

At this moment my steady old horse stepped forward to crop some grass near my feet, and I was obliged to bend down to take his bridle to back him as quickly as possible. At that instant the old elephant saw me.

Extending his huge ears, he charged, screaming with rage, a very different sound indeed to the usual trumpeting. I waited until he got within fifteen yards, and fired full at his chest, and dodged back behind the tree. He gave a kind of trumpet and staggered past me, and then stood swaying a little. I did not wait to reload, but taking my 577 bore from my servant, let fire at his ear-hole, and the great beast dropped into a kneeling posture, quite dead. I had heard a good many shots fired by the others, and sent my servant to look for them and report results, whilst I took a rest, seated upon the leg of the dead cow. The Marstons soon came up, and said they had dropped two ; one had not been killed until

ten large bullets had been put into him; the other was finished with two 577. From our own experience, and from what we heard from other sportsmen, a small bore, say 450 or 577, with a hardened bullet, is much more reliable than the heavy 4-oz. bore, besides being less dangerous and giving less pain to the poor brutes, which precaution, I regret to say, is little heeded by a number of so-called great hunters. To illustrate this, I will only quote the words of the late Gordon Cumming —

“Having planted a bullet in the shoulder bone of an elephant, and caused the agonized creature to lean for support against a tree, I proceeded to brew some coffee. Having refreshed myself, taking observations of the elephant’s spasms and writhings between the sips, I resolved to make experiments on vulnerable points, and approaching very near, I fired several bullets at different parts of his enormous skull. He only acknowledged the shots by a salaam-like

movement of his trunk, with the point of which he gently touched the wounds with a striking and peculiar action. Surprised and shocked to find that I was only prolonging the suffering of the noble beast, which bore its trials with such dignified composure, I resolved to finish the proceeding with all possible despatch, and accordingly opened fire upon him from the left side. Aiming at the shoulder, I fired six shots with the two-grooved rifle, which must have eventually proved mortal, after which I fired six shots at the same part with the Dutch six - pounder. Large tears now trickled down from his eyes, which he slowly shut and opened, his colossal frame shivered convulsively, and falling on his side he expired."

All this is inexcusable, as over and over again Mr Cumming relates how he slew this and that giant beast with a single well-directed shot

We sent for axes, and soon chopped out the tusks, which altogether weighed 250 lbs., some steaks off the youngest animal, and a foot, which we had heard was very good eating. We cooked the foot South African fashion, which is by making a hole in the ground about the size of the foot, then making a large fire in and over the hole. When the fire has settled down to a red glow, it is all pulled out and the foot put in. Over the foot a few inches of earth are laid, and a large fire is then built on top, and in two hours it is ready for eating, the skin being easily cut through with a knife. We found it very tender and glutinous, but not much flavour.

A day or two after our sport with the elephants we sighted a herd of buffalo, and rode out, skirting a tract of dense bush which bordered the plain, and thus getting close enough for a shot. As before, we picked our animals and fired together.

One fell dead from Dick's rifle, and we mounted and gave chase after the rest. We had not gone far when the herd suddenly stopped, and huddling up together, as they generally do, stared at us. Scrambling off, we fired again at 200 yards, and another fell bellowing to the ground, rose, and fell again. Dick stopped to despatch this fellow, while we chased the rest, but only succeeded in obtaining one more, which one of us had wounded. I saw it charge Marston, who bolted a few yards, and climbed up a small tree. Knowing that it would charge me, I rode towards another tree in case of danger, but decided to stand underneath it and dodge the brute, so as to have a better chance of killing it. The buffalo, sighting me, came charging on, and I fired at fifteen paces, and sprang to one side. Before he could charge again, I shot him through the heart, just as he was turning.

We were a mile away from where we had left Dick, and wondered why he had not come on. There was a rise in the ground between him and us, and when we arrived on the top of this we could see his horse grazing, but no sign of him. Riding hastily on, we discovered poor old Dick lying gasping under the body of the dead buffalo. Our servants were running towards us from the bush, and with our combined efforts we rolled the beast off. We found the poor fellow terribly mutilated, gored through the body, also with an arm broken. There was nothing to be done, and he died a few minutes afterwards.

We buried him that evening at the same spot. His brother was terribly grieved, and sat up all night on a box, with his face in his hands, sometimes rocking himself to and fro.

Everyone liked Dick, he was a thorough sportsman, and always a jolly companion,

The winter was drawing to a close, and this sad event happening, we decided to return, and told the boys so, who were delighted at the prospect of getting away from the lions.

We did not return by the route we intended to, as we found it was infested with the *tetse-fly*, besides being a longer way round. We had had fairly good sport, considering the time we were hunting, as the pile of skins and horns in the wagon could testify.

Instead of going to Pietermaritzburg, we travelled to Kimberley, where we sold everything except the skins and horns, which Marston took to England with him, expecting to get better prices than we were offered, which he did, as I saw by the cheque he sent me.

CHAPTER XII.

I FELT very lonely in Kimberley, not knowing a soul, and missed my chum Dick, with whom I had spent years of ups and downs

As a place of residence, Kimberley is one of the most unpleasant I have ever been in.

It is situated in the centre of some vast Karroo plains, with not a tree or even a hill in sight, and no river within fifteen miles.

Being a drought-stricken place, it is frequently plagued with red dust storms, which come rolling over the veldt, smothering everything in the town. There are four mines situated within two miles of each other—Kimberley, De Beers, Du Toitspan and

Bultfontein. When they were first discovered in 1870, the diamonds were found in yellow earth, and thousands flocked from all parts, and pegged out their claims.

This yellow ground was worked to a depth of about 50 feet, when they came upon hard blue ground. Thinking they had arrived at "bottom," many abandoned their claims, others sold out at a trifle, which afterwards fetched upwards of £12,000 each, when it was found that this blue ground was the true diamondiferous soil, and went down to unknown depths. Companies were now floated, machinery erected, and in a few years a town of 25,000 inhabitants flourished on these arid plains.

"Stages" were built on the edge of the mine, on which were fixed huge "hoppers," into which the blue ground was tipped from large buckets holding over a ton, which were drawn up on wire ropes, attached to "drums" on the engines placed behind the stages.

As the drum revolves it draws one bucket up, at the same time letting an empty one down. Trucks pass under these hoppers, and are rapidly drawn away on rails by horses to the depositing floors. These floors extend for acres, and the "blue," which contains a quantity of lime, cover the floors, and, after hosing, it partly crumbles with the action of air and water. Gangs of natives are employed, who walk along in lines crushing the "blue" with the flat side of picks. Other trucks come after them, taking the pulverised soil to the washing machine. There it is hoisted by elevators, and falls into the puddling cylinder, into which there is a steady flow of water, and the revolving arms and teeth turn it into thin mud. The diamonds and other heavy matter rest on the bottom, while the lighter material flows down a "shoot" into the "tailing pit," from whence another elevator lifts it into a high shoot, and it finally settles in a huge mound some

distance away. The heavy deposit in the pan is cleaned out every twelve hours, and put through a machine called a "pulsator," which further concentrates it; thus 240 loads of earth are reduced to one load of gravel to be sorted. The sorting is done on tables, first wet by white men, then dry by natives.

The largest diamond found in these four mines weighed $42\frac{1}{2}$ carats, but afterwards one was found at Jagersfontein weighing $969\frac{1}{2}$ carats. Notwithstanding the vigilance of the detective department, it is calculated that upwards of half a million sterling value of diamonds are stolen annually.

Every gang of natives working in the mine or on the floors is watched by the overseers, and every now and then searched by a "searcher." Even so, they manage either to secrete them on their bodies, or swallow them. This done, they generally leave their employers, sell the diamond or diamonds to an illicit diamond buyer (I.D.B.),

and leave the fields, or obtain employment elsewhere. They are obliged to leave their situation to enable them to find a buyer, as all the natives employed are compelled to live in compounds. These consist of rows of galvanised iron buildings forming a square, enclosed by a high fence. Here there are shops where they can purchase all they require ; swimming-baths, hospital, and wood and water are provided free. They are compelled to remain prisoners, as it were, in this area until their three months' engagement has expired, at the end of which time many of them re-engage for further periods. They are strictly guarded against outer communication, and are searched on leaving the mine on their way to the compound. There are several entrances to the mines which are guarded night and day by officers of the Searching Department, which was in my time connected with the Detective Department. I applied for an appointment to this

Department, hearing that the officers were gentlemen, and exceedingly well paid. My references were referred to and found satisfactory, and, after a month's idleness, I was appointed searching officer in the Bultfontein mine.

I forgot to mention that Philip Marston, who was a wealthy man, declined to take Dick's share of money lying in the bank at Leydenburg.

In the two years I spent in the mines and drafted from one to the other, I saw many chances of investing money profitably, and had accumulated a large balance at my bank, and one day, giving notice to my chief, I booked as passenger by the mail for England.



COMMISSIONER STREET, JOHANNESBURG.

CHAPTER XIII.

SINCE my departure from South Africa, two important changes have occurred, namely the Witwatersrand Gold-Fields, and the British Chartered Company of South Africa. Before the discovery of the former, the gold-fields of South Africa were certainly not much attraction. The first to find gold at the Rand was a Mr Struben, who spent £11,000 on the spot before getting any return. Many companies were soon afterwards floated, and the output in September 1895 was 194,764 oz.

The town of Johannesburg, situated 5,735 feet above the sea, is on the Rand, and the land falls suddenly to the north so quickly that Pretoria, which is only thirty-five miles off, is 1,600 feet lower. This height gives Johannesburg a fine climate, and makes it cold, if not the coldest town in South Africa.

A few years ago there was not a tree to be seen, but owing to the richness of the soil, not only do large trees now flourish, but rows of green hedges fringe fields and gardens, recalling our English lanes. The town is becoming the largest city in South Africa. It is not a beautiful town, but handsome buildings are being erected, the streets improved and lighted with electric light, and there are three miles of tramway.

Railway communication extends to the Cape 1014 miles, to Delagoa Bay 395 miles, and to Durban about 438 miles.

As far as gold is concerned, South Africa is practically a reef country, no alluvial deposits of any extent having been found. But that is not to say they will not be discovered. No country in the world has better prospects than it has, and the fortunes of many lie hidden, waiting to be unearthed.

Some fields show their gold in massive belts of quartz running vertically or horizontally (called floating), others in thin veins between

slate and shales, while, at the Rand, the gold is found in a hard conglomerate called "basket," which runs in a form of reef, covers hundreds of square miles of country, and sinks to unknown depths ; in other words, it is inexhaustible.

It is hardly worth while giving a detailed description of gold extraction, as most would be bored with such, while a short account may interest many and be skipped by the others.

The work first commenced by digging trenches and sinking shafts with the dip of the reef. This system was then done away with, and vertical shafts fitted with "skips" were sunk, cutting the parallel reefs. As the shaft descends, levels are made into the reef ; the ore is then hoisted up through these shafts by machinery and taken to the batteries, where it is first broken into pieces the size of lump sugar, and then put into the mortar box. Five heavy stamps, each falling with the weight of nearly a thousand pounds, drop into a mortar box and form a battery. Some mills have considerably more than a

hundred stamps. Each stamp falls ninety times a minute, and the noise of a large number at work, crushing the ore to powder, is almost deafening.

The ore crushed, the wet pulp is run over copper plate-tables on which mercury is laid, with which the gold alone amalgamates ; from this it runs through mercury troughs, thence over blankets laid in other troughs, which catch all the remaining gold. The tailings run on into mounds or pits for further treatment by the cyanide process, which extracts the silver and the remaining gold. Now and then the batteries are stopped, and the amalgam is cleaned up and put into a retort, which is placed into a furnace. The heat causes the mercury to vaporise, and it is caught by the condenser and reliquefied and bottled for further use. The gold left in the retort is melted in crucibles and poured into moulds.

Johannesburg has already more European advantages than any other city in South Africa. Fine hotels, clubs, shops with Parisian and

London wares, theatres, polo clubs, rinks, and whatever reckless expenditure can procure in the way of comfort and distraction is to be had there. The value of building sites has increased enormously, and one hears of £40,000 being paid for a "stand" that was bought for a few hundreds six years ago. Commodities are getting cheaper with the railway and increased facilities for traffic.

Some day, no doubt, it will be the seat of a fierce struggle between the British population, assisted by the foreigner—French, German, or Spanish, as the case may be—against the "want-wit," blind policy, and petty tyranny of the Boer official.

It is to the interest of the capitalist to keep matters going smoothly, but the rapidly increasing British population, with families growing up around them to cement their interest, all tax-paying members of the community, must eventually predominate; the dissatisfaction will one day bubble over and find outlet in a Transvaal war.

CHAPTER XIV.

WITH regard to the British Chartered Company, little need be said, as it is so well known. The great capabilities of the country which they lay claim to are, in my opinion, not exaggerated in the least. What I saw of their vast dominions impressed me that a great future was before it. They own and have mineral rights over a tract of country larger than France, Germany, Austria, and Italy combined—a country rich in minerals, probably precious stones, and some of the finest grazing and agricultural land in the world. Over a hundred payable reefs have been found, and the country is advancing with rapid strides. Half a dozen newspapers

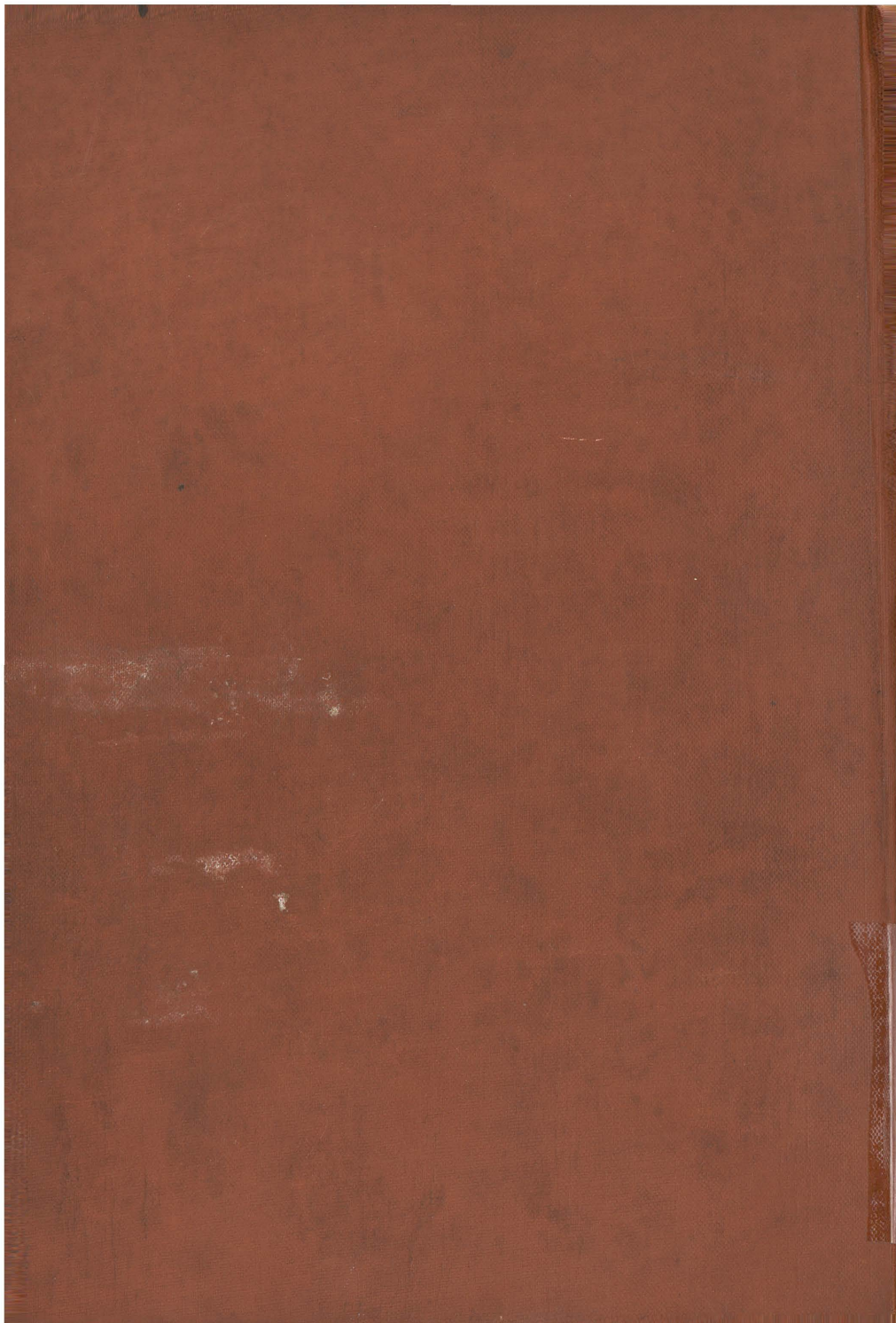
are published, railway, telegraph, and postal communication established, towns springing up like mushrooms, and many people flocking there, confident of making a "pile" one way or another. Land can be purchased in Mashonaland at 9d. an acre, in Matabeleland at 1s. 6d. per acre, both subject to conditions.

People going there are chiefly interested in mining, little farming having been commenced; but there is no doubt as to whether it would pay or not with land at that price, and fancy prices to be obtained for produce. An acquaintance of mine there made several thousands by growing vegetables alone, profits sometimes amounting to £150 a month. This may seem an exaggeration, but when a few acres of cabbages at half a crown each, onions at sixpence, and other vegetables at like prices are reckoned up, it is probable enough.

The all-round man is the best man for the

Colony, and any youngster with a decent education, not afraid of hard work, with a pair of hands fit for practical use, who can ride and work hard, will make his way there. A little knowledge of carpentering or forge work is worth more than all the Latin and Greek crammed in college to a fellow trying to make his way in South Africa. It is a great country with a great future, and there is space and to spare for intelligent men.

THE END.



THE
AFRICAN

A PLAIN TALE
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