lane, amid old oaks, where squirrels leap from bough to bough, or eat nuts, whilst their saucy eyes defy us to catch them, we come at last upon a long and broad avenue of elms, leading to a fine rambling old mansion of Tudor architecture, amid parks, under the tall trees of which antlered deer are browsing; gardens and orchards beyond attest the luxuriance of the soil. Conservatories, with rare exotics, adorn the mansion; and a high terrace affords a view of scenery, unsurpassed by any rustic or sylvan landscape Old England, so rich in picturesque nooks and corners, can show.

Passing from the park, by the further gate, a rural lane, leading through a beech-wood, and over a babbling brook (so clear, you can see the rounded pebbles at the bottom), we come upon one of those small moss-grown "ivy-mantled" weather-beaten "time-honoured" old churches, nowhere to be seen out of England. It is adorned, near its windows, with those grim grinning demon-faces, called "corbels." The architecture is of the Gothic pattern. Around it is "God's Acre"; there, many an old inscription testifies the antiquity of the time when the now restful occupants flourished. Such names as "James Barker, died 1710;" "John Bell, died 1694;" and many more of even older date, remind us in how old a country we are!

There, on yon headstone, with the device of a fat cherub, winged and limbless, conducting a released mortal to heaven, is the name of "Joseph Whittaker, 1652." Why, that is the very date of the founding of Cape Town. What a young Colony we are! Here is a still older tomb: "George Hamlin, 1501;" and following this, the epitaph, "He was a g—n—d—ue;" what can it mean. "He was a good man and a true!" How obliterated by time's unsparing hand!

Just commencing outside of the porch-gate, is the hamlet of Kettlethorpe, and this is Kettlethorpe church. What a sweet English name! how full of rustic melody! And yet, not so very unlike a Colonial (possible) name. Imagine, if you will, a "Ketel Dorp" here! How would it sound, think you? How like we all are,—British and Dutch, brother Teutons!

Well does the writer recollect this spot, scene of childish pleasures! How he, a little boy then, went with his grand aunt Ellen Barker, and his shy rustic great-cousin, Mary Barker, to eat "syllabubs" at the haymaking, at yonder homestead, peeping out of a wood of pines. The strawberries and cream, how delicious! The apples roasted on a string! the tales told of ghosts, by the "Yule" fire; the hearers shuddering, and half inclined to believe!

I noticed, on a tombstone, "Joseph Whittaker, 1652." Days when Cape Town was not; only a fort here! Days when, where Papendorp church now stands, five lions were shot! Days when, in Salt River, sea-cows floundered about! Yet, then, Kettlethorpe church was old, old, very old! Our Liturgy had been used about a century! Well, we *do* feel young in this Colony!

We shall now return to the mansion. In a spacious well-furnished drawing-room, fitted with all the elegance wealth and taste united can produce, are two old ladies, with mob caps on (old fashion!), seated on a comfortable sofa. They are both advanced far in years. From a certain similarity in their features, one would suppose them to be sisters. And so they are.

One, the elder apparently, is reading a telegram, not long since brought. It runs thus:—

"DEAR MOTHER,

I am at Southampton. Expect me directly. Just arrived. Smart passage. News!"

Telegrams are, or should be, very short, and elliptical, perhaps.

"I wonder, Martha, what time he will be here! Will he bring good news. No! I am afraid not! It is now so long since poor Reginald was missing!"

"Depend upon it, sister," says the other, more cheerful, and

little younger perhaps; "God orders all for the best. We must learn to say, from our very hearts, 'Thy will be done.'" "Ah! you too have had your trials; bitter ones, too. Poor Alfred! But I still hold, and will ever hold, that it was Durville himself who took that note; then tried to pass it off as Alfred's doing."

"How could that be done?"

"By slipping the note into his pocket, perhaps. I never trusted Durville; with all his seeming candour, there was something undefinable about him, which I didn't at all like."—knock was here heard.

The door opened, and the servant showed two clerical visitors in; one of whom introduced the other, as Mr. Newton. His portrait was hanging against the wall, over the mantel-piece; whilst talking, Mr. Newton's eye happened to glance at it. He jumped up, with an exclamation. "Pardon me! but here is a portrait, exactly resembling the features of a young man who acted as catechist under me, in Cape Colony, some years ago."

"The ladies looked at each other; and one of them asked, 'Where?'"

"At a place called Sandy Cove, in the district of Ventersdorp," was the answer.

"Why," said the other lady, "that is where Ralph was, eh?"

"Yes," said the first lady, "it was."

The noise of a chaise rapidly approaching up the gravelly walk startled them. A servant came running in, "Oh! Mrs. Whittaker, Mrs. Manners! here's Mr. Ralph, returned from Africa." And presently his voice was heard below, and he came running upstairs, and kissed both the old ladies, whilst they fairly cried with joy, especially his mother.

When the greetings, during which the ministers stood aloof, were at length over, they were introduced to Ralph. His mother informed him of Mr. Newton's surprise at sight of the portrait. Explanations followed; and Ralph, to his surprise, found that Mr. Newton had formerly been clergyman of Ventersdorp (the very place Ralph had visited), and thought the portrait resembled Herman Staunton, his former catechist.

Ralph drew him aside. "No wonder," he said, "for it was my cousin, that lady's son, Alfred Manners! Did you also know 'Dorothea Swart?'"

"Yes," said the parson, surprised.

"To be sure! It was my missing brother's child!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes. Presently, I shall inform these ladies, my ma and my aunt, Mrs. Manners."

He did so, when the clergymen had withdrawn; gradually,

and little by little, so as to break the shock, for with females never tell sad news suddenly, nor blurt it out as some do, but be *gradual*.

When Ralph's long narration was finished, his mother said, "Ralph, are you certain, now?"

"To be sure; Mrs. Vos mentioned the "Seringapatam" and the 'ornament'; so did the priest at Port Elizabeth, who told Marks. Coincidences these!"

"I am satisfied," said his mother.

"And I too," said Mrs. Manners. "Especially after what Mr. Newton recognised in yonder portrait."

"We will write to the consul at Zanzibar," said Ralph, "and get him to see Murad Shami for further proofs. We must send Murad a present, as a token of our regard."

"Yes to be sure?" said both ladies.

And it *was* done. News, certain and satisfactory, was in a few months received from the consul, *confirming* all that had been discovered.

And the graves at Brandfontein had a fine new headstone of white marble put over them; *one* common stone in place of the former *two*.

Ralph Whittaker went out again, and courted, and eventually got married to Sannie Venter.

There were great rejoicings on that occasion, and the guests heard the romantic story told.

Hieronimus Venter is now farming in Natal, on his deceased brother's plantation.

Mrs. Drake died of hard drinking and "D. T.'s", at Fort Beaufort, if, as I think, a police report in the local "Advocate" refers to *her*.

THE END.

Explanation of South African Dutch Idioms and Terms.

ALLAH WERELD! God's World! an exclamation. "Allah" is borrowed from the Mohammedans of Cape Town.

ARME, poor.

BAAI, bay (of the sea).

BAAS, master; also "sieur."

BAVIAAN, a baboon. Baviaans touw, monkey rope; a creeper.

BAYE, or baaije, or bayang, a curious Cape word from French

"bien," veel, much; very.

ERF (plural Erven), a building lot.

Fontein (French "fontaine"), fountain.

GESTORVEN, died.

GEBOREN, born.

HIJ or Hy, he.

JA, yes.

NIE (niet), no.

KAMBUIS, kitchen.

KLIPKOUS, a univalve (edible) shell-fish.

KEREL, fellow (Scotch "carle").

KERK, church (Scotch "kirk").

KWAAI, sulky, annoyed, angry.

KLOOF, a cleft in the mountains, sometimes a pass.

LEKKER, nice.

LEKKERS, sweetmeats.

MY MAGTIG! oh, my (litt. my mighty).

MEESTER, a schoolmaster, or tutor.

MOOI, pretty.

MIER, ant, emmet.

NIX, niets, nothing.

NIX WERD, nothing worth.

OU', oud, old.

OU' NOY, old lady.

NOY, lady.

PAART, paard, horse.

ROER, an old-fashioned Dutch-Boer gun.

SALL, hall.

SLIM, roguishly clever, shrewd.

SHELM, rascal.

SLAAN, strike.

SPIEL, play.

STAL, stable.

STALMEESTER, groom.

- SCHULPAT (in good Dutch, schilpad), tortoise.
 SKOP, dig (used as an ostrich's kick).
 SPOOR, footsteps (vestigia).
 SJAMBOK, a whip of hippopotamus hide.
 SEA-COW, a hippopotamus, or river horse.
 TAMALEITJES, toffee, a kind of sweetmeat.
 TREK, drag; also trek, emigrate (of Boers).
 TREK PERREIRA! A proverbial phrase, "be off," used very
 offensively. (Perreira, a man's name.)
 TRONK, gaol, prison.
 VERNEUKER, cheat.
 VOGEL, bird.
 VOORMAN, overseer.
 VOGELTJE, a small bird.
 VRY, to woo, court a lady.
 VRYER, a wooer.
 VAN 'ANT, van nacht, to-night.
 VERLOS, pity.
 VISCH, fish.
 VLEY, valley, valley (but vley, in South Africa, a lake).
 VERRÔT, or v'rot (litt. rotten), stupid, incapable.
 VET, fat.
 VANRHUM, a liqueur.
 WERK, work.
 WAAR, true.
 WAARACHTIG! Upon my word; (almost an oath).
 WEESKIND, orphan child.
 WERF, large yard of a Cape farmstead.
 WEET, knows.
 YSTERVARKS, porcupines; iron pigs, or ijzer varks.
 ZOLDER, attic, loft, garret.
- DORP (German "dorf"), village.
 BURG, town.
 BRANDFONTEIN, burnt fountain.
 BUFFELS VLEY, lake of the Buffalo.
 RIETFONTEIN, reed fountain.
- PRONUNCIATION. — Rietfontein—pronounce Rêet-fon-tane.
 Vley, lake—pronounce like "flay." Kopje, hill—pronounce
 Cóp-py.
 Ei, in Dutch, pronounce a as in "sane."
- ALHIER, here.
 BLESBOK, a sort of antelope.
 BRIEF, letter.

- BESJES, berries.
 COURANT, newspaper.
 DISSSELBOOM, pole of a wagop.
 DAAR, there.
 EI'EN-EIGEN, own, one's own.
 GEK, foolish, silly, mad, infatuated.
 HOOGMOEDIG, high-spirited, proud.
 HAMEL, wether (sheep).
 HERDER, shepherd.
 HEER, lord; also Mr. before a name.
 INSPAN, to put the oxen in a wagon.
 OUTSPAN, to take the oxen out of a wagon.
 KOMFYT, a kind of preserve or jam.
 KOOKIES, cakes.
 KARBONATJES, carbonadoes.
 KRAAL (from the Portuguese "corral," through the East Coast
 Kafirs), enclosure for cattle.
 KAPJES, or cappies, sun-bonnets.
 KLIP, a "stone" at the Cape, really "cliff."
 KRANTZ, a precipice.
 KANTOOR, court of justice; office for writing.
 LEELYK, ugly.
 MEISJE, uneducated girl.
 NOYTJE, young lady.
 NACHTMAAL, night-meal; the Lord's Supper of the Dutch
 Reformed Church.
 NAAM, name.
 ORREL (good Dutch "orgel," an organ), concertina.
 PAAPIES, "papyri," reeds in a lake or river.
 PAAUW, a Cape peacock.
 REGT, right.
 ROOI, red.
 SCHRYF, write.
 SPOOKS, ghosts.
 SPREEKWOORD, proverb.
 VERLOS, pity.
 VELD, open country.
 VOORHUIS, front room.
 WINKEL, a shop.
 WEG, away.
 WACHT-EEN-BITJE DOORNS (wait-a-bit thorns), a kind of tree
 bearing hooked thorns.
- AAS-VOGELS, vultures.
 ALMAGTIG, Almighty.
 ALLAH MAGTIG! (litt. Mighty Allah!) Oh, my!
 BLIXEM, blackguard.

BLADEN, leaves.

CANTEEN, a rather low public house (auberge).

COMMANDO, an expedition (hostile) of Boers.

DROOG, dry.

HONIG, honey.

HOND, dog.

HONDT-JE, puppy, whelp.

HEX, a witch.

JIJ, you.

KLOP, box (on the ear).

LAND (at the Cape, corn field), opposed to "veld."

NOU, now.

NOG NIE', not yet.

OOK, also.

OOR, ear.

OPREKEN, count, reckon up.

PERLAMOENS, edible shell-fish, so also "klip kous."

RIEMS (made of leather), straps for horses.

SPRUIT, a feeder or tributary of a river.

VOORLOOPER, the boy who leads the oxen; also, the man who walks before a funeral; voor—before; loop—walk.

VROUW (frau), a wife.

WIJS, at the Cape means "impudent."

SCHOON (in Holland), beautiful; (at the Cape) clean.

At the Cape they say "mooi" for "pretty."

Please observe:—The Dutch *spelling* I have partly adapted to the "Kaapsche Taal," or Cape Dialect.

A few Dutch proper names, plainly spelled and pronounced as below:—

Hendrick Lourens, pronounce Hén-drik Ló-rens.

Gysbert van As, pronounce Gais-bert fan Ass; the "g" like "ch" in Scottish "loch."

Vos, pronounce Fóss.

Venter, pronounce Fénter.

Ventersdorp, pronounce Fén-ters-dorp.

Leeuwfontein, pronounce Léu-fon-tane.

Zeekoegat, pronounce Seé-koo-gat ("g" like "ch" in "loch.")

The Dutch "V," in sound, the English "F."

The Dutch "Z," in sound, the English "S" in soft.

Jij, pronounce "Yea," meaning "You."

"J" in Dutch, English "Y."

"Oe" in Dutch, in English "Oo."

Moed, pronounce Mood.

"Ou" in Dutch, our long "O," as "Lourens," pronounce Lo-rens.

"Salome," meaning "Salome," pronounce in Dutch "Sár-lo-my."

Heer, pronounce as English "hear" or "here."

Perlamoens, pronounce "pair-la-mòons."

Tamaleitjes, pronounce "ta-ma-lait-chiss."

Klip kous, pronounced Klip koase (as "oa" in "coast.")

Vrouw, pronounced frow, (as in "froward.")

Wijs, pronounce vaice (rhyming with "lace," or "race.")

Komfyt, pronounce com-fâte.

Meisje, pronounce ma-cy (rhyming to "racy.")

Winkel, pronounce vin-kle (Scotch "winkle.")

Dutch "w" sounds as English "v."

Dutch "v" sounds as English "f."

"Ei" sounds as "ai" in "pain."

"Ie" sounds as "ee" in "feet."

The Dutch "r" is always trilled.

Werf, pronounce vair-r-ff ("air" as in "pair.")

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