

Six Months At The Cape By R. M. Ballantyne

*Free*editorial 

Six Months at the Cape

Letter 1

**“A Life on the Ocean Wave.”
South Africa.**

Dear Periwinkle, Since that memorable, not to say miserable, day, when you and I parted at Saint Katherine's Docks, (see note 1), with the rain streaming from our respective noses rendering tears superfluous, if not impossible and the noise of preparation for departure damaging the fervour of our “farewell” since that day, I have ploughed with my “adventurous keel” upwards of six thousand miles of the “main,” and now write to you from the wild Karroo of Southern Africa.

The Karroo is not an animal. It is a spot at present a lovely spot. I am surrounded by nature and all her southern abundance. Mimosa trees, prickly pears, and aloes remind me that I am not in England. Ostriches, stalking on the plains, tell that I am in Africa. It is not much above thirty years since the last lion was shot in this region, (see note 2), and the kloofs, or gorges, of the blue mountains that bound the horizon are, at the present hour, full of “Cape-tigers,” wild deer of different sorts, baboons, monkeys, and but hold! I must not forestall. Let me begin at the beginning.

The adventurous keel above referred to was not, as you know, my own private property. I shared it with some two hundred or so of human beings, and a large assortment of the lower animals. Its name was the “Windsor Castle” one of a

magnificent line of ocean steamers belonging to an enterprising British firm.

There is something appallingly disagreeable in leave-taking. I do not refer now to the sentiment, but to the manner of it. Neither do I hint, my dear fellow, at your manner of leave-taking. Your abrupt “Well, old boy, bon voyage, good-bye, bless you,” followed by your prompt retirement from the scene, was perfect in its way, and left nothing to be desired; but leave-takings in general how different!

Have you never stood on a railway platform to watch the starting of an express?

Of course you have, and you have seen the moist faces of those two young sisters, who had come to “see off” that dear old aunt, who had been more than a mother to them since that day, long ago, when they were left orphans, and who was leaving them for a few months, for the first time for many years; and you have observed how, after kissing and weeping on her for the fiftieth time, they were forcibly separated by the exasperated guard; and the old lady was firmly, yet gently thrust into her carriage, and the door savagely locked with one hand, while the silver whistle was viciously clapt to the lips with the other, and the last “goo-oodbyed-arling!” was drowned by a shriek, and puff and clank, as the train rolled off.

You’ve seen it all, have you not, over and over again, in every degree and modification? No doubt you have, and as it is with parting humanity at railway stations, so is it at steamboat wharves.

There are differences, however. After you had left, I stood and sympathised with those around me, and observed that there is usually more emotion on a wharf than on a platform naturally enough, as, in the case of long sea voyages, partings, it may be presumed, are for longer periods, and dangers are supposed to be greater and more numerous than in land journeys, though this is open to question. The waiting process, too, is prolonged. Even after the warning bell had sent non-voyagers ashore, they had to stand for a considerable time in the rain while we cast off our moorings or went through some of those incomprehensible processes by which a leviathan steamer is moved out of dock.

After having made a first false move, which separated us about three yards from the wharf inducing the wearied friends on shore to brighten up and smile, and kiss hands, and wave kerchiefs, with that energy of decision which usually marks a really final farewell our steamer remained in that position for full half an hour, during which period we gazed from the bulwarks, and our friends gazed from under their dripping umbrellas across the now impassable gulf in

mute resignation.

At that moment a great blessing befell us. A boy let his cap drop from the wharf into the water! It was an insignificant matter in itself, but it acted like the little safety-valve which prevents the bursting of a high-pressure engine. Voyagers and friends no longer looked at each other like melancholy imbeciles. A gleam of intense interest suffused every visage, intelligence sparkled in every eye, as we turned and concentrated our attention on that cap! The unexpressed blessing of the whole company, ashore and afloat, descended on the uncovered head of that boy, who, all unconscious of the great end he was fulfilling, made frantic and futile efforts with a long piece of stick to recover his lost property.

But we did at last get under weigh, and then there were some touches of real pathos. I felt no disposition to note the humorous elements around when I saw that overgrown lad of apparently eighteen summers, press to the side and wave his thin hands in adieu to an elderly lady on shore, while tears that he could not, and evidently did not care to restrain, ran down his hollow cheeks. He had no friend on board, and was being sent to the Cape for the benefit of his health. So, too, was another young mansomewhere between twenty and thirty yearswhose high colour, brilliant eye, and feeble step told their own tale. But this man was not friendless. His young wife was there, and supported him with tender solicitude towards a seat. These two were in the after-cabin. Among the steerage passengers the fell disease was represented in the person of a little boy. "Too late" was written on the countenances of at least two of these, the married man and the little boy.

As to the healthy passengers, what shall I say of them? Need I tell you that every species of humanity was represented?

There were tall men, and short men, as well as men broad and narrow, mentally, not less than physically. There were ladies pretty, and ladies plain, as well as grave and gay. Fat and funny ones we had, also lean ones and sad. The wise and foolish virgins were represented. So too were smokers and drinkers; and not a few earnest, loving, and lovable, men and women.

A tendency had been gaining on me of late to believe that, after passing middle-life, a man cannot make new and enthusiastic friendships. Never was I more mistaken. It is now my firm conviction that men may and do make friendships of the closest kind up to the end of their career. Of course the new friends do not, and cannot, take the place of the old. It seems to me that they serve a higher purpose, and, by enabling one to realise the difference between the old and the new, draw the cords of ancient friendship tighter. At all events, you may depend upon it, my dear Periwinkle, that no new friend shall ever

tumble you out of the niche which you occupy in my bosom!

But be this as it may, it is a fact that in my berth which held four, and was full all the voyage there was a tall, dark, powerful, middle-aged man, an Englishman born in Cape Colony, (see note 3), who had been “home” for a trip, and was on his way out again to his African home on the great Karroo. This man raised within me feelings of disgust when I first saw him in the dim light of our berth, because he was big, and I knew that a big man requires more air to fill his lungs than a little one, and there was no superabundant air in our berth quite the reverse. This man occupied the top berth opposite to mine. Each morning as I awoke my eyes fell on his beard of iron-grey, and I gazed at his placid countenance till he awoke or I found his placid countenance gazing at me when I awoke. From gazing to nodding in recognition is an easy step in ordinary circumstances, but not when one’s head is on one’s pillow. We therefore passed at once, without the ceremony of nodding, into a quiet “good morning.” Although reticent, he gradually added a smile to the “good morning,” and I noticed that his smile was a peculiarly pleasant one. Steps that succeed the “first” are generally easy. From disliking this man not on personal, but purely selfish grounds I came to like him; then to love him. I have reason to believe that the attachment was mutual. His name why should I not state it? I don’t think he would object is Hobson.

In the bunk below Hobson lay a young Wesleyan minister. He was a slender young fellow, modest and thoughtful. If Hobson’s bunk had given way, I fear that his modesty and thoughtfulness might have been put to a severe test. I looked down upon this young Wesleyan from my materially exalted position, but before the voyage was over I learned to look up to him from a spiritually low position. My impression is that he was a “meek” man. I may be mistaken, but of this am I certain, that he was one of the gentlest, and at the same time one of the most able men in the ship.

But, to return to my berth which, by the way, I was often loth to do, owing to the confined air below, and the fresh glorious breezes on deck the man who slept under me was a young banker, a clerk, going out to the Cape to make his fortune, and a fine capable-looking fellow he was, inclined rather to be receptive than communicative. He frequently bumped me with his head in getting up; I, not unfrequently, put a foot upon his nose, or toes, in getting down.

What can I say about the sea that has not been said over and over again in days of old? This, however, is worthy of record, that we passed the famous Bay of Biscay in a dead-calm. We did not “lay” one single “day” on that “Bay of Biscay, O!” The “O!” seems rather awkwardly to imply that I am not stating the exact truth, but I assure you that it is a fact. More than this, we had not a

storm all the way to the Cape. It was a pure pleasure excursion a sort of yacht voyage from beginning to end; very pleasant at the time, and delightful now to dwell upon; for, besides the satisfaction of making a new friend like Hobson, there were others to whom I was powerfully drawn, both by natural sympathy and intellectual bias.

There was a Wesleyan minister, also an Englishman, born in South Africa, and of the race of Anak, with whom, and his amiable wife, and pretty children, I fraternised ardently. My soul was also gladdened by intercourse with a clergyman of the Dutch-Reformed Church, well-known in the Cape, and especially in the Transvaal who, with his pleasant wife and daughter, was on his way back to South Africa after a brief trip to Europe. He was argumentative; so, you know, am I. He was also good-tempered, therefore we got on well.

It would be an endless business to name and describe all the passengers who were personally attractive, and who were more or less worthy of description. There were, among others, a genial and enthusiastic Dutch-African legislator of the Cape; a broad-shouldered but retiring astronomer; also a kindly Cape merchant; and a genial English banker, with their respective wives and families. I had the good fortune to sit in the midst of these at meals, close to Captain Hewat, who is unquestionably, what many of us styled him, a “trump.” He is also a Scotchman. There was likewise a diamond-digger, and another man who seemed to hate everybody except himself. There were also several sportsmen; one of whom, a gallant son of Mars, and an author, had traversed the “Great Lone Land” of British America, and had generally, it seemed to me, “done” the world, with the exception of Central Africa, which he was at last going to add to his list. There were also troops of children, who behaved remarkably well considering the trials they had to undergo; and numerous nurses, some of whom required more attention than all the ladies put together.

You will now, no doubt, expect an account of romantic adventures on the deep, and narrow escapes, and alarms of fire, and men overboard, and thrilling narratives. If so, your expectations are doomed to disappointment. We fished for no sharks, we chased no whales, we fell in with no slavers or pirates. Nevertheless we saw flying fish, and we had concerts and lectures; and such delightful perambulations of the decks, and such charming impromptu duets and glees and solos on retired parts of the deck in moonlight nights, and such earnest discussions, and such genial companionship! Truly that voyage was one of those brilliant episodes which occur only once in a lifetime, and cannot be repeated; one of those green spots in memory, which, methinks, will survive when all other earthly things have passed away.

I will write no more about it, however, at present. Neither will I proceed in what is usually considered the natural manner with my epistlesnamely, step by step. Arrivals, cities, travelling, roads, inns, and all such, I will skip, and proceed at one bound to that which at the present moment is to me most interesting, merely remarking that we reached Capetown, (of which more hereafter), in November,the South African summerafter a voyage of twenty-five days.

I am now sojourning at Ebenezer-Hobson's residence on the Karroo.

Letter 2.

Hunting Springboks on the Karroo.

To start for the hunting-field at seven in the morning in a carriage and six, smacks of royalty and sounds luxurious, but in South Africa there are drawbacks connected therewith.

Hobson's farm is, as I have said, on the Karroothose vast plains which at some seasons resemble a sandy desert, and at others are covered with rich verdure and gorgeous flowers. They are named after the small, succulent, Karroo-bush, which represents the grass of other plains, and is excellent food for cattle, sheep, and ostriches.

These plains embrace a considerable portion of the territory of the Cape. The Karroo is pre-eminently lumpy. Its roads in most places are merely the result of traffic. They, also, are lumpy. Our carriage was a native "cart," by which is meant a plain and powerful machine with springs that are too strong readily to yield. Five of our team were mules, the sixth was a pony.

Our party at starting numbered five, but grew as we progressed. We took with us provisions and fodder for two days. The driving was undertaken by Hobson's nephew, assisted by his eldest son"Six-foot Johnny." There was a double necessity for two drivers. To hold the reins of five kicking mules and a prancing pony required both hands as well as all the strength of the cousin, though he was a powerful fellow, and the management of the whip claimed both arms, and all the strength, as well as the undivided attention of his assistant. The whip was a salmon-rod in appearance, without exaggeration. It had a bamboo handle somewhere between twelve and fourteen feet long, with a proportionate lash. The operator sometimes found it convenient to stand when he made a cast with his fishing-rod weapon. He was an adept with it; capable, it seemed to me, of picking a fly off one of the leader's ears.

There was some trouble in keeping our team quiet while rifles, ammunition, provisions, etcetera, were being stowed in the cart.

At last the cousin gave the word. Six-foot Johnny made a cast. The lash grazed the leader's flank with a crack that might have shamed a small revolver. The mules presented first their noses, then their heels to the sky; the cart leaped from the ground, and we were offbumping, rattling, crashing, swinging, over the wild Karroo, followed by some half-dozen horses led by two mounted Hottentot attendants.

My friend Hobson, greatly to our grief, did not accompany us, owing to inflamed eyes, but I shared the back seat of the cart with his brother Jonathan, a tall strapping man of middle age and modest mien, who seemed to me the perfect type of a colonial hero.

In an hour or so we came to the solitary farm of a Mr Green, who regaled us with a sumptuous breakfast, and lent me a spur. I had the liberal offer of two spurs, but as, in hunting with the rifle, it is sometimes advisable to sit on one's right heel, and memory during the excitement of the chase is apt to prove faithless, I contented myself with one spur, feeling pretty confident that if I persuaded the left side of my horse to go, the right side could not well remain behind.

Mr Green joined us. Thereafter we came to the residence of a Mr Priest, who also joined us with his son, and thus we sped on over the flat sandy plains, inhaling the sweet scent of mimosa blossom, glowing in the fervid sunshine, and picking up comrades here and there, until about noon we reached the scene of our intended operations.

This was a vast, almost level plain named the Plaat River Flats. It lay between two rivers, was eight or ten miles wide and upwards of twenty miles in length a mighty ocean, as it were, of short, compact Karroo, with a boundless horizon like the sea in all directions save one, where a great South African mountain range intercepted the view. Here and there a few clumps of mimosa bushes rose like islets, and lent additional interest to the scene.

We "outspanned", that is, we unyoked, and "off-saddled" here for luncheon, and found shelter from the sun under a mimosa, which was large enough to merit being styled a tree. Its thorns were from four to six inches in length.

The party had now swelled to fourteen all stout hardy descendants of the English, Scotch, or Dutch settlers, who had originally peopled the land; good rifle shots, and splendid horsemen. One of them was conspicuous by his brawny arms, which were burnt to a deep brown in consequence of his preferring to hunt and work at all times with shirt sleeves rolled up above the elbows. Another struck me as having the broadest pair of shoulders I ever saw

in a man of his size.

“Capital water here,” said Green to me, on alighting beside the mimosa-thorn.

“Indeed,” said I, thirsting for some, “where is it?”

“Here! come; I’ll show you.”

He led me to a spot among the bushes where lay a small pond of thin mud the colour of weak tea with milk.

“There you are,” said Green.

I looked at him inquiringly.

He looked at me and smiled.

I laughed.

Green grinned, and assured me that it was “first-rate water.”

He dipped a cup, as he spoke, and drank it. So did his comrades, with evident satisfaction, though the liquid was so opaque that I could not see the bottom of a tea-cup when it was full.

There could be no further doubt on the point. These reckless and jovial South AfricansEuropean by extraction though they were, and without a drop of black blood in their veinshad actually accommodated themselves to circumstances so far as to consider liquid mud good water! More than that, I found that most of the party deemed it a sufficient beverage, for they were all temperance men, if not total abstainers. Still further, I followed their example, drank of that yellow pond, and actually enjoyed it. Subsequently I made the discovery that there were small animals in it; after that I preferred it in the form of tea, which was quickly infused by our active Hottentots.

The discovery above referred to was made when Green, (or Brownarms, or Broadshoulders, I forget which), was quaffing a cup of the cold element. Having drained it he spat out the last mouthful, and along with it a lively creature like a small shrimp, with something like a screw-propeller under its tail!

Enjoying our tea under the shade of the mimosa, we rested for an hour, and then, saddling our steeds and slinging on rifles and cartridge-pouches, we mounted, and sallied forth upon the plain.

A glorious sensation of freedom came over me as I felt my horse’s springy step,a sensation which brought powerfully back the memory of those days

when I first galloped over the American prairies. Surely there must be a sympathy, a mesmeric influence, between a horse and his rider which sends a thrill through each. Hobson had lent me his own favourite horse, Rob Roy. He was a charming creature; well made, active, willing, and tender in the mouth, but, best of all, he “tripped” splendidly.

Tripping is a favourite gait in South Africa, especially among the Dutch farmers. It is something between pacing and ambling, a motion so easy that one scarce rises at all from the saddle. We tripped off into the vast plain towards the horizon, each horseman diverging a little from his comrades, like a fleet of fishing-boats putting out to sea. Most of the party rode without coats, for the sky was cloudless, and we looked for a broiling day. Brownarms, I observed, had his sleeves rolled up, as usual, to the shoulder. Six-foot Johnny rode a cream-coloured pony, which, like himself, enjoyed itself intensely, and seemed ready for anything. Each man grasped his rifle by the middle with the right hand, and rested the stock on his thigh.

Being a stranger to the work, I had been supplied with a Hottentot as well as a horse, to guide me and carry my rifle; but I scorned to ride without my weapon, and did not at first see the necessity of a guide in the circumstances. Ultimately I was only too glad to avail myself of his services!

The South Africans call Hottentots “boys,” whatever their age or size may be. My “boy” was named Michael. He was a small wiry man of twenty or thirty, more or less, with a dirty brown face, dirty brown garments, and a dirty brown horse. Though a bad one to look at, it was a marvellous horse to go. Michael had a cavernous red mouth, and magnificent white teeth. Likewise he was gifted with a strong sense of the ludicrous, as I have reason to know.

We advanced slowly into the plain at first, and gradually scattered until some of the party began to look like mere specks in the distance. Presently I saw two or three of them break into a gallop, and observed a few moving spots of white on the horizon. I looked anxiously at my boy. He returned the gaze with glittering eyes and said “bok.”

“Boks! are they?” said I, applying my spur and making a leap over an ant-bear hole.

Rob Roy stretched his legs with a will, but a howl from Michael caused me to look round. He was trending off in another direction, and pointing violently towards something. He spoke nothing but Dutch. My acquaintance with that tongue was limited to the single word “Ja.”

He was aware of this, and his visage became all eyes and mouth in his frantic effort to assure me it would be wise were I to follow his lead.

I turned at once and galloped alongside of him in faith.

It soon became clear what he aimed at. The horsemen on the far off horizon were driving the springboks towards the stream which bounded one side of the great plain, Mike was making for the bushes that bordered that stream in the hope of reaching them before the boks should observe us.

Oh! it was a glorious burst, that first race over the wild Karroo, on a spirited steed, in the freshness of early morning

With the silent bushboy alone by my side,

for he was silent, though tremendously excited. His brown rags fluttered in the self-made breeze, and his brown pony scrambled over the ground quite as fast as Rob Roy. We reached a clump of underwood in time, and pulled up, panting, beside a bush which was high enough to conceal the horses.

Anxiously we watched here, and carefully did I look to my rifle, a double-barrelled breech-loading "Soaper-Henry," to see that it was loaded and cocked, and frequently did I take aim at stump and stone to get my hand and eye well "in," and admiringly, with hope in every lineament, did Michael observe me.

"See anything of them, Mike?" I asked.

I might as well have asked a baboon. Mike only grinned, but Mike's grin once seen was not easily forgotten.

Suddenly Mike caught sight of something, and bolted. I followed. At the same moment pop! pop! went rifles in different parts of the plain. We could not see anything distant for the bushes, but presently we came to the edge of an open space, into which several springboks were trotting with a confusedly surprised air.

"Now, Sar, now's your chance," said Mike, using the only English sentence he possessed, and laying hold of the bridle of my horse.

I was on the ground and down on one knee in such a hurry, that to this day I know not by what process I got off the horse.

Usually, when thus taken by surprise, the springboks stop for a moment or two and gaze at the kneeling hunter. This affords a splendid though brief chance to take good aim, but the springboks were not inquisitive that day. They did not halt. I had to take a running shot, and the ball fell short, to my intense mortification. I had sighted for three hundred yards. Sighting quickly for five hundred, while the frightened animals were scampering wildly away, I put a

ball in the dust just between the legs of one.

The leap which that creature gave was magnificent. Much too high to be guessed at with a hope of being believed! The full significance of the animal's name was now apparent. Charging a breech-loader is rapid work, but the flock was nine hundred or a thousand yards off before I could again take aim. In despair I fired and sent a bullet into the midst of them, but without touching one.

I now turned to look at the "boy," who was sitting on his pony with both eyes nearly shut, and a smile so wide that the double row of his teeth were exposed to the very last grinders!

But he became extremely grave and sympathetic as I turned towards him, and made a remark in Dutch which was doubtless equivalent to "better luck next time."

Remounting I rode to the edge of the clump of bushes and found several of my companions, some of whom carried the carcasses of springboks at their cruppers. Hope revived at once, and I set off with them in search of another flock.

"You've failed, I see," remarked my friend Jonathan Hobson in a sympathetic tone.

Ah! what a blessed thing is sympathy!

"Yes," said I; "my shots fell short."

"Don't let that discourage you," returned Jonathan, "you're not used to the Karroo. Distance is very deceptive. Sighting one's rifle is the chief difficulty in these regions, but you'll soon come to it."

Another flock of springboks was discovered at this moment on a distant knoll, towards which we trotted, tripped, and cantered. We quickly scattered, each man taking his own course. Six-foot Johnny, already burdened with a buck, went off at reckless speed. He soon came near enough to cause the game to look up inquiringly. This made him draw rein, and advance with caution in a sidling and indirect manner. In a few minutes the boks trotted off. We were now within long range, and made a dash at racing-speed to head them. The creatures absolutely played with us at first, and performed some of their astounding leaps, as if for our special amusement. Had they set off at full speed at once we should not have had a chance, for they are fleeter than horses. Their manner of leaping is à la indiarubber ball. It is not a bound forwards, but a "stott" straight upwards, six, eight, or nine feet, without

apparent effort, and displaying at each bound a ridge, or fold, of pure white hair on their backs which at other times is concealed.

We now “put on a spurt,” and the leading men got near enough between two and three hundred yards. They dismounted, dropped their bridles, and kneeled to take aim. Brownarms fired and brought one down so did Broadshoulders. Six-foot Johnny, in his eagerness, let the cream pony stumble, somehow, and went over its head also over his own, and landed on his knees. The bok he was after stopped to gaze at the catastrophe. Johnny, profiting by his position, took aim and tumbled it over.

Mike was by this time leading me towards an animal. We got within three hundred yards when it began to stretch out. Further pursuit being useless, I pulled up, leaped off, kneeled, fired, and missed again the ball, although straight, falling short. With wild haste I scrambled on Rob Roy who, by the way, stood as still as a stone when left with the bridle thrown over his head and hanging from his nose. The horses were trained to this.

Loading as I ran we soon came to a bok which had been turned by some of the other hunters. Again I raced, pulled up, leaped off, and fired. The pop! pop! was now going on all over the plain, and balls were whistling everywhere. Again my bok refused to stop to look at me as he ought to have done and again I missed. Michael’s eyes were now quite shut, and his jaws visible to the wisdom teeth supposing he possessed any.

Growing reckless under disappointment I now dashed away in pursuit of animals that had been scattered by the fusillade, and fired right and left at all ranges between two and ten hundred yards, but without any other effect than that of driving up the dust under two or three of them, and causing many of their astounding leaps. Soon the rest of the party were scattered so far on the plain as to be utterly out of sight and hearing. As far as sensation went, my “Tottie” and I were as lonely in that wilderness as was Mungo Park in days gone by.

All this time the sun was blazing in the sky with unclouded and fervent heat. It had been 110 degrees in the shade at Ebenezer a day or two before, therefore I judged it to have been much the same on this occasion. There was not a breath of wind. Everything was tremulous with heat.

Suddenly I beheld, with the deepest interest, a magnificent lake with beautiful islets scattered over its crystal breast. Often had I read of the mirage of African deserts, and much had I thought about it. Now, for the first time, it was before me. Never was deception more perfect. If I had not known that no such lake existed in the region I should have been almost ready to stake my

life on the reality of what I saw. No wonder that thirsty travellers in unknown regions should have so often pushed forward in eager pursuit of this beautiful phantom.

“Things are not what they seem,” truly! This applies to many terrestrial things, but to none of them more thoroughly than to the mirage.

While I was looking at it, the form of the lake altered sufficiently to have dispelled the illusion, if I had been labouring under it. In a few minutes it passed away altogether, but only to reappear elsewhere.

Another curious effect, and rather absurd mistake, resulted from the different densities in the super-heated atmosphere which caused this mirage. Fancying that I saw two springboks on the horizon I pointed them out to my boy.

“Ja!” said Mike, nodding his head and riding towards them at a smart canter. As we advanced I observed that the boks began to grow rather larger than life, and that Mike slackened his pace and began to grin. It turned out that the objects were two carts with white canvas hoods, and when we came up to them we found they belonged to a party who had come out to join us, but who, up to that hour, had been unable to discover us in the vast hunting-field!

After directing them to our camp we proceeded on our way. That is to say Mike did. For myself, I was completely lost, and if left to myself should have been quite unable to return to camp.

While galloping along, revelling in the sunshine in the love of which I will not yield to cats we came suddenly on the largest snake I had yet seen. It was, I believe, a cobra, must have been fully six feet long, if not more, and was gliding with an easy sinuous motion over the plain as fast apparently, as a man's ordinary running-pace. I observed that it did not get out of the way of small bushes, but went straight through them without the smallest check to its speed. It suddenly dived into a hole and disappeared. It is said that when snakes take to a hole to escape pursuit, some of them have a habit of causing their heads to stop abruptly at the entrance, and allowing their bodies and tails to flip past like the lash of a whip, so that if the pursuer were to thrust in his hand to grasp the tail he would be met by the fangs! As the bite of most South African snakes means death, if the part be not cut out, or otherwise effectually treated, handling them is carefully avoided. Nevertheless my friend Jonathan when a younger man, let us hope! was in the habit of occasionally catching deadly snakes by the tail, swinging them round his head, and dashing out their brains on a stone or tree!

Soon we perceived two of our comrades driving a flock of springboks towards the river. Mike at once diverged towards a clump of bushes which it seemed

probable they would pass. In ten minutes we were down in a hollow, with the horses hid behind a mimosa-thorn. The boks had not seen us, being too much taken up with their pursuers; they came straight towards us.

“Now, sar,” whispered Mike once again, while his eyes glared with glee, “now’s your chance!”

I went down on one knee, carefully sighted the rifle, and looked up. The foremost bok was within good range. I fired and missed! “Desolation!” said I, cramming in another cartridge while the flock diverged to the left.

There was no hope now of anything but a running shot. I aimed carefully. The smoke cleared off, the flock dashed on, but one bok lay prone upon the earth. Bang! went my second barrel, and another bok, leaping into the air, fell, rose, fell again, then rose and ran on.

Mike was now jubilant. The whole internal structure of his mouth was disclosed to view in his satisfaction, as he viewed the prostrate animal. I may add that although we did not find the wounded bok that evening, we found him next day.

With our prize strapped behind Mike’s saddle we rode in triumph into camp, a little before sunset, and found most of our companions assembled, busy preparing supper and making other arrangements for camping out on the veldtas they call the plain. Some had been successful, some had failed, but a good many springboks had been killed, and all were hearty as crickets and hungry as hyenas.

To kindle fires, boil tea, roast venison steaks, spread blankets on the ground, and otherwise attend to the duties of the bivouac, was now the order of the hour. The moon rose while we were thus engaged, and mingled her pale light with the ruddy blaze of camp-fires. We spoke little and ate much. Then followed the inevitable pipe and the pleasant chat, but we were all too ready for rest to care about keeping it up long. I was constrained to take the bed of honour in the cart. The others stretched their limbs on the Karroo, and in ten minutes every man was in the land of nod.

Next day we mounted at daybreak and renewed the hunt, but I will say no more about it than that we bagged twenty-six springboks amongst us, and that Six-foot Johnny, having killed the greatest number of animals, returned home “King of the hunt,” with a scrap of ostrich feather in his cap.

Letter 3.

Somerset The British Settlers Original “Owners” Native Church-Going.

On my way to the Karroo I had to pass through Somerset East, and it so fell out that I fell in with a countryman from Edinburgh, who chanced to be going to Somerset in the same “passenger-cart” with myself. His name must have been a novelty once, though much of its freshness is worn off now it was Brown.

Our cart had a hood; the roads were very bad, and the behaviour of that hood was stupendous! Its attachment to the cart was, so to speak, partial; therefore it possessed a semi-independent motion which was perplexing. You could not count on its actions. A sudden lurch of the cart to right or left did, of course, carry the hood with it, and, counting on that, you laid your sudden plans to avoid collision; but the elasticity of the hood enabled it to give you a slap on the face before obeying its proper impulse. So, too, it would come down on your head unexpectedly, or, without the slightest provocation, would hit you on the neck behind. I learned with painful certainty in that cart that I had a “small” to my back! It seemed to me that it grew large before the journey was over.

Brown was an intelligent man, not an unusual state of things with the “Browns.” He had two pretty daughters with him, aged eight and twelve respectively. We got on well together, and crossed the Zuurberg range in company on the last day of the year.

It was over passes in this range that the settlers of 1820 went in long trains of Cape wagons, with wives and little ones, and household goods, and civilised implements of husbandry, and weapons of defence, with high hopes and strong courage, and with their “lives in their hands,” to subdue the wilderness. It was from these heights that they looked over the beautiful and bush-clad plains of “Albany,” which lay before them as the lot of their inheritance.

The breaking up and scattering of the various “parties” was most eloquently and graphically told by the Reverend H.H. Dugmore in a lecture delivered at Grahamstown, on the occasion of the “British Settlers’ Jubilee,” in May 1870 fifty years after the arrival of the “fathers.” (See Note 1.) I quote one passage, which gives a good idea of the manner in which the land was taken up.

“And now the Sunday’s River is crossed, and the terrible old Ado Hill is climbed, and Quaggas Flat is passed, and the Bushman’s river heights are scaled. The points of divergence are reached, and the long column breaks into divisions. Baillie’s party made their way to the mouth of the Fish River, where, it was said, the ‘Head’ had been allowed to choose a territory, and where he hoped to realise imaginations of commercial wealth by founding a

seaport town. And the Duke of Newcastle's protégés from Nottingham took possession of the beautiful vale of Clumber, naming it in honour of their noble patron. And Wilson's party settled between the plains of Waay-plaats and the Kowie bush, right across the path of the elephants, some of which they tried to shoot with fowling-pieces. And Sefton's party founded the village of Salem, the religious importance of which to the early progress of the settlement, is not to be estimated by its present size and population. These four were the large parties. The smaller ones filled up the intervening spaces between them. Behind the thicket-clad sandhills of the Kowie and Green Fountain, and extending over the low plains beyond Bathurst, were the locations of Cock's, Thornhill's, Ostler's, Smith's, and Richardson's parties. Skirting the wooded Kloofs from Bathurst towards the banks of the Klienemonden, were ranged the parties of James and Hyman. It was the latter who gravely announced to Captain Trapps, the Bathurst magistrate, the discovery of 'precious stones' on his location; and which the angry gentleman, jealous of the reserved rights of Government, found, on further inquiry, were only 'precious big ones!' The rich valley of Lushington afforded a resting-place to Dyason's party. Holder's people called their location New Bristol; which never, however, acquired any resemblance to Old Bristol. Passing on towards the front, there were Mouncey's party, Hayhurst's party, Bradshaw's party, Southey's party, stretching along the edge of the wide plains of the Round Hill, and drinking their Western waters. The post of honour and of danger was the line of the Kap River. This was occupied by the party of Scott below Kafir Drift, and by the Irish party above it. The forlorn hope of the entire settlement was Mahony's party at the clay pits, who had to bear the first brunt of every Kafir depredation in the Lower Albany direction. Names thicken as we proceed from Waay-plaats towards Grahamstown. Passing Greathead's location, we come among the men of Dalgairns at Blauw Krantz. Then those of Liversage about Manly's Flats. John Stanley, 'Head of all Parties,' as he styled himself, belonged to the same neighbourhood. Turvey's party were in Grobblaar's Kloof; William Smith's at Stony Vale, Dr Clarke's at Collingham. Howard's, Morgan's, and Carlisle's, bring us by successive steps to the neighbourhood of Grahamstown.

"My 'reminiscences' are those of an Albany settler; but I do not forget that there was another party, who, though locally separated from the main body, occupied a position, the importance of which developed itself in the after-history of the settlement. I refer to the Scotch party, who were located on the Baviaans River, among mountains and glens that have been rendered classic by the poetry of their leader and historic by the gallant deeds and endurance of his compatriots in the after-struggles of the frontier. I need make no particular reference, however, to the early circumstances of that body of men, as in Pringle's African Sketches they have a most graphically-written history of their own."

Thus, in 1820, was the land overrun and taken possession of by the “British Settlers.” It had once been the land of the Hottentots, but had never at any time rightfully belonged to the Kafirs, who, after wrongfully entering it and rendering themselves by their thievish disposition and deceit an unbearable nuisance, were finally driven out of it in 1819.

The idea of Government in sending the settlers out to occupy these vacated lands was, that a convenient buffer might thus be placed on the frontier of the colony to keep the savages in check. That these settlers and their descendants received many a rude shock, and played their part nobly, has been proved, and is admitted on all hands. That they received less encouragement and help from those who induced them to emigrate than might have been expected, is equally certain.

Brown and I chatted, more or less, of these things as we toiled up the slopes of the Zuurberg, where the original settlers had toiled fifty-five years before us, and in the afternoon came to a pretty good inn, where a small misfortune befell us. While we were indulging in a cup of tea, one of our horses escaped. We had crossed the mountain range by that time, and the truant had a fine range of undulating country to scamper over. That animal gave us some trouble, for, although nearly a dozen men went, after him on horseback, he kept dodging about actively with many flourishes of heels and tail during the whole afternoon.

When one is in no hurry, and the weather is fine, a delay of this kind is rather pleasant than otherwise. While men and boys were engaged in the fruitless chase, I wandered off into the bush in the hope of stumbling on a tortoise or a snake, or some other creature that I had previously been accustomed to see in zoological collections, but the reptiles kept close, and refused to show themselves. I came, however, on a gigantic beehive; at least it resembled one in appearance, though the smoke that issued from a hole in its top suggested humanity. There was also a hole in one side partially covered by a rickety door. Close beside it stood a little black creature which resembled a fat and hairless monkey. It might have been a baboon. The astonished gaze and grin with which it greeted me warranted such an assumption, but when it suddenly turned and bolted through the hole into the beehive, I observed that it had no tail not even a vestige of such a creation, and thus discovered that it was a “Tottie,” or Hottentot boy. The sublime, the quaint, the miserable, the ridiculous, and the beautiful, were before me in that scene. Let me expound these five “heads” in order.

On my left rose the woody slopes and crags of the Zuurberg, above whose summits the white hills and towers and gorgeous battlements of cloud-land

rose into the bright blue sky. Around me were groups of flowering mimosa bushes, with thorns from three to six inches long, interspersed with which were curious aloes, whose weird leafy tops gave them the aspect of shrubs growing upside down with their roots scrambling aimlessly in the air. In front stood the native hut, the wretchedness of whose outside was only equalled by the filth and poverty-stricken aspect within. Near to this were several native children, as black as coal, as impudent-looking as tom-tits, and as lively as crickets. Beyond all lay the undulating plains studded with flowering shrubs of varied form and hue, and bathed in golden sunshine.

There is something sad, ay, and something mysterious, to me in the thought that such a lovely land had been, until so recently, the home of the savage and the scene of his wicked and ruthless deeds.

On New Year's day I dined in a public restaurant in Somerset, in a strange land with strangers. But the strangers were not shy. Neither was I. There were about a dozen of us at table, and before dinner was half over we were as sociable as if we had been bosom friends from infancy. We even got to the length of warm discussion, and I heard some sentiments expressed regarding natives and "native policy," with which I could not agree; but, being ignorant on the subject at the time, I stuck to general principles. It seemed to me that some of the speakers must have been born with their brains turned the wrong way. This idea recalls to memory the curious fact that, during my first walk in Somerset, I saw a mounted Hottentot policeman wearing his helmet with the fore part to the back, because its rear peak was longer, and a better sunshade, than the front.

The same tendency to sacrifice appearance to utility is observable among the Malays of Capetown, who treat their sou'-westers similarly.

My first visit to a native church was on a Sunday, the hottest Sunday I ever spent. The congregation was entirely black and brown. It, also, was hot, so that the church was by no means cool. Whatever depth, or want of depth, there might have been in the Christianity of these people, the garb and the bearing of civilisation were very obvious and very pleasant to behold. Their behaviour was most orderly and modest, though, probably, many of them had gone there to display their finery.

Taking my place near the pulpit I saw them to advantage. The church was pretty full. I sat down beside a very stout Hottentot girl, whose dress of showy chintz was as much a subject of interest to herself as of indifference to the congregation. There were marvellous contrasts and surprising harmonies displayed in that church, with not a few discords. Childlike good-humour sat on every countenance. When Mr Green ascended the pulpit eager expectancy

gleamed in every jet-black eye. When the psalm was given out the preparatory clearing of throats and consequent opening of thick red lips and revelation of splendid rows of teeth all over the church had quite a lighting-up effect on the scene. They sang heartily and well of course, all black people do so, I think. Just opposite me sat a young man with a countenance so solemn that I felt sure he had made up his mind to “be good,” and get the full benefit of the services. His black cheeks seemed to glisten with earnestness; his thick lips pouted with devotional good-will. I do not write in ridicule, but merely endeavour to convey my full meaning. He wore a superfine black dress coat, a gaudy vest, and buff corduroy trousers so short that they displayed to advantage his enormous bare feet. Beside him was an elderly man with tweed trousers, a white shirt and brown shooting coat, and a face not quite so solemn but very sedate. Some of the men had boots, some had black silk hats, others wideawakes, which of course they removed on entering. It seemed to me that there was among them every part and variety of costume from morning to evening dress, but no individual could boast of being complete in himself.

As for the women, they were indescribable. Some of them wore little more than a blanket, others were clothed in the height of European fashion, or something like it, and all had evidently put on their “Sunday’s best.” One stout and remarkably healthy young woman appeared in a brilliant skirt, and an indescribable hat with ostrich feathers on her woolly head. She sat herself down close beside me and went to sleep at the beginning of the sermon not out of irreverence, I am persuaded, but from heat. In this state she continued swaying to and fro to the end of the discourse, occasionally drooping, as though she meant to make a pillow of my shoulder, which she would certainly have done, but for a more modestly clad Hottentot girl at her other side, who, evidently scandalised, kept poking at her continuously with her elbow. In justice to the congregation I am bound to add, that I saw very few sleepers. They were most attentive and earnest, despite the distracting elements of a humorous kind that obtruded themselves.

Somerset East is a pretty town on the Little Fish River, at the foot of the Boschberg mountains, which rise abruptly from the plain. It boasts of banks, a newspaper, several churches, and the Gill College, an imposing edifice which was erected by private endowment. In regard to its inhabitants, all I can say is, that the few members I had the pleasure of meeting there during a three days’ sojourn were exceedingly hospitable and kind.

Letter 4.

Adventures with Ostriches.

Ostrich-farming is no child’s play. It involves risk in more ways than one, and

sometimes taxes both the courage and strength of the farmer.

In ordinary circumstances the ostrich is a mild, inoffensive creature indeed the female is always so; but when a male ostrich is what I may style nesting when, enclosed in a large field or paddock, he guards his wives and his eggs no lion of the desert, no tiger of the jungle or kloof, is more ferocious or more savagely bent on the death of any or all who dare to intrude on his domain.

The power of the ostrich, too, is quite equal to his strength of will. He stands from seven to nine feet in height, and is very heavy.

His tremendous legs are his only weapons, and his kick is almost, if not quite, equal to that of a horse. Possessing enormous feet, with two toes on each, the horny points of which can cut and rip like cold chisels, he rushes at an adversary and kicks, or hits out, straightforward, like a prize-fighter. No unarmed man on earth could stand long before a furious male ostrich without being killed. But there are one or two weak points about him, which abate somewhat the danger of his attack. In the first place his power lies only in his mighty legs, the thighs of which blue-grey and destitute of feathers are like two shoulders of mutton. With his beak he can do nothing, and his long neck is so weak that if you can only lay hold of it and pull his head to the ground you are comparatively safe, for he cannot kick effectively in that position, and devotes all his energies, when thus caught, to useless attempts to pull his head out of your grasp. But, then, how are you to get hold of that neck the root of which stands nearly as high as your own head in the face of two claws that go like battering-rams wrought by lightning? As well might you attempt to lay hold of a prize-fighter's nose while his active fists are darting out at you.

A powerful, active man has been known, when attacked while unarmed, to spring on the bird, grasp a wing with one arm and the body with the other, and hug it, but there is great danger in this method, because in the attempt you are pretty sure to receive at least one kick, and that, if it takes effect, will be quite sufficient to put you out of action. It also requires much power of endurance, for, hugging a creature that is strong enough to dance about and lift you off your legs in its wild efforts to get rid of you, must be hard work. Supposing that you do succeed, however, in holding on until you work your way along to the neck and get the head into custody, then you can without much difficulty choke the bird, but a male ostrich costs about 150 pounds, and one hesitates to choke 150 pounds, even for the sake of one's life, especially when the valuable bird belongs to one's friend.

Another and perhaps the best plan, if you are caught unarmed, is to lie down. An ostrich cannot kick you when you lie flat on the ground, he can only dance on you, and although that process is unpleasant it is not necessarily fatal.

The ostrich is easily killed by a blow on the neck with a stout stick, but this is as objectionable as the choking process, on the ground of cost. In short, the only legitimate method of meeting a savage papa, in his own field, is with a strong forked pole eight or nine feet long, with which you catch the bird at the root of the neck, and thus keeping him at pole's-length, let him kick and hiss away to his heart's content till he is tired, or until assistance comes to you, or until you work him near a wall, when you may jump over and escape, for an ostrich will not jump.

Often have I gone, thus armed, with my friend Hobson to feed the nesting ostriches. The risk of attack, I may mention in passing, is not great when two men go together, because the bird seems undecided which foe to attack, and generally ends by condescending to pick at the mealies, (Indian corn), which are thrown down to him.

One morning Hobson and his eldest son Six-foot Johnny and I mounted our steeds and rode away to the field in which one of the male ostriches dwelt with his meek brown wives. The wives are always brown, the husbands are jet-black, with the exception of those magnificent and pure white feathers in wings and tail which are so much prized and worn by the fair dames of Europe. Hobson carried a sack of mealies at his saddle-bow.

There were several male birds on the farm, all of which were distinguished by name. There were "Master," and "David Marais," and "Black Jack," and "Blind-boy," (minus one eye!) and "Gouws," etcetera. Our visit that morning was to David Marais. David was by far the fiercest of the lot, but he was excessively fond of mealies, and could be attracted though by no means appeased by these.

"Johnny," said Hobson, as we cantered along by the side of the little stream which caused a strip of bright fertility to wind like a green-snake over the brown Karroo, and which was, as it were, the life-blood of the farm, "Johnny, I want you to go to the nest and count the eggs, while I keep David in play."

"Very well, father."

The order, and the quiet acceptance of it, did not seem to involve much, yet Johnny had been ordered on somewhat dangerous service that morning, for David Marais was intensely watchful as well as savage. Several of the other males, although capable of giving way to temper, were so far amiable that my friend and I had frequently gone into their enclosures with our forked sticks and mealies, and had received no worse at their hands than a threatening attitude or a suspicious look, which passed away when the food was thrown

down; but David's temper was such that we never ventured into his paddock, contenting ourselves by throwing the mealies over the hedge or wall that bounded the field. This field, or enclosure, by the way, was not a small piece of ground which one could take in at a glance. It was more than a mile in extent, undulating in form, with a stream bisecting it, and mimosa bushes scattered here and there, so that from any one point you could not see the entire field, or ascertain its exact form or size. Sometimes, on going into such a field, one has to look about for the birds also to "look out" for them, as they are prone to sudden assault!

But David Marais required no looking for. His large eagle-eye had detected us from afar, and we found him at the nearest extremity of the nearest angle of his grounds ready to give us battle, pacing slowly to and fro, with that peculiar motion of the wings which indicates suppressed wrath.

We rode along close to his hedge a short distance, and he marched with us, brushing against the hedge and showing an anxious desire to get at us. If there had been a gap in that hedge he would have charged like a thunderbolt, but there was no gap, and it is a strange fact that an ostrich cannot leap at least he will not. The merest trifle of an obstruction a bit of wall or hedge over which he could step with perfect ease is sufficient to check his advance and keep him in; that is, if he walks up to it, but he is a stupid bird, and if he runs up to such an obstruction he may tumble over it, gather himself up on the other side, and so continue the charge.

On reaching a part of the hedge which dipped into a hollow, Hobson dismounted and opened the sack with the peace-offering. The bird, after breasting up to the hedge and finding it impassable, sat down on what may be styled his elbows, scraped his wings on the ground, and rolled his head and neck about in a fashion that is indescribable. This, I was told, was his method of rousing himself, or of relieving his feelings. It looked more like making a fool of himself. A handful of mealies seemed to irritate him at first, but by degrees the temptation became too strong. He commenced to pick a few seeds ready, however, on the smallest provocation, to forsake them, charge up to the hedge, and hiss at us.

"Now, Johnny, I'll keep him in play," said Hobson senior. "You go round to the nest. Keep well down in the hollows, else he'll be sure to see you."

Johnny at once rode off. The suspicious David looked after him and showed a tendency to retire in the direction of his nest, but Hobson raised his forked stick over the hedge and made a demonstration therewith. This was more than enough.

Inflated with rage David at once accepted the challenge, and rushed back to the hedge, over which another handful of mealies were thrown at him, but mealies had lost much of their power by that time. Thus, with alternate taunt and temptation was the false attack maintained by the father, while the real attack was made by the son, at the other extremity of the fortress.

I followed the real attack. We did not go direct. The bird would at once have made for its nest had we done so. We rode off in the direction in which we had come until out of sight, and then, making a long circuit at full gallop, came round to the other end of the enclosure, from which point the enemy could not be seen.

There was a wall to cross, then a deep hollow through which the little stream ran, then a belt of pretty thick bushes, beyond which, on the open plain, the nest was known to lie if I may call that a nest which is a mere hollow in the sand, in which the eggs are laid. Here the female sits all day while the male marches about on guard. At night the male sits while the female goes about and feeds. They are most attentive parents, and there is a fitness in this arrangement as regards colour, for the brown female squatted on the brown Karroo is almost invisible in daylight, while the black male is equally invisible during the darkness of the night.

“You mustn’t come with me,” said Johnny, dismounting; “it would only increase the chance of my being seen by David.”

I was detailed, therefore, to the inglorious duty of holding the horses, while my young friend made the assault alone.

He leaped the wall, descended into the bed of the stream, scrambled up the opposite bank, crossed the clump of small wood, and came out into the open. Now a short piece of this open fifty yards or so, perhaps was visible from the lower end of the field, where Hobson and David were still coquetting with each other. Johnny tried to skulk over this open ground. He might as well have sought to evade the eyes of Argus. The long-sighted bird caught the very first glint of his cap. Insult and mealies were alike unavailing now. He forsook the sire and made at the son with his great compass-like legs, covering the ground in tremendous as well as rapid strides. No race-horse ever cleared the ground like David Marais! Johnny saw that the “game was up.” Applying his own long legs to the ground with a will, he rushed at the nest. The female bounced up, ran a few yards, and squatted in helpless stupidity. Johnny counted the eggs, turned, and fled. Not a moment too soon! Indeed he was too late, for the ostrich was already close up, and Johnny’s retreat by the way he had come was cut off; but he turned at a sharp angle, and made for another clump of bushes, through which he plunged with a wild hilarious laugh, into the safe retreat of

the river-bed. David Marais could not follow there, but he doubtless consoled himself with the reflection that he had gallantly defended his wife and little ones, and had beaten the enemy from the field!

Nothing of all this had I seen, for the belt of bushes hid the actors from view, but I heard the ringing laugh with rather anxious surprise, and saw Johnny emerge immediately after from the banks of the stream, flushed and panting from his adventure.

That I do not exaggerate the power and ferocity of these birds, may be gathered from an incident which occurred to Hobson himself, and which he related on our way home.

One morning he rode to the enclosure of the bird named Master, and entered, intending to feed him and his wife with mealies. Master must have risen off his wrong side that morning, for, instead of amiably accepting his breakfast, he made a sudden and furious rush at his benefactor. Hobson's horse wheeled round and bolted, no wonder, with the claw of an ostrich acting as a spur on his flank! The horse was so frightened that he fairly ran away. Master ran after him, and, being much fleeter, kept on kicking his legs and flanks, so that they were soon covered with blood, and once he kicked so high as to cut the crupper. The horse became almost mad with terror, and quite ungovernable. It was chased round and round the place, the walls being too high to leap, and the gate having been closed. At last the horse dashed madly into a mimosa bush, and stuck fast. The impetuous Master followed, but, before he could back out, Hobson caught him by the throat in his powerful grasp. He held on until Master choked. Not wishing to kill the bird, he then let go, and Master dropped like a stone. Hobson then galloped to the river, but Master, who recovered immediately, came rushing on to renew the attack. Hobson, however, had found shelter and safety behind some bushes in the bed of the stream.

Not long after our visit to David Marais, I went with Six-foot Johnny to the territory which belonged to Blind-boy. That sagacious bird was not so blind but that, with his one eye, he observed us coming, and met us more than half-way. Knowing him to be, comparatively, a peaceable bird, and being mounted, we entered the enclosure and rode towards him. From certain symptoms and rufflings of the feathers and cockings of the tail, however, my companion knew that Blind-boy was not as amiable as might have been wished.

"Take care," said Johnny.

"Why?" said I.

"Because he's angry."

The signs of wrath did not appear to me very obvious, but I afterwards came to understand that, in an ostrich, a small amount of demonstration means an extreme depth of anger.

We rode slowly forward. Blind-boy advanced as slowly, with a dangerous motion of the wings.

“Keep on this side of the ditch,” said Johnny. “Now, then, we’d better be off.”

Before I well understood that it was advisable to get out of the bird’s way, my companion had put spurs to his horse, and was off like an arrow. Or ever I was aware what my horse meant to do, I was almost thrown to the ground. He whirled on his hind-legs without orders, and went off like the wind. Nothing but a natural tendency to hold tight with my knees prevented me from being left beside Blind-boy. We went at racing-speed to the gate, and then found, on looking back, that we might have spared ourselves the rush, for Blind-boy was standing as we left him! The ditch had proved an impassable barrier, and he was gazing after us in apparent wonder at our haste. My own wonder at the smart behaviour of my horse was removed when Johnny told me that it was the identical steed his father had ridden when attacked, as I have described, by Master.

Johnny himself was once assaulted, trampled on, and severely cut about the head, by one of these same ostriches, and might have been killed if his father had not chanced to be at hand. Johnny was younger at the time, and, in the foolish ardour of youth, attempted to rise when knocked down. This gave the ostrich the opportunity of once and again repeating his blows. If the lad had lain still he would have suffered less. I might draw a beautiful moral on submission and humility out of this, but won’t.

Strange to say, the male ostrich loses nearly all his courage when out of his own proper paddock or domain. This was illustrated to me one morning in the case of Gouws. We were walking by the side of his enclosure, and he was advancing to meet us in his own warlike style, when we observed that the gate was open. Before we could get near to close it Gouws marched through. If we had entered his grounds an attack would have been highly probable, but no sooner did he find himself outside the accustomed wall than the spirit in him changed. He looked confusedly round at the unfamiliar objects, then dropped his defiant tail, and fled.

It cost us the better part of a forenoon, with temperature at 105 degrees in the shade, before we succeeded in driving that bird back into his own paddock, and all that time he was running away from us, overwhelmed, apparently, with

fear!

Letter 5.

More about Ostriches Karroo Gardens A Ride with Bonny Sketching under Difficulties Anecdotes and Incidents.

Ah, those were happy days, when, with a congenial spirit, I drove and galloped over the South African plains. There was not much in the way of thrilling incidents, to be sure, and nothing whatever of wild adventure, but there was novelty in everything, and possibilities enough to keep the spirit ever on the alert.

We used to ride out sometimes after steenboks, small brown creatures, that made little show when bagged, but then there were huge and horrid vultures to remind one of the sandy desert, and there were pauwsgigantic birds that were splendid eating; and the very thought that I trod on land which little more than quarter of a century back had been marked by the print of the royal lion was in itself sufficient to arouse unwonted interest, which was increased by the knowledge of the fact that the kloofs or glens and gorges of the blue hills on the horizon were at that time the natural homes of leopards or "Cape-tigers" and huge baboons.

These animals are, however, extremely wary. The baboons go about in troops, and are wont to leave a trusty old-man baboon on guard, while the rest go down at early morn to rob the settler of his fruits and vegetables. If the old man happens to see or scent danger he gives a signal and the troop flies helter-skelter to the nearest cliffs. They are therefore not easily got at by hunters. As to "tigers," they go about stealthily like cats. I was told there was not a chance of getting a shot at them, unless I went out with dogs and a hunting party for the purpose. As this could not be accomplished at the time, I had to content myself with smaller game.

Bonny, (one of Hobson's younger sons), and I went out one day after breakfast to try for a steenbok before dinner. There were plenty of them in the stretches of bush-land that dotted the Karroo in the immediate neighbourhood of the farmhouse.

Stretching out at a gallop with that light-hearted cheerfulness which is engendered by bright weather, fresh air, and a good mount, we skirted the river where Hreikie nursed her little flock.

Hreikie was a small Hottentot girl, as lightly clad as was compatible with propriety. Her face was dirty brown, her mouth large, her nose a shapeless elevation with two holes in the front of it. Her head was not covered, but

merely sprinkled with tight woolly knobs or curls the size of peas. Each knob grew apart from its neighbour knob, and was surrounded, so to speak, by bald or desert land. This style of hair was not peculiar to Hreikie alone, but to the whole Hottentot race. Hreikie's family consisted of thirty-three young ostriches, which, though only a few weeks of age, stood, I think, upwards of two feet high. Some of them had been brought out by artificial incubation had been heated, as it were, into existence without maternal aid. These birds, Bonny said, had been already purchased for 15 pounds sterling apiece, and were deliverable to the purchaser in six months. They were fed and guarded all day and housed each evening with tender solicitude by their Hottentot stepmother, whom the birds evidently regarded as their own natural parent.

We swept on past the garden, where, on a previous morning, Bonny and I had killed a deadly green-tree snake upwards of five feet long, and where, on many other mornings, he and I, with sometimes other members of the family entered into strong temptation among the magnificent fruit. We used to overcome the temptation by giving way to it! There were plums, peaches, figs, apples, apricots, grapes, nectarines, and other fruits, with which the trees were so laden that some of the branches had given way and their luscious loads were lying on the ground. Cartloads of these were given away to friends, and to any one, as there was no market for their disposal.

Many splendid gardens like this exist on what is sometimes styled the barren Karroo; but the land is anything but barren. All it requires is a copious supply of water, and wherever farmers have taken the trouble to form dams and store the heavy though infrequent rains, gardens of the most prolific kind have been the result. The Karroo-bush itself, which gives name to these plains, is a succulent plant, which thrives in the almost waterless soil, and forms a rich pasturage for sheep and cattle. Hobson's garden copiously watered by streams led out from his large dams was a beautiful shady oasis of green and gold, in the midst of what, to some eyes, might have appeared a desert, but which, if irrigated properly, would become a perfect paradise of fertility.

We cantered on over the plain, till the garden and the farm looked in the distance like ships at sea, and rode among the bushes that crowned a rising ground. We set up some guinea-fowl and other birds, and startled a hare, but let them go, as our aim was steenboks. The little boks, however, were not on the knoll that day, so away we went again at a gallop until the garden and the farm went down on the horizon.

Sometimes we kept together and chatted, at other times we diverged and skirted small clumps of underwood on opposite sides. At one time, while separated from Bonny, I saw a large stone lying on the ground. As I looked, the stone began to crawl! It was a tortoise, fully as large as a soup-tureen. The

sight of an animal in its “native wilds,” which you have all your life been accustomed to see in zoological gardens, has something peculiar, almost absurd, in it. As it is with animals, so it is with other objects. I remember being impressed with this idea, for the first time, in the south of France, when I beheld a tree covered with lemons fruit which, up to that period, had been connected in my mind with grocers’ windows and brown sugar!

I turned aside and dismounted. The sluggish tortoise stopped, recognised in me an enemy, and drew in its head and feet. After lifting and looking at him I set him down. Then it occurred to me that some one had said a tortoise could carry a man. I stepped upon this one’s back forthwith. He lay perfectly still for some time. At last with great caution the head and feet were protruded. Another pause, as if of meditation, then the feet were applied to the ground; they pushed and strained, until finally the creature advanced about two inches, and then stopped! This was not much, but it was sufficient to prove his great strength, and to convince me that a large tortoise could easily have walked off with a little boy.

I found Bonny dismounted and waiting.

“No steenboks to-day, I fear,” he said.

“We must have a shot at something, Bonny,” said I, dismounting, and sitting down on an anthill. Having been a fair average shot in a rifle corps in Scotland I took careful aim at a small bush, bent on doing credit to the British Volunteers. The result was a “bull’s-eye.”

“Capital!” exclaimed Bonny; “if you shoot like that you’ll kill plenty of boks.”

Half an hour later I was passing round the left of a knoll, while Bonny took the right. Up leaped a steenbok, which ran a hundred yards or so, and stopped to look at me. I was already off the horse and down in the Hythe position. A careful aim was again taken. The result was “a miss!” while the small deer vanished like the smoke of my rifle. So great is the difference between target-practice and hunting!

It was time now to think of returning for dinner. I was thoroughly lost by that time in the vast plain like a ship at sea without a compass. But Bonny was as knowing in Karroo-craft as a Kentucky hunter is in wood-craft. He steered as true a course for home as if he had smelt the leg of mutton that was roasting at the fire. Probably he did in imagination! Soon the two ships reappeared on the horizon; our fleet nags quickly transformed them into the garden and the farm, and in half an hour we were relating our mild adventure round Hobson’s hospitable board.

“I’m going to visit brother Jonathan after dinner: will you come?” said my host.

“Yes, with pleasure,” said I, “but first, while you have your siesta, (midday nap), I will go into the opposite field and make that long-talked-of sketch of your house.”

“Very good; I’ll send for you when the cart is ready. There are some ostriches in the field, but you don’t need to mind them, for they are quite young, although full-grown.”

It is a common custom among South Africans to take a nap in the heat of the day during summer. They dine early, and the power of the sun at that part of the day renders work almost impossible. I could not at first fall in with this custom; therefore, while the family retired, I took my sketch-book and colours and went off to the field.

There was a mound, whence I could obtain a good view of the house with its surroundings, the cattle-kraal or enclosure, the course of the little stream, with one of the small dams or lakelets, and the garden, the whole backed by the blue mountain range on the horizon.

The sun was blazing fiercely, but, as before remarked, I delight in heat. Selecting a stone I sat down, opened my book and colour-box, and began. To those who don’t know it, I may say that sketching is a most fascinating and engrossing species of work. I soon forgot where I was, forgot Hobson, forgot time, forgot every thing in fact except the glowing face of nature, when a sound recalled me. I looked round and observed eight or ten huge ostriches stalking towards me with slow funereal gait. I felt somewhat uneasy, for their youth, of which Hobson had assured me, was in no way indicated by their huge bodies and dreadful legs. However, I had taken the precaution to carry my forked stick, and drawing it nearer continued at my work with an easier mind. If they meant war I knew escape to be hopeless, for the nearest wall was a quarter of a mile off.

The females halted at a respectful distance, but two of the largest black males came stalking close up to me and stood still, gazing intently, first with one eye, then with the other, at a distance of about six yards.

Meanwhile some of the females sat down, and one of them put herself in an attitude so absurd that I introduced her into the drawing. Presently the largest male advanced a little nearer, and kept somewhat behind me. This was embarrassing. It occurred to me that, in the art of war, an attacking party is supposed to have the advantage of one that is assaulted. I therefore rose, brought my fork to the charge, and went at the bird with a furious roar. It

turned and ran a few yards, but stopped when I stopped, and began to return slowly, as before, the moment I had sat down. As it drew nearer I observed that it eyed my colour-box curiously. Stories about the peculiar taste of these giant birds recurred to me. People say they will eat anything. Their digestive powers have passed into a proverb. The day before I had given an ostrich a large apple, which it coolly bolted, and I could trace the progress of the apple by the lump in its throat as it passed rather slowly down. Some one Bonny I rather think had told me he had seen an ostrich accept and swallow a bottle of shoe-blackening! Anything bright is sure to attract the eye of an ostrich and be coveted. I trembled for my colour-box, and, seizing my fork, charged again.

About this time Bonny himself came to say that the cart was ready. We therefore packed up and came away. The ostriches, he said, were too young to think of molesting us, though he admitted that they would probably have swallowed the colour-box if I had allowed them. They followed us down to the gate, and finally saw us safely off their premises.

“Father once had an ostrich,” said Bonny, as we walked towards the house, “that caught a couple of thieves for him.”

“Indeed! how was that, Bonny?”

“You are aware that Kafirs are terrible thieves?” he replied.

“Yes, I’ve been given to understand that they have propensities that way.”

“Oh! but you have no idea how clever they are at it, and the Totties are just as bad, if not worse. On one occasion we had a nest of eggs in the field over there, which we had left to be hatched in the natural way by the hen-ostrich. One night it rained very hard so hard that we feared the young ones would be drowned in the nest, so brother Johnny was sent to look after them. He took two Totties with him. It was very dark, but he found the nest with the cock bird sitting on it. You know the cock always sits at night. Well, Johnny took him by the nose and pulled him off the nest, and gave him to the two Totties to hold. It was hard work, but they kept his head well down, so that he couldn’t kick. Johnny soon bagged all the little ones, leaped over the wall, and then called out to let go the cock. It was so dark that he couldn’t see very well. He could only hear a scuffle, and then saw the two men bounding over the wall like indiarubber balls while the cock went bang against it like a battering-ram. We got the little ones home all safe, but, would you believe it? these rascally Totties had managed to pull out all the best wing-feathers while they were holding the cock each feather worth, perhaps, twenty shillings or more and got clear away with them to the canteen, where they can always sell stolen goods.

“But that is not what I was going to tell you,” continued Bonny. “It was about

two Kafir thieves who were going round the country stealing. They came to our place one evening, and, in the course of their depredations, happened to cross one of the fields where a pair of our ostriches had a nest. The cock had not yet commenced his night duty on the nest. He caught sight of the two Kafirs, and was down on them instantly like lightning. They took refuge in a mimosa-thorn, and there he kept them all night. It was no use their trying to make a bolt for it, because twice or three times their speed could not have saved them from the ostrich. There they remained, and there father found them next morning, when he rode out to feed the birds.”

The sturdy sons of this Karroo farmer had no light duty to perform each day. The farm was twenty miles in length, and of variable breadth. There were no crops raised on it, save the fruit of the splendid garden already mentioned, some grapes, and a few mealies. The sources of gain were ostriches and their feathers, Angora goat hair, (mohair), horses, sheep-wool, and cattle, looking after which kept father and sons pretty constantly in the saddle. It was a dashing style of life, requiring robust health and spirits. I have seen one or both of the boys return of an evening after having been up at five or six, and out all day, scarce able to decide whether to eat or sleep! Counting and guarding the flocks formed a part of the duty.

One evening the report was brought that a horse and thirteen bucks had disappeared. The Kafir thief had driven them off in the direction of Somerset. There he had been questioned closely as to where he came from, etcetera. His replies not being satisfactory, the animals were seized and put in the pound, whence they were afterwards reclaimed, while the thief escaped being put in the “trunk,” or jail, by a sudden dart into the jungle of the Boschberg!

My friend and I were soon on the road which led to the farm of his brother Jonathan. It stood about two miles distant. On our way we had to pass one corner of the private domain of Black Jack, or David Marais, I forget which I think it was the former. He was there ready for us, and evidently in a rage at the mere possibility of our intrusion, for the wings were going like flails and the tail was up. Hobson pulled up to look at him for a minute. I got down and went to the wall, knowing that it afforded perfect security. Black Jack came up slowly, as if he meant no mischief. I leant over the wall, which was breast-high, and poked fun at him. In an instant, like a flash of light, he came at me. I saw his great claw over my head, and almost before I could jump back, a couple of heavy stones were driven violently off the top of the wall. To bolt and jump into the cart was almost an involuntary and instantaneous impulse on my part, though there was no need for haste, because the furious biped could not leap the wall.

“Yes,” remarked my friend, with a quiet chuckle, as we drove along; “I

expected as much. Black Jack is in a bad humour to-day.”

The farm of Jonathan lay at the side of the stream which watered that of his brother. It was a pretty place. We drove through the stream to get to the house. On entering we found Jonathan standing in his hall, besprinkled with his own blood, and smiling. He was one of those tall, thin, powerful sort of men, with genial good-humour wrinkling the corners of their eyes, who seem to be ready to smile at everything, pleasant or otherwise, that befalls them.

“Hallo! what’s wrong, Jonathan?” asked his brother, with a touch of tenderness in his tone.

“Nothing particular,” replied the other; “I’ve just had a tussle with one of my birds. He wriggled out of the stick and kicked me.”

On more particular inquiry we found that Jonathan and his son another powerful six-footer had gone that morning to search for eggs, which they felt sure must have been laid somewhere about the enclosed field. To keep the male bird in play while the search was being made, the father took his forked stick, met the cock in single combat, clapped the fork on his neck, and let him kick away. All might have gone well, for the father, besides being strong, was accustomed to such work; but the bird, instead of keeping up a straightforward assault, as it ought to have done, turned its back to its foe, wriggled its neck, in some inexplicable manner, out of the fork, and before it could be refixed had given Jonathan several tremendous kicks. One of these nearly tore his trousers to pieces, and another cut him across the right wrist into the bone. This rendered his right arm powerless for the moment, and it might have gone ill with him, had not his son, who was still in sight, observed what had occurred, and run back to the rescue. As it was, the father’s wrist was severely, though I hope not permanently, damaged.

On a certain occasion three friends visited Ebenezer. One of these we shall call him Squib was a sporting character, and anxious to have a shot at the guinea-fowl which abounded on the farm. Hobson, with his usual kindness, readily agreed to pilot him and his friends.

“The ground, however,” said Hobson, “is part of the domain which belongs to one of my ostriches, whose temper is uncertain. I don’t feel sure of him. Perhaps it would be better”

“Oh! never mind that,” interrupted Squib; “we’re not afraid of ostriches. Come along.”

“Very well,” returned the host, “come along.”

And along they went to the domain of Gouws, who was found pacing solemnly inside the wall of his enclosure. His wings were active, and his tail was cocked. Otherwise he was calm enough to all appearance. Hobson knew that the bird was in a rage, and said so, but his friends, who were young and reckless, insisted on entering the enclosure.

They did so, and Gouws followed them with a stately air, but did not attack, being no doubt perplexed by numbers.

They walked in Indian file, Hobson being the last of the line.

“I could turn him with a bit of a bush,” said Squib, glancing at Gouws, who was drawing gradually nearer to the party. “Just cut one for me, Hobson, will you, like a good fellow?”

Hobson turned aside and stooped to cut a branch from a mimosa bush.

Just then the ostrich, which had marched ahead of the party, turned sharp round and charged. Poor Squib tripped, by good luck, and fell as the bird passed over him. It kicked down the other two, and sprang on the shoulders of the stooping Hobson, who fell and gashed his finger as the bird tumbled over him.

The whole party rose with marvellous celerity, and the sportsmen rushed towards the boundary wall, while Gouws scrambled on his long legs and ran after them. Had the distance been great, their chance of escape would have been small. As it was, Gouws overtook one of the party just as he reached a part of the wall which had been mended with mimosa-thorn bushes. With one tremendous kick he sent the unfortunate man into the midst of the thorns, where he would certainly have given him further punishment had he not been attracted by a yell of alarm from another of the party. Poor Squib was not fleet of foot or active. He made a clumsy attempt to vault the wall, which his companions had already leaped. Leaving his thorn-pierced victim, Gouws made at Squib, applied his huge foot to his person, with a slap that must have forcibly recalled the days of childhood, and sent him over the wall with undignified haste. It is generally believed that Squib has not gone guinea-fowl shooting among ostriches since that day!

The profits on ostrich feathers are very considerable. I do not profess to give statistical information in these pages, but merely touch lightly on what came under my observation. At one farm which I visited near Capetown I was told that the owner had cleared 2500 pounds in one year. Timid men are sometimes alarmed by depressions in the trade in feathers, and some of them have sold off their birds at heavy loss; but bold and hopeful men continue to persevere and prosper, as such men always will in every trade all the world over. That

ostrich-farming has been found worthy of zealous attention is proved by the fact that, while in 1865 there were only between eighty and ninety birds in the colony, in 1875 there were upwards of 22,000. (In 1925 there were 239,000.)

Some days afterwards, I pretty well completed my circle of knowledge on this subject by witnessing the birth of an ostrich!

Hobson and I rode that day over to a lovely place named Glenbonny, on the edge of that part of the Karroo where the mountainous lands begin. It was a charming ride of forty miles there and back with a pleasant visit, and a rest between. Here dwelt relatives of my friend a family named Berrington one daughter of which, (with wealth of golden hair), had been a shipmate on the voyage out. The principal neighbours of this family were tigers and baboons. There was a minor population of deer, hyenas, hares, conies, monkeys, and moles, but no human beings of any kind. Their dwelling was low and flat-roofed, the walls being coated with mud, so that its aspect outside was not imposing, but inside we found substantial comfort if not luxury, refinement, and hospitality. This is not an infrequent combination in the outlying districts of the Cape, where the nature of life and things is such that wealth, education, and refinement are often found robed in a modest homespun garb, and housed in a mere hut.

Among other objects of interest inside we found ostriches very little ones in divers stages of progression. There was one, the size of an ordinary fowl, which had been in existence after egg life I mean a few days, and swaggered about the premises like an impudent child. There was another baby weak in the understanding, physically as well as mentally which staggered about in a drunken manner, with an insane tendency to use its tail as a support. This creature was kept in existence by having its food forcibly crammed down its throat, the amount given each meal being gauged not by appetite but by the tension of its stomach. Last, and not least, there was one which had succeeded in bursting out one end of its native egg that morning. Its already tremendous toes protruded, and were engaged in further efforts to get out when we arrived. While we were at dinner that day the creature effected its liberation, and entered on the staggering and stuffing phase of its career.

All these birds, and many others, had been nursed into life through a hot-air and warm blanket incubator, by the amiable lady of the house, and were destined to spend the early part of their lives under the care of some Hottentot stepmother.

Letter 6.

Over the Plains Lion and Tiger Reminiscences Frontier Forces and Escaped

Convicts, Monkeys and Prickly Pears A Veteran Settler's Experiences of Kafir Warfare Story of the Dutch Farmers' Rising in 1815.

It was a sad day that on which I left the Karroo and bade farewell to Ebenezer.

I had gone there in absolute ignorance of men and things, and had found a hearty welcome in the abode of a warm-hearted Christian family and a romantic region, full, to me, of new ideas, experiences, circumstances, and sensations.

Hobson drove me in his cart. Our destination was the mountain region of Baviaans, or Baboons, River.

The first part of our route lay across the Karroo and over the mountain range which separated us from the town of Somerset East. As we sped along, drawn by two powerful horses, over the ocean-like plains, we were silent at first, but gradually the cheering influence of rapid motion and fine weather began to tell. Our spirits rose, and Hobson related numerous anecdotes, historical and adventurous, from the rich stores of a good memory.

About noon we outspanned beside a stream and allowed the horses to have a roll. Under the shade of a bush we lay and chatted, while our eyes roamed over the rolling plains to the blue mountain range which formed its northern boundary.

“There,” said my friend, pointing towards the mountains, “is the spot where one of the last lions was seen in this part of the country. There were plenty of them here once, and the last one disappeared in 1840, only thirty-six years ago.”

He then related the incident connected with the lion referred to. The following is the substance of it.

Early in the year 1840 a runaway soldier was travelling through that part of the country. He was on his way to Graaff-Reinet in search of work. At that time farmhouses were very few and far between in that region. The wearied soldier came one evening to the house of a Boer named Smit, not many miles from the spot where Hobson and I were reposing.

Smit was a surly fellow, and refused shelter to the traveller, who was therefore obliged to continue his journey during the night. Next day the unfortunate man's mangled body was found not far off, a few yards from the foot of a small tree. The traces revealed clearly that he had been killed by a lion, whose footprints had been seen and voice heard for some time in the neighbourhood. On the approach of the lion the man had sought refuge in the small tree just

mentioned, but being little better than a large bush, it failed him in the hour of need. Even when perched on the highest branch that would bear him, he was not beyond the spring of the lion. It had caught him, torn him down, and devoured his breast and arms, after which it left him.

This was the last lion in that region that succeeded in taking human life. Six months later the last lion of all made his appearance. He was evidently a less ferocious animal, and made his final exit in a rather humorous manner. In his prowling about he chanced to find an old Dutchman, and pounced upon him, but the old man had his wits about him. At first sight of his enemy he let himself go limp as if dead. Lions are particular. They don't like dead meals; they prefer to kill their own dinners. After pouncing on his prey the lion put his mouth to the old fellow's ear and roared. If he was not deaf for life after that he ought to have been! At all events he was deaf at the time to the remark, for he paid no attention to it whatever. Then the lion pawed him a little, lay down on him, rolled him about as a cat plays with a mouse, and ultimately couched a few yards off to watch jealously for the slightest sign of life. But the Dutchman was a splendid actor. Even in breathing he managed to remain motionless, and at last the lion sneaked away overwhelmed with disappointment. Then the old man slowly lifted his head, rose, congratulated himself, and returned home in a thankful state of mind.

Although lions had finally taken themselves off, and retired to safer and more distant retreats, the mountain glens of the neighbourhood were, as I have already said, still inhabited by leopards of large size and dangerous temper.

"They are powerful and savage fellows," said my friend, as he rose to inspan, "and few men like to face them unless assisted by a party, and with good dogs. One friend of mine, a doctor, used to boast that he could stare a leopard out of countenance. At last one was caught in a trap, and the doctor tried the experiment, but only got knocked over and his nose scratched for his pains. There was a curious instance, once, of a Fingo going mad in consequence of being bitten by a leopard. The madness took the form of his feigning to be a leopard, and there was no doubt as to his insanity, for he continually growled and scratched and snapped with his teeth, and finished off by jumping through a glass door. Now then, the cart's ready; in you go."

I jumped in, and off we went again over the sweet-scented plain, now on a good bit of road, now on a bad; often forsaking the track altogether, and occasionally plunging into holes that knocked our heads against the hood, and tried our springs to the uttermost, till evening at last found us among the hills, where a rough-and-ready inn afforded us shelter for the night.

Passing through Somerset we came to a place named Cookhouse Drift, where

there is a bridge over the Great Fish River.

We also met here with seven troopers of the frontier, armed and mounted police, as tight and serviceable a set of young fellows as one could wish to see clad in corduroy, thorough-going, rough-and-ready colonial cavalry and well-trained to bush fighting. They were out after seven escaped convicts, and had caught one, a big Kafir, who was handcuffed, and seemed sulky when I looked at him.

At another place, where the prickly pear was very prolific, and the bush so dense that it formed a pretty safe retreat to escaped convicts, as well as baboons and tigers, we discovered a band of Kafirs celebrating a wedding.

The prickly pears, which were ripe at this time, we found to be very pleasant and refreshing, but we had to handle them with care, as they were covered with prickles so fine that they pierced the skin and broke off the pear with the least touch. The great evil of prickly pear thorns is that it is almost impossible to extract them, and although it can scarcely be said that they cause pain, the irritation they produce is great and prolonged. The monkeys know this well!

I was greatly amused once, while delayed at a road-side inn, by the antics of a monkey with a prickly pear. I had fed him with part of one, of which he seemed passionately fond. Wishing to know whether monkeys as well as men were cautious in handling the fruit, I pulled another by means of a couple of sticks. The usual mode of proceeding is to rub the pear on the ground with a bunch of grass, and thus remove the prickles, when it may be handled with impunity. Without doing this, however, I lifted the pear with my sticks and handed it to Jacko. He looked at it earnestly for a few seconds, then at me with a round mouth and reproachful eyes, as though to say, "You don't mean that, do you?"

I smiled and nodded.

Jacko looked again at the pear and put one finger towards it with great caution, but drew back and looked up at me again, as if to say, "Won't you help me?"

I smiled again and shook my head, whereupon he went to work with the most gingerly and delicate touches, as if he were handling red-hot iron. At last he managed to tear a hole in the skin, into which he inserted his black nose, and greedily devoured the contents. Despite his caution, however, I noticed that Jacko kept scratching his hands pretty steadily for some time afterwards.

As we advanced into the hills the roads became unimaginably bad. In one place our track had been carried away by a flood, and the boulder-covered bed of the torrent was our only road.

At last we got up into the mountain region of Glen Lynden, the place to which the Scotch settlers were sent by Government in 1820, under the care of Thomas Pringle, the “African poet,” who, among other pieces, wrote the beautiful poem which begins:

“Afar in the desert I love to ride,

With the silent bushboy alone by my side.”

The descendants of the 1820 men now occupy these valleys. Both in physique and character they do credit to their sires.

Here I met one of the few survivors of the original settlers, Mr Dodds Pringle, and brother to the poet. (This happened about 1876.) Although upwards of seventy, and a large, stout man, I saw him mount his horse with the activity of a man of thirty. At his house in Glen Lynedock, where I spent a night, they showed me an assagai, or Kafir spear, which had been bent into the form of a half-moon against his, (Mr Pringle’s), stomach! It happened thus:

He was out fighting with the rest of the farmers in the war of 1851, and one day was attacked by Kafirs, one of whom flung his assagai at him with tremendous force. Mr Pringle had just fired his rifle, and was reloading when the assagai struck him. It was arrested, however, in its deadly flight by his belt and bullet-pouch. The savage rushed forward, intending to finish his adversary by a thrust from a short spear, but old Pringle guarded the thrust with one hand, while, with the other, he drew a pistol and shot the Kafir through the heart. At that moment another savage ran at him, but a comrade of Pringle suddenly came on the scene and the savage turned to fly. The comrade took aim at him.

“Be cool, and take him low,” said Pringle, undoing his belt to examine his wound.

The comrade fired, and the savage fell.

“Are you killed?” asked the comrade, turning to Pringle and glancing at the bent assagai.

“I don’t know,” replied the other, with a serious look, as he thrust his hand under his waist-belt, “there’s no hole that I can find, anyhow.”

The hand, when withdrawn, was covered with blood, but it was found on examination that the wound was slight, thanks to the providential interposition of the thick bullet-pouch. The old gentleman is now naturally fond of showing the weapon which had so nearly proved fatal.

Advancing into the Baviaans River District we passed through many places of historic interest, and scenery that must have reminded the Scottish settlers of the rugged glens to which they had bidden farewell for ever.

Among other places, Hobson pointed out a small cavern, high up on the cliffs, which was the scene of a cruel affray not many years before the arrival of the Scotch settlers in the district.

As it illustrates the wild frontier life of those times, and bears on the subject of the grievances of early colonists, I shall relate it.

There was a Dutch Boer, a farmer named Bezuidenhout, who, in the year 1815, dwelt in the lonely and wild recesses of the Baviaans River District. He seems to have been a passionate, headstrong man. The Dutch Boers were generally honest, sterling men, though at that time very ignorant, being far removed from the means of instruction. But the Dutchmen, not less than others, had wild and foolish men amongst them who were easily misled by unprincipled adventurers.

Bezuidenhout seems to have been one of these; at all events he was savage enough to treat one of his Hottentot servants so ill that he was cited to appear before the Court of his district, and was foolish enough to resist the summons. A messenger was therefore sent to arrest him, and as he was known to be a daring character, and had threatened to shoot any limb of the law who should dare to approach his residence, twenty men of the Cape Corps, under Lieutenant Rousseau accompanied the messenger.

On reaching the mountain home of Bezuidenhout they found him prepared. He and a powerful half-caste in his employment were found sheltered behind the high wall of a cattle enclosure, well armed. The Dutchman called to the soldiers to stop, else he would shoot the first man. Disregarding the threat, the lieutenant extended his men in skirmishing order, and attacked. Bezuidenhout fired, happily missed, and retreated into his house, whence he passed by a back-door into the thick jungle in rear. They lost him for a time, but finally traced him to a steep krantz, or precipice, up the almost inaccessible face of which he and his follower had taken refuge in a small cavern. The muzzles of their rifles were seen protruding from the entrance. Lieutenant Rousseau therefore crept up warily, until he reached a ledge above the aperture, from which point he challenged the farmer to surrender, telling him the reason of his being there, and assuring him of personal safety.

The man replied he would die rather than submit. The Lieutenant endeavoured to persuade him to surrender, but he was obdurate. Night was approaching.

The officer was anxious to get his men out of these dark kloofs in daylight. He therefore ordered them to ascend in two bodies. They did so, reached the cave, and rushed to the entrance, from which Bezuidenhout fired, but without effect, the muzzle of his rifle having been thrown up. At the same moment one of the soldiers fired into the cavern, and shot the farmer dead on the spot. The servant surrendered, and on entering the place it was found that a large quantity of ammunition had been collected there, evidently with a view to standing a siege.

After the departure of the military, the relations and friends of the unfortunate and misguided man assembled to bury him, and, over his grave, they vowed to avenge his death. A brother of Bezuidenhout spoke to them, and so wrought on their feelings that a great number of the farmers of that and the neighbouring districts ultimately assembled under arms, with the avowed intention of ridding themselves altogether of British interference! They went still further, and took a step which might have been much more serious. They sent Cornelius Faber, a brother-in-law of the Bezuidenhouts, to the Kafir chief Gaika for the purpose of rousing that savage and his hordes to attack the Colony.

Of course the Government was obliged to frustrate such an attempt with all possible speed. Troops were immediately sent against the rebels, under Colonel Cuyler. One of the rebel leaders, named Prinsloo, was captured at a critical moment, and the main body, amounting to between three and four hundred, was finally met with. But before proceeding to extremities, a field-commandant, William Nel, volunteered to go alone among the rebels, and reason with them. He did so, and was so far successful as to shake the resolution of some, for, although disaffected, many of these men were by no means so foolish as their leaders. Indeed, many of them had been threatened and coerced into rebellion. Seeing the effect of Nel's remonstrances, Faber, Bezuidenhout, and other leaders, assembled their forces at a place called Slachters Nek, and exacted from them an oath to remain faithful to each other until they had expelled the tyrants from the frontier.

Next morning Colonel Cuyler proceeded to attack them. On his approach thirty or more of them threw down their arms in token of surrender; the remainder, seeing that resistance would be hopeless, retired into the fastnesses of Baviaans River. There they were followed and surrounded, and an attempt was made to bring them to submission, but during the night most of them managed to escape by familiar mountain passes.

The principal leaders, rejecting all terms, escaped with their wagons, families, and goods to the Winterberg Mountains, bordering on Kafirland, where they hoped to be safe; but, being followed up hotly by a body of troops under

Major Fraser, they were eventually overtaken and surrounded in a deep kloof. Here six of them were brought to bay, among whom were Faber, with his wife, his son a lad of fourteen years, and John Bezuidenhout. These, retiring behind the wagons, a skirmish began, which was not concluded until one of the soldiers was killed, another wounded, Bezuidenhout shot, and Faber and his wife and son severely wounded. Then the party were taken prisoners.

Subsequently fifty or sixty of the other rebels were captured and taken to Capetown. Of these, thirty-nine of the most culpable were tried on the charge of high treason. Six were condemned to death; the others, after being compelled to witness the execution of their leaders, were to undergo various degrees of punishment, according to their proved guilt. One of the six had the capital sentence commuted to transportation for life, and the remaining five ringleaders were executed.

Letter 7.

Lion-Hunting, etcetera, in the Early Days Bushmen and their Troubles.

It is deeply interesting to tread in the footsteps of bold adventurous men, and visit the scenes which have been rendered classic by their deeds of heroic daring or of patient endurance. So I found it during my brief sojourn in the regions of Baviaans River, where, upwards of fifty years before, my countrymen had faced, fought, and subdued the savage, the wilderness, and the wild-beast.

The every-day life of the early settlers of this region cannot be better illustrated than by a brief quotation from the diary of one of them.

“October 1st. Arrival of the Somerset wagon with flour, seed-corn, etcetera. I discharged the servant Sandy from the party, gave him a pass, countersigned by the Deputy-Landdrost, and sent him off with the Somerset wagon towards Grahamstown. This lad has turned out to be at once a fool and a blackguard, and quite beyond hope of reform.

“4th. A sharp frost last night blighted all our early potatoes, pumpkins, melons, kidney-beans, etcetera. It appears we had sown some of our seed too early.

“8th, Sunday. A troop of about twenty quaggas galloped through the corner of our gardens during divine service.

“9th. A herd of hartebeests passed close to our huts, pursued by a pack of six wild dogs (*Hyaena venatica*). Fired at the latter, but without effect. This day Mr John Rennie, being out hunting on Hyndhope Fells, fell in with two wild Bushmen, dressed in sheepskins. They ran off on his approach, but made no

demonstration of hostility. He came upon six hyenas devouring a hartebeest, and brought me its skull and horns.

“11th. Visited by three Boers from the Tarkadesirous of exchanging horses and cattle for guns and ammunition. Completed my map of the location.

“16th. Surprised by a slight fall of snow; weather chill and cloudy. The laughing hyena heard near the folds last night. The sound truly horrible.

“21st. Fine weather. Killed a large yellow snake.

“23rd. Received a visit from our district clergyman, the Reverend J. Evans of Cradock. He brought a packet from the Landdrost conveying letters from the Colonial Secretary, assuring me of the continued support of the Government, and giving us the agreeable intelligence that a party of emigrants from the West of Scotland were speedily expected out, who would be located close beside us. Received also very pleasant letters from Scotland, from Dr Philip, and from our parted comrade Mr Elliott. Religious service in the evening by Mr Evans. All much pleased and comforted.

“24th. Mr G. Rennie, who at my request had gone with a party of Hottentots to explore the country beyond the mountains towards the Koonap River, returned with a very favourable report of it. Abundance of wood, water, and rich pasturage. He saw a great deal of large game, and the recent traces of elephants. Shot a gnu and hartebeest.

“November 1st. The weather warm and serene, like the finest summer weather in England. Two snakes and a large scorpion killed. Turtle-doves, touracoos, thrushes, finches, and other birds of beautiful plumage become numerous.

“6th. Violent storm of thunder. The peals fearfully loud. Magnificent clouds at sunset.

“15th. A tiger-wolf broke into the kraal last night, and killed several sheep.

“22nd. A wolf-trap constructed, with the aid of the Hottentots, of large stones and timber.

“29th. A wolf caught in the trap.

“December 4th. A heavy rain for three days swells the river to an unfordable size. All the dry beds of torrents filled with furious floods.

“7th. Weather again warm and serene. Mr G. Rennie kills another wild-boar at Glen Vair.

“19th. My brother John finds stone fit for millstones, and with the aid of one of the Hottentots begins to construct a small mill.

“29th. My father narrowly escapes being gored by a furious ox. Blight appears in the wheat.

“30th. Receive a large packet of letters and newspapers from Scotland. All deeply interested. This is the first packet of British newspapers that has reached us.”

How all the Robinson-Crusoe blood in one's veins is stirred by such a diary! Truly I sometimes almost regret that I was not born to become a pioneer settler in the African wilds!

However, it is some comfort to have the privilege of paying a flying visit to these same wilds, which in many respects are quite as wild now as they were then. The lions, elephants, quaggas, and some others of the large game, it is true, have taken themselves off to remoter wilds, but the leopards, hyenas, baboons, antelopes, still inhabit these kloofs, while snakes, scorpions, and the like are as plentiful as ever.

Talking of baboons reminds me that these creatures are said to sleep sometimes on a ledge of rock on the face of a precipice for security against lurking foes. I was assured that sometimes a row of them may be seen in such a situation sitting sound asleep, with their faces in their hands, against the precipice, and their tails hanging over the ledge. Of course I do not vouch for the truth of such reports. I am answerable only for what I profess to have seen.

The highest type of monkey suggests the lowest type of man in Africa. This is the Bushman, or, as the Dutch have it, Bosjesman. He is a branch of the Hottentot race, and a very miserable, stunted branch; nevertheless he is very far indeed removed from the baboon. He has no tail, for certain; at least if he has, he conceals it effectually. He wears garments, which no monkey does, and he speaks, which no monkey ever did.

No thanks to the white man, however, if the poor Bushman is not a baboon with the spirit of a tiger, for he has been most shamefully treated in time past. It is true the Bushmen were arrant thieves, and committed great havoc among the frontier farmers at various times, and it was both natural and right that these farmers should defend their homes and property. But it was neither right nor natural that these unfortunate natives should have been so cruelly dealt with.

When the Scotch party settled at Glen Lynden, their troubles with wild-beast pilferers were augmented occasionally by the appearance of Bosjesman-

thieves.

“In the beginning of October,” writes Mr Pringle, “we were somewhat alarmed by the discovery of a band of predatory Bushmen, lurking among the rocks and caverns of the wild mountains between us and the valley of the Tarka. Lieutenant Pettingal, an officer of engineers, who was then in our valley, engaged in the Government survey of the country, discovered this horde in searching for some of his horses that were missing. Suspecting, from the traces, that they had been carried off by Bushmen, he went out with an armed troop in pursuit, and came upon a party of these wild marauders in one of the most savage recesses of the neighbouring mountains. They were at breakfast, on a grey horse which they had slaughtered, and had steaks roasting on the fire cut out of the flank, with the hide still upon them. Pettingal, enraged by the supposed loss of his best blood-horse, poured in a volley upon them; but, apparently, without effect, for they all scrambled off with inconceivable agility among the rocks and bushes. He recovered, however, some of his own horses, and eight belonging to our neighbour which were tied up under an overhanging cliff near the top of a mountain.”

There were no Bushmen running wild among the beautiful hills and valleys of Glen Lynden when Hobson and I entered it, but the region was not free, as I have related, from naked Kafirs, and it is still noted for its population of hairy baboons.

Letter 8.

Rain! Rain! Rain! Baboons River Seahorse Kloof We hunt the Hills on Horseback in spite of Rain Floods and Accidents Part from Hobson Mail-Carts and Diamond-Diggers.

Rain is a blessed refreshment to the thirsty land; it is a life-giving cordial to the thirsty soul; but when rain descends in torrents and without cessation during the greater part of one's brief holiday, or at any other very unseasonable period, and when one is not thirsty, it becomes depressing, to say the least.

Thus was I treated by rain during my week in Baviaans River. Hobson and I had at last pushed up into the very heart of that wild mountain region, the allotted home of the Scottish settlers of 1820, the scene of many Kafir raids and battles.

For months before we had lived in perpetual sunshine. Hobson had sighed for a drop of rain. Sometimes South Africans have to sigh for a twelve-month before relief is sent. Even while I write, the colony is suffering excessively from drought, and many farmers have been ruined. On the Karroo I had almost

come to forget the sensation of being rained upon, and an umbrella there would have appeared as great an impropriety as a muslin overcoat in Nova Zembla. Nevertheless, no sooner did we arrive at Seahorse Kloof than the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain came down steadily night and day, while the sky presented a universal grey that would have done credit to the Scottish Highlands. It was too bad!

My main object in penetrating to these rugged wilds was to visit one of the Pringles, a relative of personal friends on the borders of my own land. Finding that Mr Pringle was absent from home, we turned aside to visit a cousin of Hobson's, a Mr John Edwards, who dwelt in what appeared to me the fag-end of the world, a lonely farmhouse, at the head of the mountain gorge named Seahorse Kloof.

"It's a splendid country," said Hobson, "with lots of game, and Edwards is a noted hunter, besides being a capital fellow."

What more could man desire? We arrived full of hope and spirits, received a hearty welcome, and awoke next day to find the sky grey, as I have said, and the rain descending steadily.

Of course we hoped against hope, but as day after day came and went, our hopes and spirits sank. Then there came a reaction that is not uncommon in the circumstances, we grew desperate, and began to enjoy our misery. We got out our rifles, took up a sheltered position in the shed of an outhouse, and blazed away from dripping morn to pouring eve at empty bottles, amongst which we did tremendous execution.

Of course, also, we relieved the tedium of enforced indoor life by song and talk, but these resources could not make up for lost time, and the depth to which I had been sunk was revealed to me by the sudden rebound of joy when, after a week of heavy wet, there was a break in the universal grey and the sun came feebly out. Blessed sun, if thou wert to roast me alive, methinks I would love thee still!

Before this happened, however, we had a few brief intervals of modified dripping. During one of these, in which the rain all but ceased for a forenoon, I resolved to go out into one of the mountain gorges for a ramble alone. My host lent me his double barreled one barrel being for shot, the other rifled.

"It is loaded," said he, "the right with shot, the left with ball."

"Very good," said I; "expect a tiger when I return."

My host smiled. Leopards were there, truly, but as he knew, and as I have

elsewhere mentioned, they never show themselves except when driven out of their retreats by dogs. To say truth, I only wanted a walk, expected to kill a rabbit or a crow, and hoped faintly for a buck. None of these things did I see, but I found a small coney, at which I fired the shot barrel. To my surprise there came no report from the gun, merely a feeble spirt. I afterwards learned that one of "the boys" had loaded it the day before with a miniature charge for small birds. Hope increased as I pushed further up into the Kloof, and fancy began to play. Although there was no chance of seeing "tigers," it was something to know that such creatures were really there; that I was actually in the native home of "wild-beasts." The floor of my host's parlour was covered with the beautiful spotted skins of animals which had been shot or trapped by himself. One of these measured about nine feet, which, allowing three for the tail, gives a body of six feet long.

As the day advanced rain again began to fall, but nothing could damp me now. I had almost worked myself into the belief that I was tiger-hunting! I advanced with cautious tread, looked earnestly into dark caverns, and passed under the deep shadow of thick and tangled bushes with feelings of awe. I even indulged my wayward fancy by thinking of Gordon Cumming and Livingstone; did my best to mistake gnarled roots for big snakes, and red stones for couching leopards. At last, while in the sombre twilight of a dense mass of underwood, I actually did see a bit of brown hair moving. I threw forward my rifle with a promptitude worthy of Hawkeye himself, but experienced no shock of excitement, for the object was so palpably a small rabbit, or coney, that imagination sternly refused to deceive me. Baboons had been heard barking on the evening of our arrival. I looked out for these, but saw none. In short, none of the inhabitants of wood, glen, or mountain, save myself, were foolish enough to go out in such weather. Nevertheless I returned to the house happy and ready for supper.

On Saturday morning the sunshine, which I have before mentioned, gladdened our eyes and hearts. The weather seemed at last favourable. Edwards at once ordered out horses and rifles, and away we went four of us up the mountains after game. It was a new experience in regard to riding. Horses, I knew, were capable of travelling over exceedingly rough roads, and trained ones could even ascend staircases, but I now learned that horses can climb precipices. Never saw anything like it before; never even imagined it!

Our prospects were fair, but they were false, for, ere long, the rain began again. However, we were reckless by that time and defied it. Riding up the kloof that I had traversed on foot, we sighted bucks but got no shot. Gaining the top of the kloof we saw more bucks out of range. We passed over the shoulder of the mountain into another glen, and skirted the top of a precipice.

While descending some slopes at an angle of I know not what, the use of our cruppers became strikingly apparent. I began, for the first time in my life, to feel anxiety as to the strength of a horse's tail. In going up such places the saddle girths were severely tried, but the mane kept one from slipping down one's perpendicular animal.

Coming to a comparatively level stretch we sank into a silently reflective and forgetful mood, while the rain-drops dribbled down our noses, sopped from our mackintoshes to our saddles, whence they re-ascended, through the capillary influence of garments, to our necks, and soon equalised our humidity.

"Look out!" shouted Edwards, suddenly. We all obeyed, and saw a brown buck labouring up a slope so steep that running was out of the question. I stuck my heels into my steed and faced him at the slope. He took it. He would have taken the side of a house, I think, if told to. But he gasped with the frantic nature of his efforts. I felt as if he were leaping up the slope, kangaroo fashion, on his hind-legs. On reaching the top, the antelope was observed disappearing in the distance. It was of no use weeping. Rain would have washed the tears away.

"Look out!" again shouted our host; "get off!"

We all obeyed, cocked our guns, and gazed. A herd of antelopes! just visible in the mist. We all fired, and missed.

"Very mysterious," muttered one of our number, I forget which.

We loaded hastily, but not quickly. Our guns were muzzle-loaders, and rain does not facilitate loading. In trying to force a bullet down, my ramrod slipped, and I cut my knuckles severely.

"You've drawn first blood, anyhow," savagely muttered one of us, I forget who.

We mounted again, and let me tell you that mounting on a steep hillside in a long wet mackintosh with a big rifle, bleeding knuckles, and a heavy heart, is difficult as well as disagreeable.

To increase our enjoyment, Edwards again shouted, "Get off!" We did so with more than military obedience, and I saw a buck standing not more than a hundred yards in front of me. I gave him the rifled barrel. He hopped. Then the shot barrel. He winced and fled, but presently stopped and lay down. Edwards ran towards him, kneeled, fired, and broke his leg. Between us all we managed to kill him, and then turned homewards.

The only noteworthy incident that occurred on the way back was the starting of a troop of baboons, which went scampering down the cliffs in consternation like balls of brown hair. We also descended some broken ground, so steep that it was almost impossible to keep the saddle. Looking at Edwards, I observed that the ears of his horse appeared between his feet, while its tail waved over his head like a dragoon's plume. At last we were compelled to dismount and lead our animals, our minds being sometimes divided between the danger of missing our footing in front, and being tumbled on by our steeds behind.

Thus we hunted on the Baviaans River mountains in adverse circumstances, and returned home moderately pleased, though not particularly successful.

The rains had by that time flooded the whole country, and rendered travelling almost impossible. The river was running wildly past the house, and there was no bridge over it.

We held a consultation on Monday as to our departure. The weather was fine at last, but the river flooded. The tortuous nature of its bed necessitated five or six crossings in the course of twelve miles. Were they fordable? was the question. "We shall go and try," was Hobson's final decision. "Try" is the watchword of all true pioneers. We saddled and set forth. Hobson drove the cart, with my portmanteau. During the first part of the journey I was to accompany Edwards on horseback. We had a Hottentot servant with us, who rode one horse and led another.

It was a most enjoyable ride in the bright sunshine that day. Everything was fresh, green, and glittering after the long-continued rain. Baboons were seen on the way, and shouted at us, whether in defiance, derision, or encouragement, is best known to themselves. All the "drifts" or fords were passed in safety till we came to the last on Baviaans River. Here the powerful stream rose to our saddles, and the opposite bank had been so much washed away that it seemed impossible to get the cart up.

"I'll cross," said Edwards, "and if necessary we'll cut a slope in the bank."

In he went, floundered through, and managed to ascend the opposite bank, though not without a severe struggle, for besides being high and steep, it was very wetcoated, in fact, with soft mud.

The Tottie with the led horse followed his master. I followed the Tottie close in his steps, so as to get the benefit of his experience, either by imitating or avoiding his example. We gained the opposite side. I saw the Hottentot's horse rise before me as if mounting a staircase. He slipped, and floundered on his nose and knees. The led horse disconcerted him. Just then my own horse made a bound up the bank, and pawed the mud for a moment. "Slack the reins! give

him his head!" shouted Edwards. I did so. With a mighty plunge and a groan the sturdy animal bore me to the top of the bank in safety. I turned and saw the Tottie's horse throw up its head and fore legs, as if imploringly, to the skies, and fall backwards. The Tottie himself appeared for a moment in the form of a spread-eagle, and then horse and man went back with a sounding splash into the river.

Hobson, who had been all the time enjoying the spectacle, now crossed with the cart; but, on taking the bank, despite their utmost efforts, the powerful pair stuck fast on their knees and noses. Meanwhile the Hottentot scrambled out with his animals, none the worse for the plunge.

As the horses could not move the cart an inch in their semi-perpendicular position, we unharnessed them, and the four of us, by slow degrees, working one wheel at a time, zig-zagged the cart upward a few feet, when horses were once more attached, and the crossing was finally accomplished.

That evening we came to "Smith's farm," one of the places where the Diamond-field coaches stop to change horses. It was beyond the mountains at the commencement of the great rolling plains. Here I had arranged to await the arrival of the mail-cart, and proceed viâ Bedford to Grahamstown.

And here, with deep regret, I bade farewell to my friend Hobson a true-hearted, well-educated Englishman, born in the colony; the son of one of the "1820 settlers;" a brave, bold, fearless, loving man, who hunted lions, leopards, elephants, zebras, and all the large game of Africa in his youth, and was "out" in the war, a warm friend, a splendid type of those hardy men whose lot it is to subdue the wilderness.

There were several hours to pass before the arrival of the mail-cart. Smith and his people were busy, and, as there were no guests at the time in that lonely road-side inn, I had plenty of leisure to bask in the sunshine, sketch the cactus bushes that abounded there, (see Note 1), gaze dreamily over the boundless Karroo, and meditate sadly on friendships and partings.

The first thing that struck me on turning from Smith's humble abode to ramble on the plains was the presence of a bad smell a very bad smell! I brought my nose to bear in various directions, but could discover no cause. Having nothing to do I applied myself with diligence to the investigation, all the more earnestly that I found it impossible to get out of the tainted atmosphere. Regarding the heavens steadily, for it was very calm, and making up my mind as to the direction which the little wind that there was came from, I followed my nose, and was led by it to the decaying carcass of an ox which lay not a hundred yards from Smith's door. My opinion of Smith was lowered! When I

passed to windward of the carcass, the bad smell ceased.

I mention this, not because it is an interesting incident, but because it is a feature of South African travel. Wherever you go on the Karroo, there you will find the rotting remains of poor creatures, which, having “died in harness,” are cast loose for the benefit of the vultures. These ill-looking and disgusting birds are most useful scavengers. They scent the quarry from afar so far, indeed, as to be beyond the vision of human eyes. You may gaze round you far and near in the plains, and behold no sign of any bird; but kill one of your horses and leave it dead on the plain, and straightway, from various quarters of the heavens, you will see little specks which grow and float, and circle and grow, until they assume the ugly form and huge proportions of unclean vultures, which will perch on the carcass, and make away with it in a remarkably short space of time. It was only the skin and bones of the ox which rendered themselves obnoxious at Smith’s. Vultures had cleared out of it every morsel of flesh some days before.

As I have said, there are no roads worthy of the name in many parts of the Karroo. Those that exist are often in such a dilapidated condition that travellers sometimes find it more pleasant to forsake them and drive over the rugged veldt. This can be easily understood when it is remembered that the roads are traversed by the celebrated “Cape wagons,” which are of enormous size and weight, requiring from sixteen to twenty oxen to draw them. Such vehicles finding a hollow in a road, soon make it a deep hole, which finally becomes an impassable cavern. In drawing, struggling, and fighting with these wagons, sick and weakly animals constantly succumb, are left to die, and thus vultures are supplied with a continual feast, while carcasses and skulls, and bleaching bones, are familiar objects by the roadsides on the plains.

At last the mail-cart arrived, and I secured a place.

It is usually a small two-wheeled vehicle drawn by four horses, the driver of which seems to think that every one ought to possess an iron frame as callous as his own. The cart has a species of canvas hood, such as I have described in a former letter, stretched on a movable frame. It serves the purpose of a monstrous parasol. You get into this cart, the team is cleverly started by, it may be, a smart fellow, and driven away with the speed at which mails ought to travel; or it is wildly started by a conceited driver, who sets out with a plunge, and continues his course with a prolonged crash, as though the fate of empires reposed in his mail-bags. You come to a ditch; you go in with a plunge, and come out with a jerk. Your head hits the back of the hood when you go in, your nose hits the back of the driver when you come out. A rut in the road causes one wheel to descend suddenly about eighteen inches; or an unavoidable lump of that height produces the same effect; the hood gives you

a deliberate punch on the head. Before you have quite recovered, it gives you another. A miniature precipice appears. This was caused by the latest waterspout choosing to cut the road instead of follow it. The mail-cart does not pause. Its springs were made, apparently, to spring. It descends. For one instant you are left in the air, the next you resume your seat with violence. This sort of thing does not last long, however, for you quickly become wise. You acquire the habit of voluntarily stiffening your backbone at the ditches, of yielding to the ruts, and of holding on at the precipices. Still, with all your precautions, you suffer severely. I have been seriously informed that, during some of their plunges on what may be called stormy roads, men have been jolted bodily out of mail-carts at the Cape, and I can easily believe it.

The Diamond-field mail was full, but they kindly made room for me, and plastered my portmanteau, like an excrescence, on the other baggage.

The drive to Bedford was too short to admit of much familiar intercourse with the diggers, if diggers they were. Subsequently I met with a successful digger, who told me a good deal about the diamond-fields. He was a Scot, who had left a lucrative claim to be managed by a partner while he took a trip to the "old country." His account of diamond digging inclined me to think that coal-heaving is a much easier occupation, and more remunerative on the whole, except in the case of lucky diggers. This Scot showed me what he called a "big diamond," and allowed me to make a careful drawing of it. He could not guess at its value. If it had been a pure diamond like the "star of South Africa," it would have been worth many thousands of pounds, but it was not pure. According to digger parlance it was "off-colour," and, therefore, not excessively valuable. Still it was a precious gem, and would doubtless fetch several hundreds of pounds. Of course it was unpolished, but even in that state was very beautiful. It weighed seventy-eight carats. The "star of South Africa," above referred to, was a pure and magnificent gem. It was found by a Hottentot, named Swartzboy, sold by him for 400 pounds, and disposed of the same day for 12,000 pounds so, at least, runs one account of the matter.

Late in the evening we reached Bedford.

As we started next morning at break of day my personal knowledge of that flourishing town is too limited to warrant many remarks thereon. It may be that the vision of ghostly houses passing our cart in the morning mists suggested to my sleepy imagination the idea of a town, but I cannot remember that it did. Possibly the fact that the population numbered above 1000 may have occurred to my mind, but I think not. It is more probable that the mind, if it operated at all, pictured the population as recumbent and snoring. Indeed, the only thing that memory will recall, when severely taxed, in regard to Bedford, isbed, its first syllable.

Letter 9.

Crossing the Great Fish River Travelling at the Cape as it is to be Grahamstown, her Early Struggles and Present Prosperity.

Travelling in South Africa is occasionally interrupted by sudden storms of rain which convert dry beds of streams into roaring torrents, and perennial rivers into devastating floods.

At the Great Fish River I came on a specimen of the mighty power of water in the ruins of a splendid bridge. The great floods of the previous year had carried one-half of it away. The other half denuded of its flooring and all its woodwork, and standing out against the sky a mere skeleton of iron girders still connected the left bank of the river with the massive tower of masonry in the middle. From this tower to the other bank was a gulf impassable to horse or cart. The great river itself flows in a deep channel. It was still somewhat flooded. From its high banks we saw it roaring more than forty feet beneath the level of the bridge. It was clear to the most ignorant eye that fording the stream was impossible. I looked inquiringly at the driver.

“You’ll have to go over on the rope,” he said, with a sardonic smile.

“The rope?” said I, with an earnest gaze at the impassable gulf.

“Yes, the rope. There’s a man crossing now.”

I looked again, and observed something like a cobweb on the sky between the central pier and the opposite bank. There was a black spot that resembled a spider moving slowly along the cobweb. It was a fellow-man!

“And the mails and the luggage?” I asked.

“Go over same way.”

“The cart and horses?”

“Don’t go over at all. Get fresh ones on other side. There was once a box on the river for hauling them over, but it’s been damaged.”

The process of crossing was begun at once.

The driver and some workmen shouldered the bags and baggage, while the passengers of whom there were three followed to the central pier.

To men with heads liable to giddiness the passage from the bank to the pier

would have been trying, for, the floor having been carried away, we had to walk on the open girders, looking down past our feet to the torrent as to a miniature Niagara. The distance of forty feet seemed changed to four hundred from that position. Fortunately none of us were afflicted with giddy heads.

The flat space on the tower-top gained, we found two workmen engaged in tying our baggage to a little platform about four feet square, which was suspended by ropes to a couple of little wheels. These wheels travelled on a thick cable, the spider web before referred to. The contrivance was hauled to and fro by a smaller line after the manner of our rocket apparatus for rescuing life at sea, and, when we passengers afterwards sat down on it with nothing but the tight grip of our hands on an iron bar to save us from falling into the flood below, we flattered ourselves that we had attained to something resembling the experience of those who have been saved from shipwreck.

Many people hold the erroneous doctrine that travellers and traffic create railways, whereas all experience goes to prove that railways create travellers and traffic. Of course at their first beginnings railways were formed by the few hundreds of travellers who were chiefly traffickers, but no sooner were they called into being than they became creative, they turned thousands of stay-at-homes into travellers; they rushed between the great centres of industry, sweeping up the people in their train, and, with a grand contempt of littleness in every form, caught up the slow-going cars and coaches of former days in their huge embrace, and whirled them along in company with any number you chose of tons and bales of merchandise; they groaned up the acclivities of Highland hills, and snorted into sequestered glens, alluring, nay, compelling, the lonely dwellers to come out, and causing hosts of men, with rod and gun and hammer and botanical box, to go in; they scouted the old highroads, and went, like mighty men of valour, straight to the accomplishment of their ends, leaping over and diving under each other, across everything, through anything, and sticking at nothing, until over lands where, fifty years ago, only carts and coaches used to creep and poor pedestrians were wont to plod, cataracts of travellers now flow almost without intermission night and day the prince rolling in his royal bedroom from palace to palace; the huntsman flying to the field, with his groom and horse in a box behind him; the artisan travelling in comfort to his daily toil, with his tools and a mysterious tin of victuals at his feet; thousands on thousands of busy beings hurrying through the land where one or two crawled before; shoals of foreigners coming in to get rid of prejudices and add "wrinkles to their horns," while everything is cheapened, and, best of all, knowledge is increased by this healthy though, it may be, rather rapid moving about of men and women.

Thus railways have created travellers and traffic. But they have done much

more; they have turned road-side inns into “grand hotels”; they have clambered up on the world’s heights, and built palatial abodes on the home of the mountain-hare and the eagle, where weak and worn invalids may mount without exertion, and drink in health and happiness with the freshest air of heaven.

The principle cannot be disputed that the creation of railways between great centres of industry has a direct tendency to stimulate that industry and to create other subsidiary industries with their travellers on business and travellers for pleasure. If railways ran over the Karroo, adventurous capitalists would come from all ends of the earth to see it; they would buy land when they found a convenient mode of running their produce to the markets of the large towns and the ports on the coast; they would start ostrich farms and breed horses, and grow wool, and build mighty dams, and sink artesian wells, as the French have done with some success I believe in Algiers. If railways were run up to the diamond-fields, adventurous diggers would crowd in hundreds to the great pit of Kimberley; some would succeed; those who failed would gravitate into the positions for which they were fitted by nature in a land where the want of labourers is a confessedly perplexing evil. The population would not only be increased by much new blood from without, but by that which results from prosperity and wealth within; off shoot, and as yet unimagined, enterprises would probably become numerous; additional lines would be pushed on into the gold regions; all sorts of precious gems and minerals, including “black diamonds,” are known to be abundant in the Transvaal, and, but why go on? Those who agree with me understand these matters so well as to require no urging. As for those who don’t agree:

“The man convinced against his will

Is of the same opinion still.”

What I have written is for the benefit of those who know little or nothing about South Africa. I will only add to it my own conviction, (see note 1), that the day is not far distant when a Cape man will breakfast one morning in Capetown, and dine next day at Port Elizabeth, (510 miles), run on to Grahamstown, (84 miles), to sup with a friend there take the early train to Graaff-Reinet, (160 miles), so as to have time for luncheon and a chat with a friend or relation before the starting of the night train for Kimberley, (280 miles), where he has to assist at the marriage of a sister with a diamond-digger who intends to spend his honeymoon at the Cliff Hotel amid the romantic scenery of the Catberg, and finish off with a week or two at Snowy Retreat, a magnificent hotel, (yet to be), on the tiptop of the Compassberg mountain.

This brings me back to the point at which I diverged the Great Fish River,

which takes its rise in the Sneewberg range.

What tremendous floods are implied in the carrying away of this bridge! What superabundance of water in that so-called land of drought! What opportunities for engineering skill to catch and conserve the water, and turn the “barren land” into fruitful fields! Don’t you see this, Periwinkle? If not, I will say no more, for, according to the proverb, “a nod is as good as a wink to the blind horse.”

Having crossed the bridge in safety we continued our journey in the new vehicle with fresh horses, and reached Grahamstown at four in the afternoon.

Between sixty and seventy years is not a great age for a city. Indeed, as cities go, Grahamstown may be called quite infantile. Nevertheless this youthful city has seen much rough work in its brief career.

Grahamstown was born in smoke, and cradled in war’s alarms. It began life in 1812, at which time the thieving and incorrigible Kafirs were driven across the Great Fish River then the colonial boundary by a strong force of British and Burgher troops under Colonel Graham. During these disturbed times it was established as headquarters of the troops which guarded the frontier.

When the infant was seven years old its courage and capacity were severely put to the proof. In the year 1818-19 just before the arrival of the “British settlers,” it was deemed necessary to interfere in the concerns of contending Kafir chiefs, and to punish certain tribes for their continued depredations on the colony. For these ends, as well as the recovery of stolen cattle, a strong force was sent into Kafirland. While the troops were absent, a body of Kafirs assembled in the bush of the Great Fish River, from which they issued to attack Grahamstown. They were led by a remarkable man named Makana. He was also styled the Lynx.

This Kafir, although not a chief, rose to power by the force of a superior intellect and a strong will. He was well-known in Grahamstown, having been in the habit of paying it frequent visits, on which occasions he evinced great curiosity on all subjects, speculative as well as practical.

Makana appears to have been an apt scholar. Being a man of eloquence as well as originality, he soon acquired ascendancy over most of the great chiefs of Kafirland, was almost worshipped by the people, who acknowledged him a warrior-chief as well as a prophet, and collected around him a large body of retainers. It has been thought by some that Makana was a “noble” savage, and that although he imposed on the credulity of his countrymen, his aim was to raise himself to sovereign power in order to elevate the Kafir race nearer to a level with Europeans.

But whatever be the truth regarding his objects, the invasion of Kafirland by the white men gave Makana an opportunity of which he was not slow to avail himself. His followers had suffered, with others, from the proceedings of the troops, and his soul was fired with a desire to be revenged and “drive the white men into the sea,” a favourite fate, in the Kafir mind, reserved for the entire colonial family!

Makana was general enough to perceive that nothing effective could be accomplished by the mere marauding habits to which his countrymen were addicted. He had learned that “union is strength,” and, making use of his spirit-rousing power of eloquence, went about endeavouring to concentrate the aims of the savages and to direct their energies. In these efforts he was in some measure successful. He pretended to have received heavenly revelations, and to have been sent by the great spirit to avenge their wrongs; predicted certain success to the enterprise if his followers only yielded implicit obedience to his commands, and thus managed to persuade most of the various clans to unite their forces for a simultaneous attack on the headquarters of the British troops. He told them that he had power to call from their graves the spirits of their ancestors to assist them in the war, and confidently affirmed that it was decreed that they were to drive the white men across the Zwartkops River into the ocean, after which they should “sit down and eat honey!”

Early on the morning of the 22nd April 1819 this singular man led his force of 9000 sable warriors towards Grahamstown, and the affair had been conducted with so great secrecy that the few troops there were almost taken by surprise.

Enemies in the camp are always to be more dreaded than open foes. Makana had taken care to provide himself with a spy and informer, in the person of Klaas Nuka, the Government Interpreter to Colonel Wilshire, who was at that time in command of the troops. Three days previous to the attack, this villain well aware of Makana’s approach informed the Colonel that Kafirs had been seen in the precisely opposite direction. The unsuspecting Colonel at once fell into the trap. He detached the light company of the 38th regiment to patrol in the direction pointed out. Thus was the garrison of the town, which consisted of 450 European soldiers and a small body of mounted Hottentots, weakened to the extent of 100 men.

On that same April morning Colonel Wilshire was quietly inspecting a detachment of the mounted Cape Corps, when the Hottentot Captain Boezac, chief of a band of buffalo-hunters, informed him that he had just received information of Makana’s advance. The Colonel, mounted on a fleet charger, at once rode off with an escort of ten men to reconnoitre. He came unexpectedly on the enemy in a ravine not far from the town. They were taking a rest before

rushing to the assault, and so sure were these poor savages of their irresistible power, that thousands of their wives and children followed them with their mats, pots, and cooking-jars ready to take possession of the place!

Colonel Wilshire retreated instantly, and there was need for haste. The Kafirs pursued him so closely that he reached his troops only a few minutes before them.

The small band of defenders more than made up for the difference in numbers, by the deadly precision of their fire. The Kafirs came on in a dense sable mass, led by their various chiefs, and generalled by the Lynx, who had impressed his followers with the belief that the muskets of the foe were charged only with “hot water!”

The field pieces of the troops were loaded with shrapnel shells, which at the first discharge mowed long lanes in the advancing masses, while musketry was discharged with deadly effect. But Kafirs are stern and brave warriors. On they came with wild cries, sending a shower of short spears, (assagais), before them, which, however, fell short. Regardless of the havoc in their ranks, they still came on, and the foremost men were seen to break short their assagais, with the evident intention of using them more effectively as daggers in hand-to-hand conflict. This was deliberately done by Makana’s orders, and showed his wisdom, for, with the great bodily strength, size, and agility of the Kafirs, and their overwhelming numbers, the attack, if promptly and boldly made at close quarters, could not have failed of success.

At this moment the Hottentot Captain Boezac created a diversion. He rushed with his band of a hundred and thirty men to meet the foe. These buffalo-hunters had among them some of the coolest and best marksmen in the country. Singling out the boldest of those who advanced, and were encouraging their followers in the final charge, Boezac and his men laid low many of the bravest chiefs and warriors. This gave the Kafirs a decided check. The troops cheered and fired with redoubled speed and energy. Lieutenant Aitcheson of the Artillery plied the foe with a withering fire of grapeshot. Boezac and his hunters, turning their flank, pressed them hotly in rear, and the Hottentot cavalry charged. The Kafirs recoiled, though some of the boldest, scorning to give in, rushed madly among the soldiers, and perished fighting. Then a wild panic and a total rout ensued, and the great host was scattered like chaff, and driven into the ravines.

Brief though this fight had been, the carnage among the Kafirs was terrible. One who was an eye-witness of the fight tells us that the bodies of about 2000 Kafir warriors strewn the field of battle, and that many others perished of their wounds in the rivulet leading down to the Cape Corps’ barracks. Nuka,

the faithless interpreter, was shot, but Makana escaped.

A few months afterwards, however, he delivered himself up, and the other chiefs sued for peace. With Makana's surrender the war of 1819 ended. The Lynx himself was sent prisoner to Robben Island. After nearly two years' confinement he attempted to escape in a boat with some other prisoners, but the boat was upset in the surf on Blueberg beach, and Makana was drowned, while his companions escaped.

As Grahamstown grew in years and size, she bore her part well, both in the suffering and the action which the colony has been called on to endure and undertake, during all the vicissitudes of its career in peace and in war. What that part has been would take a volume to tell.

She is now a large and beautiful town the capital of the Eastern Provinces situated on the slopes of the Zuurberg range, near the head waters of the Kowie River, 1760 feet above the sea, and thirty-six miles distant therefrom. She is also the focus where all the roads from the interior converge to enter the only available gap through the mountains Howison's Poort.

Very pleasant to dwell in is this "City of the Settlers" alias the "city of gardens," with its agreeable society, fresh breezes, and charming situation; its "twenty miles" of well-gravelled and tree-lined streets; its handsome shops and stores, its fine public buildings notably the Cathedral, and the Albany Hall its three great reservoirs, with their "twenty-four million gallons" of water, and its "twelve miles" of main pipes, by means of which its inhabitants are watered.

But I must not linger in Grahamstown now. When there in the body, I was sorely tempted to do so, too long, by the kindness of friends and the salubrity of the weather. Adieu, Grahamstown! thou art a green spot in memory, as well as in reality.

Letter 10.

Salem A Peculiar Picnic Polo under Difficulties Lecturing and Singing Sporting at Night.

Salem is, as it should be, a peaceful spot. It was not always so. There was a time when its inhabitants had to toil, so to speak, with the spade in one hand, and the musket in the other. It lies in a hollow of the great rolling plains, and was founded, like many of the eastern towns, in the memorable "1820," when the "British settlers" came out, and a new era for the colony began.

The arrival of the original settlers at Salem is thus described by one who was a

noted leader in the first days:

“Our Dutch wagon-driver intimating that we had at length reached our proper location, we took our boxes out of the wagon, and placed them on the ground. He bade us goeden dag, or farewell, cracked his long whip, and drove away, leaving us to our reflections. My wife sat down on one box, and I on another. The beautiful blue sky was above us, and the green grass beneath our feet. We looked at each other for a few moments, indulged in some reflections, and perhaps exchanged a few sentences; but it was no time for sentiment, and hence we were soon engaged in pitching our tent, and when that was accomplished, we removed into it our trunks and bedding. All the other settlers who arrived with us were similarly engaged, and in a comparatively short time the somewhat extensive valley of that part of the Assagai Bush River, which was to be the site of our future village, presented a lively and picturesque appearance.”

Soon the spade, the plough, and the axe began their subduing work. Some of the beautiful grassy slopes were turned up. Small clearings were made in the bush. Frail huts with doors of matting and windows of calico began to arise. Lime was found, white-wash was applied, and the huts began to “smile.” So did the waters of the stream when partially shorn of the bush-moustache by which, from time immemorial, they had been partially concealed; the first crops were sown, and the work of civilisation began. There was a ruinous “wattle and daub” edifice which had been deserted by a Dutch Boer before the arrival of the settlers. This was converted into a church, town-hall, and hospital.

The yell of the Kafir and the whizzing assagai afterwards disturbed the peace of Salem, and at that time the settlers proved that, though on peaceful plans intent, they could bravely hold their own; but it was peaceful enough, and beautiful, when I first beheld it.

At the door of a moderately handsome residence which had succeeded the wattle-and-daub style of thing I was heartily welcomed by my friend and his amiable spouse. Here I had the pleasure of enjoying a South African picnic.

A picnic is at all times interesting, doubly so when undertaken in peculiar circumstances. One of the peculiarities of this picnic was that the invitation to it was publicly given, and embraced the entire population. Another peculiarity was that the population, almost in its entirety, accepted the invitation. But there were still other peculiarities which will appear in the sequel.

The morning of the day fixed was bright and beautiful. This, indeed, was no peculiarity. Most of the mornings, days, and nights in that splendid region

were of much the same stamp at that time. The spot fixed on for the scene of the picnic was about six miles from Salem, where a wild buffalo had been killed the week before.

The killing of this buffalo was an “event,” for that wild denizen of the African Bush had long ago retired before the rifle of the settler to safer retreats, and rarely returned to his old haunts. A band of buffaloes, however, had apparently taken a fancy to revisit the home of their childhood at this time. There was nothing to prevent them, for, although the country is “settled,” the original “Bush” is in many places sufficiently extensive and impervious to afford safe shelter to the wildest of animals. At all events, a band of buffaloes did come to the neighbourhood of Salem, and there met with a farmer-Nimrod, who “picked off” one of their number. I turned aside, during one of my rides, to visit the head and horns, which lay near his house.

The place of rendezvous for those who dwelt in the village was an open space in front of the church. Here, at an early hour, there assembled numerous equestrians, as well as vehicles of varied shape and character. I was mounted on a smart brown pony kindly lent by Mr Shaw, teacher of the flourishing school of Salem. My friend Caldecott bestrode a powerful steed suited to his size. When the gathering had reached considerable proportions, we started like an Eastern caravan.

Among the cavaliers there were stalwart men and fair damsels also little boys and girls, prancing in anxiety to get away. There were carts, and gigs, and buggies, or things that bore some resemblance to such vehicles, in which were the more sedate ones of the gathering; and there were great “Cape wagons,” with fifteen or twenty oxen to each, containing whole families from hale old “grannies” down to grannies’ weaknesses in the shape of healthy lumps of live lard clad in amazement and bibs. It was a truly grand procession, as, after toiling up the slope that leads from the valley of Salem, we debouched upon the wide plain, and assumed our relative positions that is, the riders dashed away at speed, the carts and buggies, getting up steam, pushed on, and the oxen trailed along at their unalterable gait, so that, in a few minutes, the dense group spread into a moving mass which gradually drew itself out into an attenuated line, whereof the head ultimately became invisible to the tail.

My tall host led the way with enthusiastic vigour. He was a hearty, earnest man, who could turn quickly from the pleasant contemplation of the trivialities of life to the deep and serious consideration of the things that bear on the life to come.

One Sunday I rode over the plains with him to visit a native church in which it was his duty to conduct worship. The congregation was black and woolly-

headed Hottentots chiefly, I believe, though there may have been some Kafirs amongst them.

There is something very attractive to me in the bright, eager, childlike look of black men and women. The said look may be the genuine expression of feeling it may be, for aught I can tell, the result of contrast between the dazzling whites of eyes and teeth, with liquid-black pupils and swarthy cheeks, but that does not alter the fact that it is pleasant.

The Hottentot who translated my friend's discourse, sentence by sentence, was a fine specimen I won't say of his race, but of humanity. He was full of intelligence and fire; caught the preacher's meaning instantly, riveted with his glittering eye the attention of his audience, and rattled out his words with a power that was most impressive, and with the interspersions of those indescribable "clicks" with which the native language abounds.

But to return to the picnic.

As we advanced, groups and couples of cavaliers and carts and wagons joined the line of march from outlying farms, so that when we reached the rendezvous we must have formed a body of two hundred strong, or more.

The spot chosen was the summit of a woody knoll, from which we could survey all the country round, and look down upon the river with its miles and miles of dense bush, in which the buffaloes had vainly fancied themselves free from the danger of human foes.

Was there plenty of food at that picnic? I should think there was. South Africans do not live upon air, by any means though air has a good deal to do with their living. These comely maidens and strapping boys had not been brought up on water-gruel. These powerful men and ruddy matrons, to say nothing of the aged and the juvenile, would not have gone to that knoll on the plain without a prospect of "strong meat" of some sort. There were pies and joints, buns and beef, cakes and coffee, tea and tongues, sugar and sandwiches, hams and hampers, mounds of mealies, oceans of milk, and baskets of bread and butter. I'm not sure whether there were wines or spirits. I culpably forget. Probably there were not, for "Good Templars" are powerful in that region, and so is temperance.

Did we do justice to the viands? Didn't we? My notions of human capacity were enlarged that day. So was my own capacity out of sympathy, coupled with the ride. But we did not linger over our food. Seated in groups near the margin of, and partly in, the bush, we refreshed ourselves in comparative silence. Then we grew noisy over our milk and tea. Some of us even got the length of singing and speech-making, but the younger portion of the band soon lost their

appetites and dispersed some to romp, some to ramble, others to engage in games.

A few of the more reckless among us extemporised a game of polo.

Most people know, though some may not, that this is a game played on horseback with a club and balla species of equestrian “hockey,” as it is styled in England, “shinty” in Scotland. To be well done it requires good and trained horses, a wide expanse of level country, and expert riders. Our state of preparation for the game may be understood when I say that we had indifferent and untrained horses, that the ground was very uneven and covered with huge ant-hills, while the riders were not expertat least, not at polo.

We got sticks, however, and went at it. Half a dozen men cut and levelled several ant-hills, and marking off a square patch of ground, four of usI won’t say whowere placed, one at each corner, while the ball, a football, was put in the middle of the square.

Our innocent horses stood quietly there till the signal was given to start. Then each cavalier essayed to reach the ball first. The sudden urging of the steeds to instant action seemed to confuse them. They did not spring, as they should have done like arrows from bows. One rider wildly kicked with his heels and shook his reins. The horse turned round, as if in contempt, from the ball. Another applied his whip with vehemence, but his horse only backed. A third shouted, having neither whip nor spur, and brought his polo-stick savagely down on his animal’s flank, but it plunged and reared. The only horse that behaved well was that of a gallant youth who wore spurs. A dig from these sent him into the field. He reached the ball, made a glorious blow at it, and hit the terrestrial ball by mistake. Before the mistake could be rectified three of the other players were up, flourishing their long clubs in reckless eagerness; the fourth rode into them; the horses then lost patience and refused obedience to ordersno wonder, for one club, aimed at the ball, fell on a horse’s shins, while another saluted a horse’s ear. Presently the ball spurted out from the midst of us; the horses scattered, and one was seen to rise on its hind-legs. Immediately thereafter one of the playersI won’t say whichwas on the ground and his horse was careering over the plain! Regardless of this the other three charged, met in the shock of conflict; clubs met clubs, and ears, and shinsbut not the balluntil finally an accidental kick, from one of the horses I think, sent it towards the boundary at a considerable distance from the players.

Then it was that the power of spurs became conspicuously apparent. While two of the champions backed and reared, the gallant youth with the armed heels made a vigorous rush at the ball, miraculously hit it, and triumphantly won the game.

On the whole it was a failure in one sense, but a great success in another, inasmuch as it afforded immense amusement to the spectators, and pleasant excitement as well as exercise to the performers.

It must not be supposed, however, that the energies of the whole picnic were concentrated on polo. The party, as I have said, had broken up into groups, one of which played hide-and-seek among the bushes on the knoll, while another engaged in a game which involved sitting in a circle, changing places, frequent collisions, constant mistakes on the part of the ignorant, and shouts of laughter, with rectifying advice on the part of the knowing.

All this time the sun was glowing as only a South African summer sun can glow, in a cloudless sky, and it was not until that sun had become red in the face, and sunk far down into the west, that the panting, but far from exhausted revellers saddled up and inspanned, and began to quit the scene.

Then it was, as my friend and I stood on the bush-topped knoll, that the magnificence of our picnic fully impressed us, for, as we surveyed the long line of riders, and trundling carts, and gigs, and carriages, and heavy Cape wagons with their creeping teams winding over the plain, the head of the column was seen almost on the horizon before the rear-guard had left the scene of our festivities. This was altogether one of the pleasantest days I had spent in the colony; the people were so hearty and vigorous, so varied in appearance, character, and age, so full of life and fun and good-will.

But it is not always in the sunshine that the good people of Salem enjoy themselves. The hunters among them occasionally go out shooting at night with the aid of a dark lantern, and the wretched creature which they pursue on such occasions is called a spring-hare. It seems a mixture of the hare and the kangarooits size and aspect being those of the former animal, while its long hind-legs and its action in springing resemble the latter. In running it does not use its fore legs, but bounds like the kangaroo.

Never having engaged in night-sportingsave in dreamsI agreed to accompany two Salem Nimrods on a hunt after spring-hares.

We went into the fields. That is all I can vouch for. It happened to be so dark that we might as well have been groping about in a coal-pit. My companions, however, knew the ground, which was fortunate, for walking over a rugged surface in the dark is not only confusing, but trying to the nerves, to say nothing of the temper. I followed faithfully and “close to heel,” like a well-trained dog.

“This way, Sir; mind the ditch.”

“Where? ah! all ri-ight!”

The last syllable was shot out of me like a bullet as I plunged into the ditch.

The Nimrod who carried the lantern opened the slide for a moment, revealed the rugged nature of the ground, and closed it when I had risen.

“It’s better farther on,” he said, encouragingly.

“Is it? Ah, that’s well.”

We came to a piece of ground which my feet and legs told me was covered with long rough grass and occasional bushes. Over this we stumbled, and here the rays of the lantern were directed far in advance of us, so as to sweep slowly round, bringing bushes, and grassy tufts, and stumps, and clods, into spectral view for a moment as the focus of light moved on.

“We never see their bodies,” said the lantern-bearer, slowly, as he peered earnestly in front, “we only see the sparkle of one eye when the light falls on it, and then we fire at there, that’s one! Look, don’t you see his eye? Fire, Sir, fire!”

I raised my gun, and looked eagerly with all my eyes, but saw nothing. Never having been in the habit of firing at nothing, I hesitated.

“Ah, he’s gone! Never mind, we’ll soon see another.”

We stumbled on again. The surrounding gloom depressed me, but I revived under the influence of one or two false alarms, and a severe plunge into a deepish hole.

“There he is again, quite near,” whispered my light-bearer.

“Aim for the eye,” whispered the other.

The whispering, and intense silence that followed, coupled with the gloom, made me feel guilty. I saw nothing, but tried so hard to do so that I persuaded myself that I did, and attempted to aim.

“The sights of the gun are invisible,” I whispered somewhat testily.

Without a word the lantern was raised until the light glittered on the barrels. Then I saw nothing whatever except the gun! In sheer desperation I pulled the trigger. The tremendous appearance in the dark of the sheet of flame that belched forth, and the crash of the report in the silent night, gave me quite new ideas as to firearms.

“You’ve missed,” said the light-bearer.

As I had fired at nothing I felt inclined to reply that I had not but refrained.

Again we stumbled on, and I began to grow melancholy, when another “there he goes” brought me to the “ready,” with eager eyes.

I saw it clearly enough this time. A diamond was sparkling in the blackness before me. I aimed and fired. There was a squeal and a rush. Instantly my friends dashed off in wild pursuit and I stood listening, not daring to move for fear of ditches. The sounds of leaping, stumbling, and crashing came to me on the night air for a few minutes; then my friends returned with the light, and with a poor little spring-hare’s lifeless and long-hind-legged body.

With this trophy I returned home, resolved never more to go hunting at night.

Letter 11.

Algoa BayKafirs on the CoastDifficulties Regarding Servants.

Standing on the shores of Algoa Bay, with the “Liverpool of South Africa” Port Elizabeth at my back, I attempted to realise what must have been the scene, in the memorable “1820,” when the flourishing city was yet unborn, when the whole land was a veritable wilderness, and the sands on which the port now stands were covered with the tents of the “settlers.”

Some of the surroundings, thought I, are pretty much as they were in those days. The shipping at anchor in the offing must resemble the shipping that conveyed the emigrants across the sea except, of course, these two giant steamers of the “Donald Currie” and the “Union” lines. The bright blue sky, too, and the fiery sun are the same, and so are those magnificent “rollers,” which, rising, one scarce can tell when or where, out of a dead-calm sea, stand up for a few seconds like liquid walls, and then rush up the beach with a magnificent roar.

As I gazed, the scene was rendered still more real by the approach from seaward of a great surf-boat, similar to the surf-boats that brought the settlers from their respective ships to the shore. Such boats are still used at the port to land goods and also passengers, when the breakers are too high to admit of their being landed in small boats at the wooden pier. The surf-boats are bulky, broad, and flat, strongly built to stand severe hammering on the sand, and comparatively shallow at the stern, to admit of their being backed towards the beach, or hauled off to sea through the surf by means of a rope over the bow.

As the surf-boat neared the shore, I heard voices behind me, and, turning

round, beheld a sight which sent me completely back into the 1820 days. It was a band of gentlemen in blackblack from the crowns of their heads to the soles of their feet, with the exception of their lips and teeth and eyes. Here was the Simon Pure in very truth. They were so-called Red Kafirs, because of their habit of painting their bodies and blankets with red ochre. At this time the paint had been washed off, and the blankets laid aside. They were quite naked, fresh from the lands of their nativity, and apparently fit for anything.

Shade of Othello!to say nothing of Apollowhat magnificent forms the fellows had, and what indescribably hideous faces! They were tall, muscular, broad-shouldered, small waisted and ankled, round-muscled, black-polishedin a word, elegantly powerful. Many of them might have stood as models for Hercules. Like superfine cloth, they were of various shades; some were brown-black, some almost blue-black, and many coal-black.

They were coming down to unload the surf-boat, and seemed full of fun, and sly childlike humour, as they walked, tripped, skipped and sidled into the water. At first I was greatly puzzled to account for the fact that all their heads and throats were wrapped up, or swathed, in dirty cloth. It seemed as if every man of them was under treatment for a bad cold. This I soon found was meant to serve as a protection to their naked skins from the sharp and rugged edges and corners of the casks and cases they had to carry.

The labour is rather severe, but is well paid, so that hundreds of Kafirs annually come down from their homes in the wilderness to work for a short time. They do not, I believe, make a profession of it. Fresh relays come every year. Each young fellow's object is to make enough money to purchase a gun and cattle, and a wifeor wives. As these articles cost little in Africa, a comparatively short attention to business, during one season, enables a man who left home a beggar to return with his fortune made! He marries, sets his wives to hoe the mealies and milk the cows, and thereafter takes life easy, except when he takes a fancy to hunt elephants, or to go to war for pastime. Ever after he is a drone in the world's beehive. Having no necessity he need not work, and possessing no principle he will not.

As the boat came surging in on the foam, these manly children waded out to meet her, throwing water at each other, and skylarking as they went. They treated the whole business in fact as a rather good jest, and although they toiled like heroes, they accompanied their work with such jovial looks, and hummed such lilting, free-and-easy airs the while, that it was difficult to associate their doings with anything like labour.

Soon the boat grounded, and the Kafirs crowded round her, up to their waists sometimes in the water, and sometimes up to the arm-pits, when a bigger wave

than usual came roaring in. The boat itself was so large that, as they stood beside it, their heads barely rose to a level with the gunwale. The boatmen at once began to heave and roll the goods over the side. The Kafirs received them on their heads or shoulders, according to the shape or size of each package and they refused nothing. If a bale or a box chanced to be too heavy for one man, a comrade lent assistance; if it proved still too heavy, a third added his head or shoulder, and the box or bale was borne off.

One fellow, like a black Hercules, put his wrapper on his head, and his head under a bale, which I thought would crush him down into the surf, but he walked ashore with an easy springing motion, that showed he possessed more than sufficient power. Another man, hitting Hercules a sounding smack as he went by, received a mighty cask on his head that should have cracked it but it didn't. Then I observed the boatmen place on the gunwale an enormous flat box, which seemed to me about ten feet square. It was corrugated iron, they told me, of, I forget, how many hundredweight. A crowd of Kafirs got under it, and carried it ashore as easily as if it had been a butterfly. But this was nothing to a box which next made its appearance from the bowels of that capacious boat. It was in the form of a cube, and must have measured nine or ten feet in all directions. Its contents I never ascertained, but the difficulty with which the boatmen got it rested on the side of the boat proved its weight to be worthy of its size. To get it on the shoulders of the Kafirs was the next difficulty. It was done by degrees. As the huge case was pushed over the edge, Kafir after Kafir put his head or shoulder to it, until there were, I think, from fifteen to twenty men beneath the weight; then, slowly, it left the boat, and began to move towards the shore.

Assuredly, if four or five of these men had stumbled at the same moment, the others would have been crushed to death, but not a man stumbled. They came ashore with a slow, regular, almost dancing gait, humming a low monotonous chant, as if to enable them to step in time, and making serio-comic motions with arms and hands, until they deposited safely in a cart a weight that might have tested Atlas himself!

It seemed obvious that these wild men, (for such they truly were), had been gifted with all the powers that most white men lay claim to, vigour, muscle, energy, pluck, fun, humour, resolution. Only principle is wanted to make them a respectable and useful portion of the human family. Like all the rest of us they are keenly alive to the influence of kindness and affection. Of course if your kindness, forbearance, or affection, take the form of action which leads them to think that you are afraid of them, they will merely esteem you cunning, and treat you accordingly; but if you convince a Kafir, or any other savage, that you have a disinterested regard for him, you are sure to find him

grateful, more or less.

One family with which I dined gave me to understand that this was the result of their own experience. At that very time they had a Kafir girl in training as a housemaid. Servants, let me remark in passing, are a Cape difficulty. The demand is in excess of the supply, and the supply is not altogether what it should be, besides being dear and uncomfortably independent. I suppose it was because of this difficulty that the family I dined with had procured a half-wild Kafir girl, and undertaken her training.

Her clothes hung upon her in a manner that suggested novelty. She was young, very tall, black, lithe as an eel, strong as a horse. She was obviously new to the work, and went about it with the air of one who engages in a frolic. But the free air of the wilderness had taught her a freedom of action and stride, and a fling of body that it was not easy to restrain within the confined precincts of a diningroom. She moved round the table like a sable panther ready to spring when wanted. She had an open-mouthed smile of amused good-will, and an open-eyed “what-next only-say-quick and-I’ll-do-it” expression that was impressive. She seized the plates and dishes and bore them off with a giraffe-like, high-stepping action that was quite alarming, but she broke or spilt nothing. To say that she flung about, would be mild. It would not have been strange, I thought only a little extra dash in her jubilant method of proceeding if she had gone head-foremost through the dining-room window for the sake of bearing the mutton round by a shorter route to the kitchen.

The family expected that this girl would be reduced to moderation, and rendered faithful as she certainly was intelligent by force of kindness in a short time.

Of course in a country thus circumstanced, there are bad servants. The independence of the Totties is most amusing to those who do not suffer from it. I was told that servants out there have turned the tables on their employers, and instead of bringing “characters” with them, require to know the characters of master and mistress before they will engage. It is no uncommon thing for a domestic to come to you and say that she is tired and wants a rest, and is going off to see her mother. Indeed it is something to her credit if she takes the trouble to tell you. Sometimes she goes off without warning, leaving you to shift for yourself, returning perhaps after some days. If you find fault with her too severely on her return, she will probably leave you altogether.

This naturally tries the temper of high-spirited mistresses as does also the incorrigible carelessness of some servants.

A gentle lady said to me quietly, one day, “I never keep a servant after

slapping her!”

“Is it your habit to slap them?” I asked with a smile.

“No,” she replied with an answering smile, “but occasionally I am driven to it. When a careless girl, who has been frequently cautioned, singes one’s linen and destroys one’s best dress, and melts one’s tea-pot by putting it on the red-hot stove, what can flesh and blood do?”

I admitted that the supposed circumstances were trying.

“The last one I sent off,” continued the lady, “had done all that. When she filled up her cup of iniquity by melting the tea-pot, I just gave her a good hearty slap on the face. I couldn’t help it. Of course she left me after that.”

I did not doubt it, for the lady was not only gentle in her manner, and pretty to boot, but was tall and stout, and her fair arm was strong, and must have been heavy.

Letter 12.

Port ElizabethAlgoa BayDiamondsKafir Nobility.

Port Elizabeth may be described as the first-born city of the Eastern Province of the Cape of Good Hope. It came into being in 1820. It is now a flourishing seaport, full of energetic, busy, money-making men. It is the principal seaport of the Eastern Province, and the nearest point on the coast to the Diamond-fields420 miles from De Beer’s New Rush, a distance which was traversed in about six days by coaches.

Among its more useful enterprises it has the honour of having sent out one pioneer of future commercial prosperity in the Eastern Province, for Port Elizabeth is the starting-point of one branch of that great railway system which is to revolutionise Africa. I do not say South Africa, but advisedly use the title of wider scope.

It is not every day that one can boast of having handled a tumbler full of diamonds. Being anxious to see a mass of those precious gems in an uncut condition, I appealed to a friend who had come out with me in the “Windsor Castle.”

He introduced me to a broker, who took me into a back office, opened a strong-box, took out a small packet, and, untying it, poured out a tumblerful of diamonds! They ranged from the size of a pin-head to that of a bean, and were varied in shade, from pure crystal to straw-colour. The broker then opened one or two separate parcels, each of which contained a specially large or fine

diamond, varying in size from a pea to a hazelnut.

“That one,” he said, “may be worth four hundred pounds, and this, perhaps about five or six hundred.”

Looking at them, it was difficult to believe that they were other than paltry pebbles; yet these were the things for which men left home and kindred, pushed into the wilds of a savage land, toiled and moiled in the Great Pit at Kimberley, and too often sacrificed health, happiness, and life itself. Judging them from their looks, I would not have given sixpence for the entire lot so true is it that we do wrong in judging uncut gems, as well as unknown men, by the “outward appearance.”

A very striking, and rather unfortunate instance of this false style of judgment occurred not many days afterwards in reference to some Kafir princes and chiefs: it was on the occasion of my quitting Port Elizabeth for Capetown.

We were to have started on a Saturday afternoon, but a gale said “no,” and we left on Sunday morning. Even then, although the gale had abated, a surf so magnificent was rolling into Algoa Bay that no ship’s boat could approach the jetty. This obliged the passengers to go off to the steamer in a surf-boat. Of course the boat could not approach nearer the dry sand than fifty yards or so. There she heaved about in oceans of boiling foam, while Kafirs carried us on board one by one. The Kafirs bore the women in their strong arms as children are carried, and put them over the gunwale tenderly, but the men were made to sit on their shoulders, as one sits on horseback, and were treated with less ceremony. A giant in ebony carried me off, and trotted as he went, to the delight of some of his comrades; but I was accustomed to riding, and patted his black head approvingly.

While standing on a commanding point in the stern, a fellow-passenger directed attention to a group of Kafirs who tried to keep apart from the others, and looked dignified. These, he told me, were a party of native princes, chiefs, and councillors, who had been brought fresh from their wilderness homewith their own consent, of course and were being taken to Capetown for the purpose of being impressed with the wealth, power, grandeur, and vast resources of the white man. The other Kafirs, of whom there was a large gang, were common fellows, who chanced to be going by the same steamer as navvies to work on the Western railways. The difference between the navvies and their nobility was not great. Personally there was scarcely any, and the somewhat superior cloth of the robes worn by the latter made no great show.

The big boat was hauled off by a rope through the surf, the sail set, and we were soon alongside the ocean steamer whose iron sides rose above us like a

city wall. There was nothing but an iron ladder, flat against this wall, by which to ascend. The heaving of the surf-boat was great. It approached the ladder and retreated from it in the most irregularly spasmodic manner. Only active men, accustomed to such feats, could get upon it. Kafirs, although active as kittens, are not accustomed to the sea, or to the motion of ships and boats. For them to ascend was a matter of great difficulty; for the women and children it was impossible.

But the difficulty had been provided for. Presently we saw a great cask like an overgrown hogs-head swing over the side and descend into the boat. It was caught by our sailors and placed on the stern-sheets. Several tars from the steamer descended to assist. The cask was large enough to hold three or four women besides a child or two. Amid much giggling and persuading it was filled, a signal given, steam applied, and the party was whirled aloft with a scream, and lowered on the vessel's deck in safety.

The cask was again sent down. Meanwhile some of us had scrambled up the ladder, and a few of the Kafir navvies followed our example, but the most of them required a good deal of encouragement, and some strong persuasion, while others refused flatly to attempt it. All this time the black aristocrats looked on in grave silence. If I remember rightly there were a young prince, an old councillor, and two or three chiefs.

When those navvies that could be persuaded, or kicked up the ladder, had been disposed of, the sailors turned upon the timid ones and bundled them into the cask, neck and crop, four and five at a time. There was necessity for speed, and sailors are not wont to be delicate when this is the case. At last the aristocracy were approached. Whether the sailors knew who they were I cannot tell; it is probable that they did not, but judged by the "outward appearance." They were "niggers," that was enough for Jack.

"Come along, old boy," said one, grasping the old councillor; but the councillor held back; Jack therefore gave him a powerful shove and he went into the cask head-foremost. Another man had seized the young prince at the same moment. That potentate who in his own land possessed the power of life and death turned round with dignity, and in doing so afforded an unlooked for opportunity to the sailor, who pushed him gently till he tripped against the cask and went in backwards, squeezing the old councillor almost flat.

"That's your sort, Bill, fetch another!" cried Jack, as he packed the prince down.

One chief was quick-witted enough to submit and stepped in of his own

accord. Another half-stepped and was half-thrust in.

“Hoist away!” shouted Bill.

At that moment a forgotten navvy caught Bill’s eye, he seized him by the neck; Jack helped; the man was thrown on the top of all, and went up next moment like a spread-eagle cover to the cask.

When this “lot” was lowered four or five of the Jack-tars on deck, who greatly enjoyed the fun, turned it suddenly over, and thus it was emptied of its human contents.

Even at that moment of humiliation the savage chiefs were true to themselves. They rose from the deck in dignified silence, the prince merely saying, sternly, to the gentleman who had charge of the party, “Was this what you brought me here for?”

It is but just to add that the gentleman in charge of these noble visitors did his best to prevent the outrage, but it had occurred suddenly, in the exuberance of “Jack’s” spirits, was over in a few seconds, and could not be undone.

These Kafir chiefs were afterwards feasted and fêted by the governor and gentry of Capetown, but I have my doubts whether they will ever forget or forgive the treatment received on that occasion in Algoa Bay.

To correct the false is more difficult than to imbibe the true. Did you ever think of that before? All my life have I been under the false impression that the Cape of Good Hope was the most southerly point of Africa. It is nothing of the sort. Cape Agulhas, not far distant, is the real extremity of South Africa. We doubled it on the 3rd of April.

Oh! Bartholomew Diaz and Vasco da Gama, what would you say if you knew that we “doubled the Cape”the “Cape of Storms”the “Cape of Torments”in calm and sunshine, at the rate of thirteen knots or thereabouts, without a stitch of canvas, with ladies and gentlemen in every attitude of lazy ease upon our deck, and troops of children romping round them? How vast the difference between the “doublings” of the 15th and the 19th centuries! Then the ships were small wooden tubs; now they are huge iron kettles. Then, a few bold and sometimes turbulent spirits faced the dangers of unknown seas under the leadership of famous and heroic men; now, hundreds of men and women timid and brave mixed undistinguishably are carried in safety and comfort over the well-known ocean, by respectable captains of whom the world knows little or nothing beyond their names. Once in a lifetime was the daring feat attempted then. Once or twice a week is the trifling trip accomplished now.

But enough of moralising. Suffice it to say that we doubled the Cape without sails, without anxiety, without care, and with no triumph whatever, but not without interest. Calm and sunny though it chanced to be, we could not look upon that barren, mountainous, rocky shore, without reflecting that it still is not less now than in days of old, the Stormy Cape, and that danger as appalling as that of yore may sometimes be encountered, while heroism quite as exalted as that of the ancient Portuguese navigators is sometimes displayed by modern Britons.

There is a point not far from Cape Agulhas between it and the Cape of Good Hope named Point Danger, where courage of the highest kind once calmly faced and fought with Death. On that Point, in February 1852, the Birkenhead was wrecked. It may be truly said that courage conquered on that occasion, because the end for which it fought was the deliverance of women and children from death, and this end was gained, though above 400 of the gallant men who fought the battle perished in the hour of victory.

The Birkenhead, a large iron steamer, was engaged in the transport of troops to the frontier, where war with the Kafirs raged at the time. These troops were detachments from several regiments under command of Colonel Seton of the 74th Highlanders. About two o'clock in the morning the vessel struck upon a rock near the well-named Point Danger, and so tremendous was the shock that her iron plates were driven in as if made of egg-shell. The cabin was immediately flooded, and it was evident that in a few minutes the vessel would be engulfed among the breakers.

None but those who have witnessed similar scenes can imagine the horrors of the situation. It was dark; the breakers roared around; the rugged and almost inaccessible shores of the Cape of Storms were on the one hand, the ocean on the other; men, women, and children were rushing about the decks in wild terror; sharks were known to be in these waters, and only two of the ship's boats were available for service. In this moment of extremity God put it into the hearts of both officers and men to act with unexampled courage and wisdom.

To save all was manifestly out of the question. When people are in such circumstances it is too often "every man for himself;" the strong push aside the weak, fight for the boats, overcrowd and swamp them, and thus few, if any, are left to tell the tale. But it was not so with the heroes of the Birkenhead. At the word of command from Colonel Seton, the soldiers drew up on the reeling deck as if on parade, and obeyed his orders with steady calm, unflinching bravery. If there were any selfish spirits on board they were overawed by the heroism of the soldiers. The Colonel directed that the women and children and the sick should be put into the boats. This was quickly done, and these were all

saved without a single exception to the number of two hundred souls.

But while this was being accomplished the vessel was breaking up, and the fact that the men would be soon left to struggle in the waves was apparent to all; yet the noble officer continued to give his orders, and the not less noble men continued to obey, and saw the boats depart without a murmur. They were young soldiers too, who had never been under fire, and this “action” was the first and last that they and their leader were destined to fight. The vessel suddenly parted amidships, and though a few saved themselves by swimming and on floating pieces of wreck, the greater number perished no fewer than 357 officers and soldiers among whom was the Colonel and sixty seamen, going down with the ship. It was a sad but splendid specimen of cool self-sacrificing courage, and of the power of discipline in moments of tremendous trial.

Letter 13.

The “Cape Doctor” The Capetown Mine Mules, Literature, and Customs-Officials.

It is pretty generally known that there is a “tablecloth” at Capetown. Its proper resting-place is Table Mountain. When the flat top of that celebrated hill is clear, (I write of the summer season), the thirty thousand inhabitants of Capetown may go forth in comfort if they can stand the blazing sunshine, but as surely as that pure white cloud the tablecloth rests on the summit of Table Mountain, so surely does the gale known as the “south-easter” come down like a wolf on the fold.

The south-easter is a sneezer, and a frequent visitor at the Cape in summer. Where it comes from no one can tell: where it goes to is best known to itself: what it does in passing is painfully obvious to all. Fresh from the Antarctic seas it swoops down on the southern shores of Africa, and sweeps over the land as if in search of a worthy foe. It apparently finds one in Table Mountain, which, being 3582 feet high, craggy and precipitous, meets the enemy with frowning front, and hurls him back discomfited but not defeated.

Rallying on the instant, the south-easter rushes up over its cloud-capped head and round its rugged sides, and down its dizzy slopes, and falls with a shriek of fiendish fury on the doomed city. Oceans of sand and dust are caught up by it, whirled round as if in mad ecstasy, and dashed against the faces of the inhabitants who tightly shut their mouths and eyes as they stoop to resist the onset. Then the south-easter yells while it sweeps dust, small stones, twigs, leaves, and stray miscellanies, right over Signal Hill into the South Atlantic.

This is bad enough, but it is a mere skirmish only the advance guard of the enemy. Supposing this attack to have been commenced in the morning, the

remainder of the day is marked by a series of violent assaults with brief intervals of repose. In rapid succession the south-easter brings up its battalions and hurls them on the mountain. It leaps over the moat and ramparts of the "castle" with fury, roars down the cannons' throats, shrieks out at the touch-holes, and lashes about the town right and left, assaulting and violating, for the south-easter respects neither person nor place. It rattles roofs and windows, and all but overturns steeples and chimneys; it well-nigh blows the shops inside out, and fills them with dust; it storms the barracks and maltreats the soldiers; it compels the shutting up of sun-umbrellas, or reverses and blows them to ribbons; it removes hats and bonnets by the score, and sweeps up small pebbles in its mad career, so that one feels as if being painfully pelted with buck-shot; it causes the shipping to strain fearfully at its cables, and churns the waters of Table Bay into a seething mass of snow and indigo.

All this time the sun shines intensely in a cloudless sky, and beautifies the "cloth" which floats on Table Mountain, undulating on its surface, or pouring over its edge like a Niagara of wool, to be warmed into invisibility before tumbling half-way down the mighty precipice that backs the town.

Although I have compared the south-easter to an enemy, he is in reality a friend. The inhabitants call him the "Cape doctor," because in the general clearance he sweeps away bad smells, the natural result of bad drainage.

But the south-easter was not blowing when I arrived at the ancient capital of South Africa. The "cloth" was drawn; the crags of the mountain, the white buildings and green groves of the town and suburbs, were unsullied by mist or dust as we steamed into the Bay, and the rugged outlines of the hills of the interior were distinctly visible through the warm haze.

The suburbs of the city are exceedingly beautiful, and here many of the principal inhabitants have built elegant mansions, to which they retire after the business of each day to escape the heat, dust, and smells of the town. A short line of railroad runs to these verdant spots at one side, while a tramway extends on the other. In another direction the railway runs by Stellenbosch and the Paarl to Wellington and Worcester.

It may surprise some people to be told that there is a minea rich and prolific mineat Capetown. Nevertheless, such is undoubtedly the case.

This mine is more extensive and valuable than any of the diamond or gold mines of the Orange River or the Transvaal. Indeed it is one of the most extensive mines in the world. It is, as already said, exceedingly prolific, and is marked by one grand peculiarity, namely, that among those who devote themselves to the working of it there are no disappointed or unsuccessful

diggers. Another peculiarity is, that very little capital is required to work it. The digger is not obliged to purchase “claims,” for it is almost if not altogether “Free.”

The only capital that must be sunk in it is Time, and of that even one hour a day will suffice to bring up vast stores of wealth from its unfathomable depths, while the labour bestowed tends to rest rather than to weary the body, at the same time that it enlarges the mind and invigorates the soul.

Still another peculiarity of this mine is, that its products are various and innumerable. You must go to Australia or to California for gold, to Golconda or Kimberley for diamonds, to Mexico or Spain for silver, to Cornwall for copper, tin, and lead, and to Sweden for iron; but in this mine you will find the various metals and gems in neighbouring “pockets” and nuggets, and seams and beds. Here you may gather the golden opinions of the ancients in close proximity to those of the moderns. Here you will find pearls of thought, sparkling gems of imagery, broad seams of satire, and silvery streams of sentiment, with wealth of wisdom and of wit. Hard iron-fisted facts also, and funny mercurial fancies are to be found here in abundance, and there are tons of tin in the form of rubbish, which is usually left at a pit’s mouth, and brings little or no “tin” to those who brought it to light, while there are voluminous layers of literary lead, whose weight and dulness render the working of them tedious; but this need not, and does not, dishearten the digger, for in all mines the poor and worthless material is ever in excess of that which is valuable, and miserable indeed must be the spirit of him who should refuse to manipulate the “dirt” because the large nuggets and gems are few and far between. Throughout all the cuttings flow glittering brooks of knowledge, and also many crystal rivulets drawn from the pure waters of the River of Life.

The mine of which I write is the Public Library of Capetown.

And let it not be supposed that I exaggerate or over-estimate this mine. It unquestionably takes rank as one of the noted libraries of the world, and South Africa has reason to be proud of, and grateful to, the men who, by their enlightened schemes and liberality, were the means of creating what is at once a mine and a monument to the Cape.

But Capetown boasts of many other institutions which are well worthy of notice. It is and has been since its foundation by Van Riebeeck in 1652 the seat of Governments. (See Note 1.) It is also the seat of the Supreme Court and of the University of the Cape of Good Hope. It possesses a first-rate “South African museum,” two cathedrals, many churches, a castle, fort, barracks, and other buildings too numerous to mention. Also a splendid breakwater, patent slip, and docks.

From the sublime to the ridiculous is well-known to be but a step. From mines of knowledge to matter-of-fact mules may seem a rather long step. If it is, the blame of my taking it must rest on the force of association. From the library you can walk in a few minutes to the docks, and docks has brought me to mules. I saw a ship-load of mules there, and it was a sight not to be forgotten.

Have you ever seen a fair stand-up fight between men and mules? It is not easy to say which of the two combatants is the more mulish. I went one day to the docks and chanced to witness a conflict. They were discharging the mules from the hold of the small vessel which had brought them over sea from South America. "Victory or death" was undoubtedly the motto of each. Of course man prevailed because of superior power, not obstinacy.

Many days, ay weeks, had these mules spent on the heaving deep; no doubt they had all been sea-sick, certainly they had been half killed, but when I went down into the hold of that ship, where there must have been at least fifty animals, the hundred ears of all of them lay quite flat, pinned to their necks as a desperate pirate might nail his colours to the mast, while deep unutterable hate and dogged resolution gleamed from every eye.

They were ranged along the sides of the ship in two rows. The rows had been full all the voyage, but when I saw them, half the animals had been got on shore, so that there was plenty of room for the remnant to career about and kick defiance at their human persecutors. What charmed me most was not the triumph of intelligence over brute force, but the application of brute force on both sides, with just sufficient mechanical addition on the part of the men to render their power irresistible.

When I entered the hold, the stench of which was almost overpowering, I could see nothing in the dim light, but I could hear the wild clattering of hoofs on wooden floors, the little shrieks of irrepressible fury, and the deep firmly uttered commands such as:

"Now, then, Dick, look out!"

"Grab 'im!"

"Dig into 'im!"

"Twist 'is tail!"

"That's it!"

"Hup!"

My eyes soon becoming accustomed to the dim light, I saw a trembling mule in the embrace of three men. It trembled with passion only. One had passed a stout sheet under it. Next moment there was an order to "hoist away," and the mule went past me, with rigid limbs, high into the air, whence it was lowered I could not see whither, and disappeared.

Meanwhile the three men went viciously at another animal. They were unusually strong men, with immense chests, and brawny arms bared to the shoulders. They panted and perspired freely, and had been severely dishevelled by their recent struggles.

I saw the dim outline of a mule, in the dark recesses of the hold to which he had retired, crushing his companions against the bulk-heads of the ship. He evidently knew that his hour was come.

To this demon Dick advanced with a short rope in his hand. The mule eyed him with a gleam of malice. Its ears became, if possible, flatter. Dick made a loop on the rope, and leaning over the breast-high barricade between him and his adversary made a cast after the manner of South Americans, but the mule jerked his head aside, and the lasso missed him. While Dick was preparing for another cast, Tom came up behind him with a sly motion. The mule observed Tom, let fly both heels with a tremendous crash on the barrier, and bolted to the other end of the ship. There Harry met him with a stick, and turned him back whence he came.

Again Dick advanced, made a successful cast, and drew the noose tight. For a few moments a perfect shower of kicks was delivered at the barrier and on the sides of the ship, but the three men did not wait till the creature was exhausted: they had no time for that. Two of them hauled the mule's head by main force to the edge of the barrier, the third leaning far over caught its tail, and instantly drew it broadside on. It was still some distance from the spot under the hatchway where the band and tackle were to be attached. Towards this Tom and Dick dragged the beast by the head, while Harry assisted with the tail. No power on earth could have made that mule walk! With its ears back and all its legs planted stiffly forward, it was made to slide in the required direction by main force. The place of execution reached, Dick jammed its head against the barrier, Tom hauled its tail taut over the same and made fast. There was no intentional cruelty in their actions, but difficult work had to be quickly done, and they could not afford to be squeamish. Obstinate violence had to be overcome by resolute vigour. The mule was now helplessly fixed, with its tongue hanging out and its eyes protruding. Nevertheless, in that condition it continued, without ceasing, to struggle and try to kick, and flatten its ears. It was a magnificent exhibition of determination to resist to the very death! a glorious quality when exercised in a good cause, thought my mind reverting

to patriots and martyrs.

Meanwhile Harry had passed the broad band under the mule, drawn it over its back, and attached the big hook to it. The signal was given to the men who managed the tackle on deck, and the animal bounded into empty space.

It was at that moment I made the discovery that a mule's spirit resides in its legs. Its last act on earth, before leaving, was to deliver a concentrated double-kick at the barrier, but the instant it found itself in air its flattened ears sprung up with an air of horrified astonishment, and all its legs hung straight and rigid, the four hoofs coming together as if in abject supplication to any one, or anything, that could deliver. Not the smallest effort did it make; not a trace of self-will did it display, while it shot upwards through the hatchway nearly to the yard-arm, whence it obtained its first bird's-eye view of Capetown docks. For one moment it hung, while it was being swung over the quay, whither it was lowered, and its feet once more came in contact with mother-earth. Then, but not till then, did the disease of its limbs depart, and the spirit of its ears and heels return. With a bound it sprang into the air, but, before it had time to think, a human enemy caught its rope, and drew its head tight to an iron post. Another such enemy cast off the broad band and tackle, and the creature was suddenly let go free. Its final act was to flourish its heels in the air, and utter a squeal of rage as it trotted into the midst of a group of its kindred which had already been treated in the same way.

A spirited literary commencementthe publication of newspapersunder men of great ability and high principle, bade fair to inaugurate an era of progress that might have quickly led the colony to a far greater height of moral, mental, and, by consequence, physical prosperity than it has ever yet attained; but a long struggle for freedom of the press followed, and in 1828 this freedom was secured. The sparkling streams thus set free have flowed and waxed in volume ever since.

There is a custom-house at Capetown. It is not because of being one of the noteworthy buildings of the port that I mention it, but because of its having been to me a personal nuisance on the occasion of my arrival in the colony. A fellow-passenger had informed mewhether rightly or wrongly I knew not and cared notthat watches, jewellery, and guns, were among the taxable articles. Knowing that my portmanteau contained no such articles, except a brass watch-guard, I presented myself to the official with an air of conscious innocence. I had hoped that, like many such officials in France and elsewhere, he would have been content with an assurance that I had "nothing to declare" and the offer of my keys, but I was mistaken. This particular official was perhaps a "new broom." It may be that he had caught some smugglers not long before, and the excitement had not yet worn off. At all events, instead of

allowing me to pass he ordered me to open my portmanteau.

While I was engaged in doing so he opened my shoulder-bag and eyed its contents curiously. They were not numerous. He found nothing contraband, and appearing somewhat disappointed applied his nose to it.

“It has a queer smell,” he remarked.

As the bag had frequently done duty at picnics and been loaded with flasks and sandwiches, I was not surprised. Besides, it occurred to me that no tax was levied on “queer smells,” though such a tax might have been, with advantage, levied on the town itself. It would certainly have produced an immense revenue. I smiled, however, in a pleasant manner and said nothing.

Having shut the bag this official opened the portmanteau, and began to examine each article in a way that would have rendered it probable he might have finished sometime within the next twenty-four hours. He slowly turned over my shirts and flannels as if he expected to find mines of jewellery in the folds thereof. Suddenly he came on the brass chain and his eye glittered, which was more than the chain did. It had to be re-deposited with a sigh. I began to grow despairing. Presently he took up a book and opened it. Was he going to refresh himself with a chapter? His turning over the leaves very slowly gave reason for the suspicion. Or did the obtuse creature expect to find watches and gun-barrels between the leaves? At last he shut the book, and, laying it down, proceeded to exhume a morning coat.

At this point one of his superiors told him that that was enough, to my immense relief, and the too-conscientious official allowed me to re-pack and lock-up my property.

Letter 14.

Stellenbosch, etcetera.

An agreeable surprise is not only interesting to the recipient, but sometimes to his friends. I received one at Capetown, which is worthy of record on several grounds.

For the proper explanation of that surprise I must turn aside for a little.

A mission started in the year 1860 for the Zambesi, where it was met, and for a time joined, by the great Dr Livingstone. Its leader, Bishop Mackenzie, who laid down his life in the cause, was a man as well as a missionary. By that I mean that he was manly, a quality which is not sufficiently appreciated, in some quarters, as being a most important element in the missionary character.

While on his way up to the selected sphere of labour in Central Africa, the Bishop and his party, with Dr Livingstone, got into the region of the accursed slave-trade, and one day came unexpectedly on a band of slaves. They were chiefly women and children, bound together with sticks and chains, and herded by a few armed slave-dealers, who, having murdered their male defenders and burned their villages, were driving them to the coast for shipment to eastern lands largely, it is said, to the land of the amiable Turk.

With characteristic zeal and energy Dr Livingstone advanced with a few men to set these poor wretches free. The slave-catchers did not await the onset: they bravely fired a shot or two and fled. To set the slaves free was naturally a most congenial work for the good Bishop who had gone there to free the black man from the slavery of sin. The sticks were cut, the bonds were unloosed, and the people were told that they were free to go back to their homes. Homes! Their homes were in ashes, and the brave hearts and stout arms that might have reared new homes were cold and powerless in death, while armed Arab and Portuguese bands were prowling about the land gathering together more victims. To send these unfortunates away would have been to insure their death or recapture. There was no alternative left but to keep and guard them.

Thus the Bishop suddenly found himself in possession of a small flock with which to begin his mission.

He accepted the charge, conducted them to the region where the mission was to be established, and finally settled down with them there.

Some time after this there came a rumour that a large and powerful band of slavers was approaching the settlement with many slaves in possession, and with the intention of attacking the tribe among whom the missionaries were located. What was now to be done? To have remained inactive until the slavers marched up to their huts would have been equivalent to suicide. It would have been worse, for it would have insured the putting to flight of the few men of the tribe who it seems were not celebrated for courage and the result would have been the overthrow of the mission and the recapture of the women and children who had already been delivered.

In these trying circumstances Bishop Mackenzie and his people came to the conclusion that self-defence called for vigorous action, and, with musket and rifle, sallied forth to meet the men-stealers, with the Bishop at their head.

On reaching the position of the enemy they paused at a distance of above six hundred yards. A group of Arab slavers were standing on a hill together. One of the mission party knelt, and with an Enfield rifle sent a bullet over their heads. The effect was powerful! The slavers, accustomed to the smooth-bore

musket, had thought themselves quite safe at such a distance. They were panic-stricken: perhaps the unexpected sight of white men aided the effect. At all events, when another bullet was dropped into the midst of them, they took to flight. The missionaries, like good generals, seized their opportunity, charged home, and chased the scoundrels into the woods. Thus, with little fighting, they gained an important victory, and became possessed of a second large band of slaves chiefly women and children who had been forsaken by their terrified captors.

These the Bishop resolved to add to his settlement. Indeed, as in the previous case, he had no alternative. They were at once liberated and conducted to the station, and one of the poor black children a little girl named Dauma was carried home by Mackenzie on his own shoulders.

Soon afterwards the mission failed in that quarter. Among other misfortunes disease attacked and carried off several of the chief Europeans of the party. The earnest enthusiastic Bishop himself died there in his Master's cause, and left his bones in the swamps of the Shire River.

All this, and a great deal more, had I read with profound interest, many years before my visit to the Cape, and the whole subject had made a deep impression on my memory especially the figure of the gallant Bishop returning from his raid on the men-stealers with the little wearied Dauma on his shoulders!

Well, one day I went to visit the "Saint George's Orphanage for Girls," in Capetown. I was conducted over the dormitories and schools, etcetera, and at last came to a class-room in which were assembled some hundred or so of black orphans infants almost, most of them, and irresistibly comic in their little looks and actions.

It was here that I received the agreeable surprise before referred to. The teacher of this class was as black as her pupils.

"She is herself an orphan, one of the best girls in our school," said Miss Arthur, referring to her. "She was saved from the slavers in Central Africa many years ago."

"What!" I exclaimed, "the little girl who was saved by the missionaries of the Shire River?"

"The same."

"And who was carried home on the shoulders of Bishop Mackenzie?"

“Yes; her name is Dauma.”

I shook hands with Dauma immediately, and claimed old acquaintance on the spot!

Chief among the many interesting visits which I paid while at Capetown was one to the beautiful towns of Stellenbosch and Wellington. Both are but a short distance from the capital, and connected with it by rail. The former is one of the oldest towns of the colony. Many of the French refugees settled there in 1685.

When, in 1684, Governor Van der Stell founded the lovely town of Stellenbosch, and led out the sparkling waters of its river to irrigate trees which afterwards became very giants of the forest, little did he, or his oppressive and tyrannical son and successor, imagine that they had sown the seed of that which was destined to become an academic grove, in the pleasant retirement of which lads and men should study the universal laws of matter and of mind.

That, however, which made the deepest impression on me during this visit was the manner in which the work of training the young is conducted. Everything seemed to be done with an amount of wisdom and vigour which cannot fail to tell most beneficially and extensively on future generations.

Well do I remember in days gone by, how, with my juvenile mind addled and my juvenile fingers tingling after an application of the “tawse,” I have stared at my arithmetic book in despairhopelessly ignorant of the meaning of words and terms, utterly incapable of comprehending explanatory “rules,” passionately averse to learning in every form, and longingly anxious for the period of emancipation to arrive, when I should be old and big enough to thrash my master! No such feelings, sentiments, or difficulties can ever find a place in the breasts of those fortunate pupils whose happy lot has been cast in the Seminaries of Stellenbosch and Wellington.

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