

IN THE LAND OF MISFORTUNE.

CHAPTER I.

A DAY DREAM—DEPARTURE FROM ENGLAND—MADEIRA
EXPERIENCES—DISASTROUS NEWS.

So it was decided that I should go Southward
Ho!

Every preparation had been made for the far North-West,—guides, hunters, and Indians had been all engaged beforehand; the journey across the ice-bound land of North America had been planned, even to the crossing of Behring's Straits, and a winter's sojourn on the mystic Arctic shores of far-off Tuski Land, where, amidst a strange people and almost unknown country, I had hoped to study the manners and customs of this Asiatic tribe, and find in the solitude of those wintry scenes the loneliness which at times it is so sweet to find.

But it was ordained otherwise; and, without

entering into the causes which eventually arose to cloud this day dream, it is sufficient to say that circumstances occurred at the last moment which rendered it impossible for the expedition to be carried out.

Far away from these still and silent scenes other scenes of a very different character were being enacted. The cloud of war hung over South Africa, and the news which was sent over the seas, and read by every Englishman with eagerness and avidity, was not of that reassuring character to fill his breast with hope or confidence. Our repulse at Lange's Nek, together with the serious loss sustained, had already set a nation mourning—alas! the climax had not yet come.

In the heat of battle, when excitement is at its pitch, there is scant time to attend to the wounded and the suffering. When the hospital is reached, ministering hands await them, and everything is done to alleviate both pain and injury. But in many cases the mortally stricken soldier is left to his last agony on the spot whereon he fell, unheeded as the tide of battle flows; and the one who might bring relief and tenderness to soothe his last moments is not always by.

It was in this capacity that I decided to proceed at once to South Africa. A few days'

preparation was all that was needed; and the appointment, in addition, by Sir Algernon Borthwick of myself as correspondent of the *Morning Post* gave the object I had in view a double duty and interest.

Accompanied by my husband, and attended by one man-servant, I left England within a week following the decision I had arrived at. We embarked on board the *Donald Currie* s.s. *Warwick Castle* at Dartmouth, and with the last creak of the upheaving anchor, and the vibration of the screw, I felt that once more old England was to be parted with, and perhaps seen no more.

We were singularly fortunate in our passengers, and many hours did not elapse ere every one had more or less made friends. There were Lord Ebrington, and his sister Lady Mary Fortescue, passengers to Madeira; and Major Merriman, Captain Charles Beresford, and Lieutenants Hedley and Ruck, all of the Royal Engineers, proceeding to join the forces in Natal. Captain Hallam Parr, late secretary to Sir Bartle Frere, was also on his way to South Africa to replace as military secretary to Sir George Colley poor Macgregor, who had been lately killed. In addition there were many others amongst the large crowd of passengers that filled the *Warwick*

Castle with whom a speedy acquaintanceship was struck up.

What a motley, diversified lot does not a passenger ship bring together! Thereon one comes across people of every nationality and occupation, who in their daily intercourse become bound by a kind of friendship arising out of that feeling of loneliness which the presence of a ship mid ocean always inspires. It is, as it were, their island, to which the shipwrecked mariners cling, their only hope and home on the broad, magnificent "waters of the dark blue sea."

We had a bit of a toss in the Bay of Biscay, when most of the passengers betook themselves to their cabins, like so many rabbits disappearing into their burrows. On the third day the Canary Isles were reached, and skirting the island of Gomera, with Palma on our right, we sighted away to the eastward the peak of Teneriffe, as usual half hidden in a cloud. A few hours later, with a pretty stiff breeze blowing, we dropped anchor opposite Funchal, in the island of Madeira.

Of course there was a rush to go on shore, in spite of the rain, which came down in torrents. Many of us, anxious to obtain news of the war, lost no time in securing a boat, into which we transferred ourselves and were rowed towards the

land. On the beach the surf was breaking with tremendous power, and the excitement of landing was enhanced by the shouts of men, the screams of women and boys, all desirous of attracting attention to their wants long before we were through the surf, or in a fair way to be landed.

The boatmen in these parts show great skill in the management of their craft, bringing them in upon waves which, if they broke, would smash and overturn the strongest. As the boat nears the shore, and the breaker is about to burst, men rush forward from the beach and secure it with strong cords, to which are harnessed four powerful oxen, who at once drag the jeopardised boat high and dry on the beach.

Then arises around you a very babel of voices ; blind, halt, and lame clamour in your ear ; deformed objects exhibit to your horrified gaze their disgusting sores ; interpreters shout at you and assure you that you have engaged them, endeavouring all the time to entice you in different directions ; vendors of wares display their objects of interest, entreating you to buy ; while charioteers invite you to enter their exceedingly uncomfortable-looking conveyances.

As it was pouring with rain this offer appeared to me to be the least distasteful, so, taking refuge

in one of the hearse-like vehicles, and selecting from the crowd of guides one who appeared more cleanly and lower toned than the rest, I directed him to conduct us to the post-office. But I quickly discovered that it was a case of "from the frying-pan into the fire," for our crowd of tormentors continued to surround the slow lumbering conveyance which, minus wheels, and built on runners, bumped and jolted us unmercifully. There was very little news to be obtained in the town, our own ship having brought the latest and most authentic; so, despatching a telegram to England in search of what we required, we sought a welcome refuge in the cosy retreat of Reid's Hotel, out of reach of our many tormentors. In the afternoon we returned to the *Warwick Castle*, and at six o'clock the anchor was weighed and we were once more on our way.

Seventeen days at sea without sighting land is always dreary work to those who are not kindled with the enthusiasm of Cicero and Sir William Jones for a voyage of many thousands of miles in tropical seas.

Isaac Disraeli, in his *Literary Character*, says that "no situation is more common on a sea voyage, where nothing presents itself to the reflections of most men, than irksome observations

on the desert waters." It is reserved for the mind of genius alone, wrapped in meditation, to find delight in the surrounding scene; but as everybody who travels by sea is not a genius, capable of that deep meditation which obliterates all surroundings, amusement of some sort has to be originated in order to pass the time and give pleasure to the lower order of minds!

This we contrived to accomplish; and time flew quickly enough until, on Friday the 11th March, after coasting the greater part of the morning, Robben Island hove in sight, and with it that grand mass of flat-topped rock which towers at the back of Cape Town, and is dignified under the name of Table Mountain.

How eagerly we all pressed forward as the ship drew into dock, and anxiously awaited the news. Little we dreamed, in our British arrogance, of the words which a few minutes later fell with cruel distinctness on our listening ears:—"The British troops have been cut to pieces on the Majuba Mountain, and Sir George Colley is killed."

All over the ship a pin might have been heard to drop, so intense was the silence which followed this announcement. It was broken after a long and painful pause by whispered exclamations of horror and amazement, which gradually loudened

into the buzz of many tongues as every one began to discuss the bad news. We lost no time in landing; and immediately, with Major Merriman, Captain Beresford, Mr. Hedley, and Mr. Ruck, took train for Wynberg, in the quiet outskirts of Cape Town, with the intention of there passing the night.

The bad news had greatly affected our spirits, and although an appearance of cheerfulness was maintained, we were all in anything but a gay mood.

For myself, the shock had been great. In the recent disastrous engagement several dear friends had fallen; and wandering out alone after dinner, in the calm softness of the clear tropical night, it was hard to realise that the faces I had so lately seen, the voices I had so recently listened to, as they laughed a gay farewell, were departed for ever—cold, silent, and no more, in the grim clutches of Death.

CHAPTER II.

CAPE TOWN EXPERIENCES—VISIT TO THE ZULU KING—OFF AGAIN—THE WILD MAN'S LAND—TRANSPORT LANDING—A BLACK HOLE OF CALCUTTA.

AFTER an early breakfast the following morning we returned to Cape Town, where we spent several hours in shopping and sight-seeing. I was agreeably surprised in everything we came across, the ideas I had formed of Cape Town being not very grand. We walked up to Government House to write our names down, and were cordially and hospitably received by the courteous governor and his wife, who very kindly pressed us to take up our abode at the house during the remainder of our stay; so, availing ourselves of their hospitality, we were not long in becoming their guests. The afternoon was spent in visiting several spots of great beauty outside Cape Town, and a delightful drive home in the cool of the evening brought to a conclusion a very pleasant and well-spent day.

In compliance with a wish I had expressed to pay a visit to King Cetshwayo, Sir Hercules Robinson had made every arrangement necessary for the interview, and it was settled that after lunch on the following day we should drive over to Oude Molen and call on the Zulu King. Several visitors turned up at the luncheon hour, amongst whom came Prince Louis of Battenberg. The Prince had ridden over from Simon's Bay, at which place the detached squadron was lying, and he informed us that every one was hoping that orders would arrive for them to proceed at once to Natal. As we since learnt, these hopes were not realised. Directly lunch was over we entered the carriage which was in waiting, and started for Oude Molen. A drive of six or seven miles for the most part along the sea coast carried us through a dreary and uninviting-looking country, until, bearing suddenly to the right, we passed through some gates, and followed along a deep sandy road which led to the residence of the King. Driving across a broad sandy plain resembling somewhat an English common, we suddenly came in sight of a staring whitewashed house, which was pointed out to me as Oude Molen. The King, who had been made aware of Lady Robinson's visit, came to the door to meet

us, and shook hands with every one. He appeared glad to receive visitors, laughed heartily at several remarks we made with a view of amusing him, and in his turn chuckled over some jokes of his own making. In repose, however, his features assumed a sad and careworn expression; and it was easy to trace, in the pleasing, kindly countenance of this unfortunate man, the secret trouble which is gnawing at his heart, and embittering his daily existence.

An instance of grosser injustice can be nowhere recorded than the detention of this brave but unhappy captive, who is suffering for the ambition and cupidity of others, and whose sole crime was his defence of his invaded country, when he turned his arms against the invaders, with whom he earnestly and honestly desired to live in peace. In the dignity, patience, and fortitude under severe trial with which he bears his captivity, Cetshwayo has shown that he lacks not that which is found wanting in the breasts of his conquerors, *i.e.* generosity and nobility of soul, which it would be well for justice-loving (!) John Bull to imitate.

On hearing that I was on my way to Natal and the Transvaal, Cetshwayo expressed great interest, and in a few minutes' private conversa-

tion which I snatched with him afterwards he begged me to visit Zululand, and his wrecked capital, news of which he said it would make him happy to receive. I promised him that if possible I would do so; and having paid a visit to the four girls of the kraal who share with him his captivity, we prepared to take our departure.

I was not particularly prepossessed by the exterior view of Oude Molen, and I must confess the interior seemed to me still worse. The place is totally devoid of any kind of furniture or pictures, whereby this dingy residence could in a way be rendered cheerful and habitable. Bare is the little entrance hall or vestibule into which the visitor is first introduced,—barer still is the room in which Cetshwayo lives; and the only objects which strike the eye on entering are a few roughly manufactured kitchen chairs! In a dark dreary room at the back of the house dwell the partners of his misery. These poor creatures were very pleased to see us, and we left them happy in the possession of a few shillings and half-crowns with which we had purchased the fruits of their industry in the shape of some neatly constructed bead necklaces.

The following morning, the s.s. *Melrose* being ready to depart for Natal, we bade good-bye to

our hospitable host and hostess, and went on board. Just as we were leaving dock I received from Sir Hercules Robinson the news of the assassination of the Emperor of Russia, together with information of the further prolongation of the armistice. This last news was received by every one with great satisfaction, as it held out a hope of reaching Natal before hostilities recommenced; the possibility of a settled peace being arranged being of course quite out of the question—at least so it was generally thought.

So away we steamed, and soon Cape Town faded far astern, while distant ranges of mountains rose hazily visible on the port side of the vessel. A good deal of coasting work was done until the following day, when the *Melrose* cast anchor in Mossel Bay, and awaited the arrival of a boat put out from shore to take the mails. The water all around appeared alive with sharks, upon which every one set about trying in various fashions to catch one of these monsters. Tempting pieces of raw meat spitted on to huge hooks were hung over the ship's sides, but all to no effect, and the baits remained untouched. Rifles were got out from their cases, but though many a bullet ploughed the water on apparently the very spot where the great fish showed themselves, this

method of securing them was equally unsuccessful. The mails for Mossel Bay having been shipped, we coasted on to Port Elizabeth or Algoa Bay. At this place several of our party went on shore, but they did so at a great risk of being left behind. For myself, I did not follow their example, the general distant appearance of the town not being particularly inviting. In the distance the island of Ste. Croix could be distinguished, this being the first land discovered by B. Diaz in 1486, after rounding the Cape.

We made our last stoppage before reaching Natal at East London on the following day. This seaport town, formerly Fort Glamorgan, is built at the mouth of the Buffalo River, being over seven hundred miles distant from Cape Town. It was blowing heavily as we cast anchor in the open and exposed bay, the ship rolling her gunwales nearly under water as the tremendous seas tossed her unmercifully here and there. The greatest difficulty was experienced in shipping the cargo, and several of the passengers ran narrow escapes during their transportation from the steam-tug to the *Melrose*. It was not until many hours of discomfort had been undergone, during which period it was difficult for the most experienced sailor to gain a secure footing, that

the vessel was set once more in motion, and her head at last pointed for fair Natal.

During the whole of the following day the coast line of Kaffraria, rocky and dangerous, continued to unfold its rough and rugged scenery to our delighted view. By the great Kei River dwell the tribes of the Amagalecka Kaffirs, while that portion of the country bordering on Natal is inhabited by the Amapondos. Many of this latter tribe are a wild and untamed race, owing allegiance to no one but their chiefs, although the greater part of Kaffraria, or, as it is now more properly called, the Transkeian territories, is fully under British authority.

Through powerful glasses we could distinguish large herds of cattle, the property of these peaceful and pastoral people, quietly grazing on the slopes of Griqualand East; while in many instances the natives themselves were plainly visible at work in their mealie gardens or tending their herds.

Early on Saturday morning, the 19th March, the *Melrose* cast anchor outside the bar at Durban. A tremendous swell was rolling, and the bar itself was in such a state of agitation and turmoil that the captain of our vessel declared it impossible to take the ship into harbour until the weather should calm down.

This information was received by us with anything but satisfaction, our impatience to get on shore being in no way allayed by such unwelcome news. We were, however, forced to content ourselves with the promise that in a couple of hours the company's steam tug would be alongside, when any passengers feeling inclined to trust to the tender mercies of the bar were at liberty to avail themselves of this opportunity to get on shore, the captain assuring us that as soon as it was practicable he would lose no time in bringing his ship in for the purpose of landing our luggage.

A great many ships of all kinds and nationalities were rolling at anchor in the bay. A couple of transport vessels were busily employed in their hazardous work of landing men and horses, the latter business being especially trying, and I should imagine uncomfortable, to the unfortunate animals, some of whom remained swinging in the air for over ten minutes at a time. To lower a horse from the deck of a transport ship to the lighter below in a heavy swell is by no means an easy task, and the wretched animal,—dangling mid-air at the end of a pulley, his feet at one moment almost touching the sea, at another his body on a line with the topmost mast,—presents

indeed a pitiable object. I had ample time to watch these proceedings while awaiting the tug which was to convey us on shore, the unpleasant feeling experienced in observing the struggles of the poor beasts being pleasantly obliterated in the amusing spectacle presented by the transportation of the men from the ship to the lighters. By the aid of rope-ladders and cords depending from the ship's side the men slung themselves downwards, and sprang into the lighter whenever a convenient opportunity presented itself, in the sudden uprising of a huge wave, which brought the craft on a level with themselves. Those who could not rely so much on their ape-like powers were lowered by pulley in the same manner as the horses; a serious accident in this way very nearly taking place, which might have proved disastrous but happily did not. One of the officers of this regiment, which turned out to be that of the 14th Hussars from India, while in the act of being lowered, was let down at the wrong moment, and at once disappeared between the lighter and the ship. It was a very narrow shave, but fortunately, as luck would have it on this occasion, a friendly and interposing wave intervened to separate the ship and the lighter. Had it been otherwise the unfortunate officer

must have been smashed as flat as a pancake. As it was he escaped unhurt, but having descended with a somewhat rosy complexion, he was drawn up with an exceedingly pallid one, doubtless caused by the reflection of his own fears.

At length, after long and patient waiting, the promised steam-tug made its appearance. We caught sight of it making its way through the rough and angry waters of the bar, often so enveloped in spray that it was impossible to distinguish it. We lost no time as soon as it came alongside the vessel in transferring ourselves to its wet and slippery decks, which we had no sooner reached than we were instructed to go below. This meant descending into a pestilential hole, which was already crammed with second and third class passengers, who so entirely filled up the space that there was barely standing room. It was in vain that we remonstrated, and begged to be allowed to remain on deck. We were informed this was quite out of the question, and consequently, but very unwillingly, we staggered below, and the hatch being immediately closed we found ourselves battened down in total darkness. I have often heard of the Black Hole in Calcutta, and terrible as that place may have been, I should imagine that the hole in which we were

confined could have proved a worthy rival. Seldom have I experienced such disagreeable moments. Crowded to suffocation, children crying, women screaming, and every one more or less most inconveniently selecting this very time in which to be sick, added to the whistling of the wind, and the heavy thud of the breakers against the ship's side as it made its way across the bar, produced a confused din which sounded much—as one of our party frankly remarked—"like hell let loose." The smell was intolerable, and I shall never forget those delightful moments when the hatch was at length pushed back, and we were informed we could come on deck. Up we rushed into the pure fresh air with long-drawn exclamations of thankfulness,—truly one has to suffer before learning how to enjoy.

On landing we put up at the Alexandra Hotel, close to the point where we had come on shore, and impatiently awaited the arrival of the *Melrose*. But disappointment was again in store, for, later in the day, in attempting to cross the bar, the vessel got stranded on a sandbank ; and though the company worked hard to get her off, the close of evening saw her in the same unfortunate position.

All that afternoon the horses and men of the

14th Hussars were being landed on the quay, and we spent some time watching that interesting operation. The horses, most of them Whalers and Persians, appeared in excellent condition, not a bit the worse for all their knocking about; and the entire force was eventually landed without a loss or a casualty, with the exception of one poor beast who broke his leg, and was immediately shot.

By dint of sheer force employed the *Melrose* was tugged off the bar next day, but it was not till evening that we managed to get our luggage collected and passed through the Custom House. That afternoon we visited the 14th Hussars, by whom we were most hospitably entertained in their charming camp, pitched on the wooded slopes of the Berea, and thence wandered about Durban, making acquaintance with the pretty town nestling in its oceans of green. Of this place my first impressions were most agreeable, and I was greatly touched by the extreme courtesy and kindness which I received from many of its inhabitants to whom I was a total stranger. Altogether my recollections of Durban are completely associated with all that was pleasant and delightful, and it was a time to which I look back with great pleasure.

CHAPTER III.

FORMING A STUD—AN UNENVIABLE EXISTENCE—PLAYED OUT
—USEFUL ALLIES—A PAINFUL SCENE—AQUATIC OXEN
—NATIONAL GLOOM—ROUGH EXPERIENCES.

ON Monday, the 21st of March, we left Durban by an early train for Pieter Maritzburg, which was reached at two o'clock. No sooner had we arrived than I set to work to discover and purchase horses, a by no means easy task as it proved, these useful animals being an exceedingly scarce article, not to mention ruinously dear. It being, however, a case of "pay up or have naught," there was nothing for it but to cheerfully acquiesce in a matter of necessity, and after a timely jingle of coin, and evincing stoical willingness to be cheated, the quadrupeds made their appearance one by one, and by noon on the following day a fairly good-looking stud had been collected, to whose powers it was proposed to entrust a quick ride to Newcastle, distant some two hundred miles.

We were a gay and cheery party as we galloped that morning through the town of Pieter Maritzburg. Many a head was turned with a glance of curiosity towards our little band. Whatever they thought became soon a matter for future digestion, for a few minutes saw us on the outskirts of the town, and our horses' heads fairly pointed towards the north. Howick, distant some twelve or fourteen miles, was speedily reached. This place can boast of falls which, for beauty, size, and magnificence, far outrival the Cataracts of Niagara, and the spray which rises aloft envelopes the air for many feet in height in a dense thick mist.

Comfortable quarters awaited us at Curry's Post, which we were not sorry to reach. One of the recent purchases, for which I had given £50, turned out to be but a wretched jade. I had been obliged to buy him at the last moment for want of a better, and he had become the mount of my servant, who found the greatest difficulty in getting him along. I was glad to dispose of him for £3 to a farmer, who promised to give him a comfortable home and a fair chance to recover! I thought myself fortunate in being able to buy at this place a couple of horses for £100; and these purchases, with which I never

parted during my stay in South Africa, proved most useful and enduring, and in time of need never failed me.

We pressed on for Mooi River that night, distant from Pieter Maritzburg some forty-five miles. All along the way we passed innumerable ox waggons proceeding to the front, and heavily laden with stores. The roads, which had not then recovered from the heavy rains, were in a terrible state, the deep heavy sand and treacherous holes proving formidable obstacles to encounter and overcome. As we rode along we came across many waggons hopelessly stuck; some were completely overturned, while here and there a total breakdown added to the confusion and disaster of the scene. Double spans of oxen struggled wildly and vainly to extricate their foundering waggons; but even with the aid of spade and pick all their efforts proved fruitless, and the weary and laborious task of unloading was in the end the general result. In every direction the eye was attracted by the painful spectacle of dead and dying oxen, over whom hovered large flocks of the disgusting *Asvögel* or vulture, to whose friendly offices nevertheless the country is indebted for its freedom from pestilence and disease, which would inevitably

result were it not for the wide-spread services of these useful scavengers.

The life of a trek ox in these parts (especially a Government one, or in the service of the Government) is by no means an enviable position; and his fat sleek brethren in England, who spend their days in luxury and ease in preparation for the butcher's knife, would scarcely change places even if they could be made aware of their impending fate. A truly pitiable and repulsive sight it is to see a heavily loaded waggon being dragged along. The poor brutes yoked therein strain their patient necks and strive hard against unequal odds, goaded along the while by the demon-like shouts and horrid cries of their black drivers. As the name of each ox is pronounced the stranger can at once single him out by the trembling quiver that passes over the poor beast's frame. Whirr, crack, whack! comes the merciless double-thonged lash across his body, while a huge wale rises; more often a ghastly fleshy wound is left from which the red blood slowly trickles, testifying to the severity of his punishment.

In winter time their fate is especially hard, for the dry withered grass affords scant nourishment, while the cold piercing winds that sweep over

the Veldt strike home with fatal force through their thin and bony carcasses. Day by day they grow weaker and weaker, until the cruel yoke becomes for them a thing of the past; and, forsaken by their owners, they wander forth o'er the cold bleak Veldt to die.

During my progress up country sights of this description were very frequent, and though I was assured that a few months', even a few weeks', sojourn in South Africa would speedily accustom me to view these scenes of suffering with indifference, I must confess this prediction was in no way verified.

How delighted we were to reach Mooi River, in spite of the poor accommodation which the little wayside inn could offer. The horses had borne the journey fairly well, considering the soft condition they were in; but the poor brutes must have felt as thankful at the sight of the stable as we were on beholding the hotel.

Our rest all night long was greatly disturbed by the nocturnal attacks of a little visitor who shall be nameless! For myself, I preferred to find what repose I could in a wooden chair, in which I ensconced myself, and, with my head resting on the table, soon fell asleep; but my companions, unable to resist the temptation of a

bed and sheets, were tortured and tormented unceasingly in their restless vigils, and had every reason to envy the profound and refreshing sleep in which I indulged ! As with the dull gray dawn of early morning they sank into exhausted slumber, I awoke. It was very cold, and I felt stiff and benumbed with the hardness of my couch ; but with awaking consciousness the recollection dawned upon me that we had agreed overnight to make an early start, in order to avail ourselves of the cool hours of morning to get well along on our journey, halting during the midday heat to rest and refresh the horses. Hastily indulging in a species of cold splash, which was decidedly wintry, I groped my way to the stables and with difficulty aroused my sleepy servant and still more drowsy Kaffirs. Soon the horses were indulging in a liberal supply of oat hay, which they greatly appreciated, and having seen that the wants of these, our most faithful servants, had been properly attended to, I went back to the inn and to the fresh task of awaking my slumbering companions. But my efforts for a long time were unsuccessful, and the only replies I received to all my tapping and knocking at the doors of their rooms were suppressed groans and grunts and long-drawn

yawns. Fortunately, however, this restlessness had the effect of disturbing their recent enemies, who on this occasion proved to me most valuable allies. Renewing their attack on the bodies of their victims, these little creatures achieved a signal victory, and quickly succeeded in banishing the sluggards from their positions of sloth. A ride of eighteen miles brought us to Estcourt, where we halted for breakfast. At this place a company of the 97th Regiment and a small force of Natal Mounted Police were stationed, whose duty it was to search up-country waggons and intercept all passage of arms by Boer agents. This occupation was very little relished, and the desire to get up to the front freely expressed.

The heat was excessive, and the tempting proximity of Bushmans River made every one long for a plunge. While breakfast was preparing my companions sallied forth armed with towels, while I was forced but glad to content myself with the luxury of a cold tub, which the resources of the hotel were found to afford. When we were all assembled at breakfast a telegram was placed in my hands, and upon opening it I found it to contain an announcement from headquarters acquainting me with the signature of peace which had taken place at O'Neill's Farm

beneath the Amajuba. I will pass over what followed this announcement, or all we said and thought on this occasion. To describe it would be but a repetition of all that has been said on this subject before. Suffice to say we echoed the voices of condemning millions, and blushed for the shame and dishonour which had fallen on that country to which he who soon followed her disgrace to the grave brought "peace with honour."

Heart-sick and disgusted we continued our journey; we felt in no mood for conversation, and the next twenty-two miles was performed in silence. At Colenso, halting for an hour, we came across Colonel Wavell and Major Morris proceeding down country, and to them confirmed the disgraceful news, which we found no one willing to believe or credit. Had a book been compiled containing all the epithets and abuse hurled at the Government who had so debased and lowered the glory and prestige of England, during the six months I passed in South Africa, I verily believe that the volume in question would have been great,—beyond all power of the human frame to lift.

The temper we were all in did not improve the pleasure of a further ride of twenty miles on

tired horses; and to make matters worse, when we eventually drew near to Ladysmith we found the Klip River so rapid and swollen that to ford it was impossible. True there was a floating pont, but that, for the time being, we found engaged in transferring to the other side a mule waggon and its team. So, dismounting from our stiff and weary horses, we loosened the girths of their saddles and allowed them to wander about in search of food. It was fortunate we did so, as we were kept waiting a long time for the pont, on which the waggon was hopelessly stuck. In trying to run the vehicle on to the land, one of the fore wheels had sunk into a mud hole. Thus the front portion of the waggon rested on the land, while the hinder part remained on the pont. The road leading from the landing stage rose abruptly in a steep, almost perpendicular incline, and the mules, although they tried hard at first, found it impossible to extricate the waggon from its hopeless position. Their struggling efforts proving fruitless and ineffectual, the tired animals appeared to lose all hope or confidence in their own powers, and steadfastly and wisely refused to renew their attempts. Then ensued a scene truly repulsive and disgusting. Double-thonging his whip, the driver brought the lash down in

quick succession across the backs of the poor beasts, carrying away long streaks of flesh in the operation, while the conductor beat them unmercifully about the legs, head, and mouth, with a knobkerrie which he carried in his hand. Several soldiers in charge of the waggon, instead of interposing to prevent such cruelty, seemed to look upon it as an amusing spectacle, and one of them, drawing his knife, began to prog one of the animals with the blade. In its agony the poor brute reared up and fell backwards, while the rest, in their fright and terror, became inextricably mixed in each other's gear ; it was not until most of them, foaming and panting and covered with blood, lay helplessly stretched out on the ground, that the order was finally given to desist, and the men proceeded to unload the waggon and release and reharness the fallen mules. The scene I have described is in no way exaggerated, and I consider it to have been the most grossly cruel and degrading spectacle I have ever witnessed. Animals were given to man for use, and not abuse ; and the sooner a civilized community attend to this distinction the better. While awaiting the return of the pont I occupied myself in watching the progress of two or three hundred oxen who were being "swum," across the

Klip some fifty yards down stream. These great animals took quite kindly to the water, and did not seem in the least degree terrified by the tremendous current that was running. The moment they entered the river nothing could be distinguished but a mass of horns and black snouts appearing on the surface, presenting every appearance of drowning. In this manner they reached the opposite bank in safety, emerging like huge hippopotami from their watery refuge. In due time we were all landed on the Ladysmith side of the river, and thought ourselves in paradise as we rode along its tree-lined streets to the hotel. A few days' contemplation of the great rolling Veldt, especially in winter time, makes the sight of green foliage and vegetation of any kind or sort doubly refreshing and welcome; and it was with a sigh of satisfaction that we felt that for a short time at least we had entered upon a new world. At the Crown Hotel we found good accommodation; the wants of our horses were quickly attended to. If it is your desire to travel long distances day after day on the same horse, it is absolutely necessary to pay the strictest attention to the comfort and wellbeing of the animal. The colonial steed is, without exception, the most enduring of his kind that I have ever

come across, and I have on several occasions accomplished a journey of ninety or a hundred miles in little more than a day on the same animal. But to do this you must humour the requirements of your horse. His wants are very simple, and he requires but little, and this little is very easily supplied. At the commencement of a journey a halt should be called at the expiration of the first half hour, when, having removed the saddle, the horse should be turned loose to graze and roll, and find what water he requires. Twenty minutes is ample time to allow, when the journey can be resumed, and continued for three or four hours. A second halt for an hour is then advisable, and if the opportunity presents itself of giving him a feed of oat hay, this opportunity should not be neglected. Failing the possibility of procuring forage, the horse will content himself with a graze on the Veldt and a drink of as much water as he requires.

It is the night's rest which is so imperatively necessary to the colonial horse, without which he will soon waste away. Give him his night's rest and plenty to eat at the same time, and in the morning when you require him you will find a clean manger and a refreshed and invigorated animal. His back is supposed to be a somewhat

tender point. In this I do not agree, as the back of any horse will become swollen and sore if the saddle is not rightly attended to. It is, of course, necessary to see that this is properly stuffed and cleaned; and if this practice is adhered to, and the rider sits straight in his saddle, I do not think a sore back would ever be complained of.

A remnant of the 58th, who received such a terrible slating in the attack on Lange's Nek, was quartered at Ladysmith at the time of our arrival. In the evening we strolled up the picturesque street of the little town, listening to the band of this regiment, which was performing in a large open space or square close to the Saw Works. Public excitement was at its pitch, and the fate of any Boer found lurking in the town would have been unenviable. The action of her Majesty's Government was universally condemned, and the choice expressions of hatred and disgust, connected with the names of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Kimberley, found vent in language the reverse of polite. Shame was on every face and in every heart, and the universal gloom both painful and depressing.

We remained at Ladysmith a day to rest the horses, starting early the following morning, and breakfasting at Sunday's River, some twenty-four

miles on the road. We here came across several officers on their way down country for England, and somehow or other so dawdled away the day that it was growing dusk when we mounted our horses once more and set out for the Biggarsberg, distant some thirteen miles. It would have been wiser to have stuck to our present quarters, considering the lateness of the hour; and we regretted still more having left Sunday's River, when a crash of thunder, followed by large drops of rain, warned us of the quick approach of a storm. Large masses of black clouds obscured the moon, and we found the greatest difficulty in keeping the road, owing to the dense blackness of the night and the inclination of the horses to wander over the Veldt in search of shelter. I was leading a little in advance of my companions, and had for the moment given my horse his head, when I was disagreeably reminded that even these sagacious animals are liable to make a mistake, for with a sudden floundering movement he toed the ground over a high ant-heap and came down with a heavy crash into a deep gully or pit. By this time the rain was coming down in torrents, and the place into which we had rolled was a perfect quagmire of mud. "Soft falling, at any rate," said I to myself, "but oh! how dirty;"

and with this feeble attempt at jocularly, proceeded to pick my way out of the slimy trap. By dint of shouting I made out the direction taken by the others, and a brilliant flash of lightning disclosed them to me some hundred yards ahead. The crash of thunder which followed the flash of lightning made my horse tremble with terror, and it may be imagined with what joy I perceived the glimmer of a distant light. Refuge was at hand, and a few minutes later saw us, drenched and miserable, unloading our packs and removing our saddles outside the dreary little half-way house of Carey's Rest. We thought ourselves fortunate, however, in procuring food and stabling for the horses, though the accommodation which awaited ourselves was of the poorest and dirtiest. Food was scarce and very bad, while the house was infested by the same species of unpleasant occupants that had annoyed us so much at Mooi River. Cold, drenched, and hungry, we spent a most unpleasant night.

CHAPTER IV.

PASSAGE OF THE BIGGARSBERG—WOUNDED SOLDIERS—OUR
FIRST DINNER AT FORT AMIEL—A CROSS COUNTRY RIDE
—A FACER—THE INGOGO BATTLEFIELD—A GALLANT ACT.

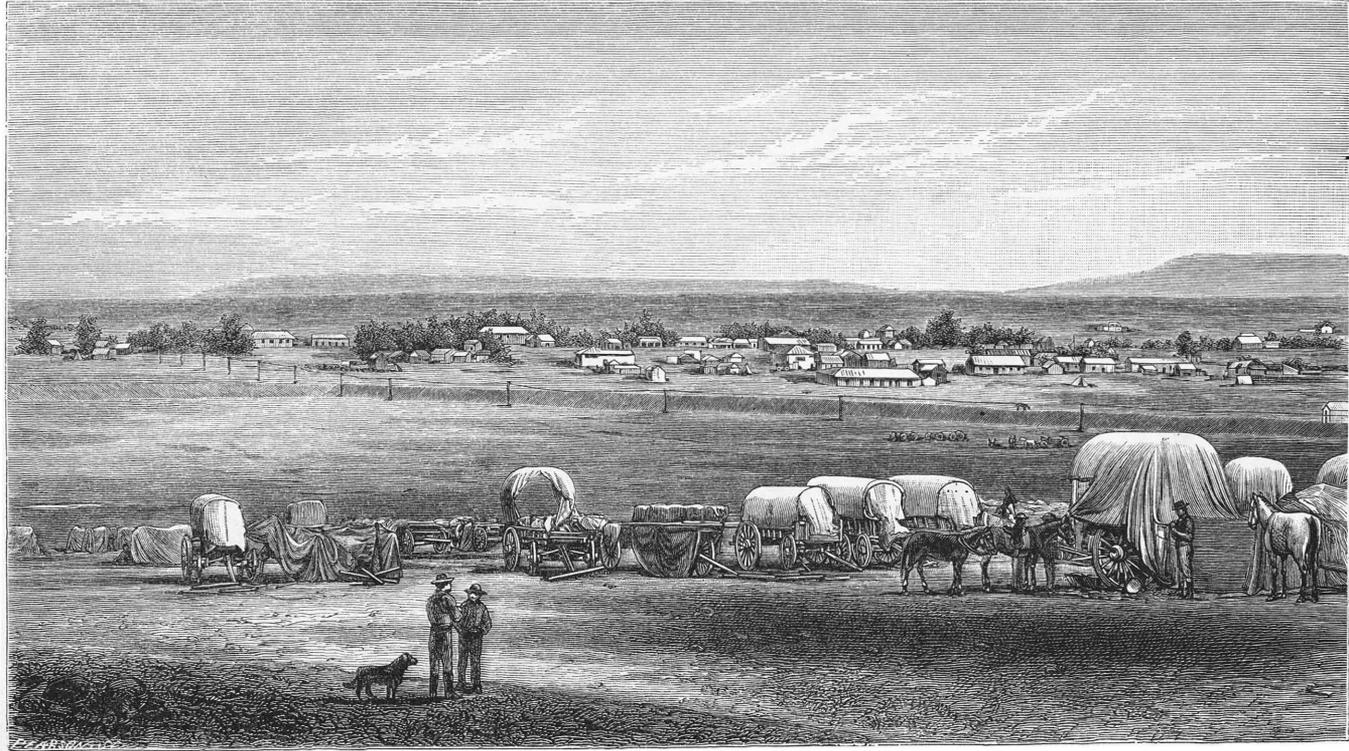
WE left Carey's Post by dawn of day, and in the passage of the Biggarsberg Range entered upon totally different scenery from that through which we had hitherto passed. The road we followed led through a hilly, rocky country, the steep, precipitous, and frowning crags of those giant heights appearing to defy the encroachments and assaults of man. Passing through a valley of wild and strange beauty, we found ourselves on the summit of the mountain pass, and looked down upon a far-stretching country, a vast rolling plain extending far away to the blue line of the Drakensberg. On regaining the Veldt we pushed along at a brisk pace, in the hope of reaching Newcastle early that afternoon, the pleasure of meeting friends whom we longed to see stimulating us to increased energy. At the Ingagane River we made a short

stay for breakfast, after which we visited a small camp on the other side of the river, where we found the soldiers busily employed in erecting forts. The officer in command came out to meet us, bringing with him a fresh mount for myself, which the kindness and forethought of Sir Evelyn Wood's aide-de-camp had provided. All along the road between the Ingagane River and Newcastle, ambulances filled with wounded soldiers kept passing us; the greater part of the men wore their left arms in slings, a curious incident illustrative of the unerring aim of the Boers. The most convalescent trudged along the road on foot, probably preferring this manner of travelling to the joltings of the slow creaking ox waggons in which their companions were laid. Most of these poor fellows looked ghastly, and signs of suffering had furrowed themselves deep into the faces of many; while a depressed look pervaded every countenance, hardly as yet recovered from the startling conviction that must have forced itself upon every one, that by the recent act of the Government all this suffering had indeed been borne in vain.

In the distance a cloud of dust had for some time attracted our attention. It had every appearance of coming our way, and we strained our eyes

to try and distinguish its cause. I was able to make out the figures of two horsemen galloping along, each leading a spare animal, and as we continued to watch the advancing party a faint cheer came floating to our ears. With a shout of welcome we dashed forward, and were soon in the midst of a general hand-shaking and the inevitable "How are you, old fellow?" an expression so characteristic of the great John Bull tribe when friends meet.

Our new companions who had just joined us turned out to be Captain Maude, aide-de-camp to Sir Evelyn Wood, and Captain Douglas of the 15th Hussars, a cousin of myself. They had ridden out from Newcastle only with a faint hope of meeting us, hardly expecting that under the present circumstances of peace we would have pushed along so quickly. However, here we were; the *rencontre* had been both pleasant and fortunate, and we rode along in the highest spirits, with which the reaction of the moment inspired us. At last Newcastle hove in sight, and away to the left of the town we could make out the white tents on Fort Amiel dotted about amidst the stone-erected hospitals and commissariat offices. I was disappointed with Newcastle; its name was decidedly grander than its personal



NEWCASTLE FROM FORT AMIEL.

appearance. A few straggling houses, chiefly temporarily-erected ones of tin, were all that met the eye, the most important being those of the Post-office and Court-house in one, two or three large stores, and the Masonic Hotel. The tin buildings enjoyed a precarious existence, as did likewise several delicate-looking constructions of wood and canvas, that had a hard fight for it with the strong winds which at this time of year swept down from the *Drakensberg* with tremendous force. I have frequently seen the former, completely taken off their legs, utterly collapse ; while the latter, blown to shreds, flapped their disconsolate remnants of canvas against the skeletons of their former selves.

We dined that night at Fort Amiel with Sir Evelyn Wood and his staff, and spent a very merry evening. A great deal of chaff was carried on between Colonel Buller and Major Fraser ; the latter, whose hand was bound up, and who was suffering from a wound received in the *Majuba* affair, aggravated by a fall from his horse sustained that morning, I am inclined to think getting the worst of it. For several days following our arrival we were very busily employed. Most of the regiments had been moved away from headquarters on account of the scarcity of grass, and

were encamped three or four miles distant on the other side of some high rising ground called Signal Hill. Thither we likewise repaired, pitching our tents close to that of the 15th Hussars, which camp overlooked those of the Inniskillings, Artillery, 3-60th, 92d Highlanders, and the 94th and 97th Regiments, extended in semicircle order in the valley below. The distant view was beautiful. Far away stretched an undulating country, watered by many streams, the winding course of the Buffalo glinting and gleaming beneath the rays of the sun, and flashing back the glory which its silver water received and mirrored. Sleepily and lazily arose the blue curling smoke of many grass fires, telling where the sable sons of Afric had passed along; and beyond all, above the fair scene which it enclosed, rose the mighty chain of the Drakensberg, fit rampart brought by nature to defy the inventions and power of man. There, amidst the many fantastically-shaped mountains, one strangely-formed, square-topped hill arose,—one to which the gaze was often turned with lingering pain and mourning,—one the sight of which awoke strange memories and regrets,—whose shadows wrap the distant graves of soldiers, whose heights cradle the bones of sleeping warriors: for Queen and country they fought and

fell on the slopes of the Amajuba. An expedition had been planned and arranged amongst ourselves to visit these scenes connected with the late war, which we calculated would occupy us several days. Our party was to consist, besides our two selves, of Captain Douglas, Captain Sullivan, and Mr. Manners, all of the 15th Hussars, and Captain Maude eventually joined us on obtaining leave from his duties as aide-de-camp, in consequence of the approaching departure of Sir Evelyn Wood for Pretoria, the General taking with him only one servant.

Our baggage and pack-horses having been sent on ahead of us in the charge of our servants to the Ingogo River, we made a start from camp soon after lunch, and, disdainful of the more circuitous but surer route following the waggon road, we immediately struck across country in the direction of Mount Prospect. It was a glorious day: the heat of the sun was tempered by the fresh and exhilarating air, and we were all of us in the highest spirits. One might have been back in Leicestershire listening to the view-holloa by the covert side, and a hundred foxes might have been supposed to be going away, judging from the manner in which these holloas were taken up and repeated, as we galloped away across the

Veldt totally regardless of the deep and treacherous ant-bear holes, or of our own necks, which we thus placed in jeopardy. Out from the long grass sprang the tiny steenbuck, a little antelope not much bigger than a large-sized hare, were it not for the long delicately tapered legs on which the body is set; the partridges scudded away, and the startled corān rose with hoarse cackle, somewhat resembling an old cock grouse. Gracefully the wild Mahaan and stately Kaffir crane winged their slow flight towards the distant gleaming waters of the Buffalo, while even the audacious magpie crow, whose serenity is seldom disturbed, cawed a loud protest against the invaders of his peaceful retreat.

Galloping in this wild manner, our party got somewhat separated from each other, and when at length I drew rein, I could see none of my companions, with the exception of my cousin, whom I could distinguish riding through some high reeds not far off. Before long a deep and treacherous-looking gully barred all farther progress, so we turned our horses' heads towards each other and rode along the sides, attentively examining every cranny and crevice therein, in the hope of coming across a convenient spot for crossing. But we joined each other without being successful; and

as the gully was too broad to jump,—too boggy, and in some places too deep, to ford,—we found ourselves nonplussed and perplexed on all sides.

“Here’s a facer,” exclaimed my cousin as he rode up; “how on earth are we going to manage this place without swimming it? The water’s quite over the horses’ ears; of that I’m certain.”

“Well, it will have to be done somehow or other,” said I; “so we had better ride along a bit in the direction you have just come, and see if we can’t find a drift or some place a little less impracticable than this.”

Turning our horses’ heads, we rode along to the northward and followed the course of the gully, which, instead of improving, appeared at every moment to grow more and more forbidding. We had almost begun to despair of success, and were making up our minds for a wetting, when, on rounding a projecting hill, we suddenly came in sight of the rest of the party, who, like us, were on the wrong side of the gully. They were standing still, and appeared to be examining something, and on galloping up we found it was a crevice, uninviting-looking enough, yet still down which a horse might possibly be induced to go, if he could only succeed in scrambling up the steep and slippery bank on the opposite side. There was no help

for it but to entrust our fortunes to the venture ; and regretting, now that it was too late, that we had not followed the road, we prepared to make the attempt. Volunteering to become our pioneer, my cousin with a great deal of slipping and sliding managed to get his horse down the crevice and into the water. Immediately the animal sank up to his knees in mud, which resulted in a great deal of floundering and struggling, until, the centre of the stream being reached, the water became much deeper and he was forced to swim. A few strokes, however, landed him safely on the opposite bank, where, with a repetition of the floundering and plunging, he eventually gained the upper ground unhurt. One by one we followed his example, and thought ourselves truly fortunate, when the last dragged, mud-stained member of our party joined us, in having escaped so cheaply with only a wetting.

Our next difficulty was to find the way. We were in total ignorance of our whereabouts, and every one had a different opinion as to the direction which should be pursued. A good deal of argument ensued, which resulted in no one being convinced as to the error of his ideas, and it was purely a stroke of good luck when our wanderings brought us out on to the battlefield of

the Ingogo, and close to the road leading down to the river of that name. We could no longer be in doubt as to our whereabouts, for the carcasses of mules and horses lay strewn in all directions, and the sickening smell of putrefying flesh testified to the large numbers that had fallen. As I rode over the battlefield I startled, in their horrible feast, the disgusting denizens of these scenes. Vultures and crows were perched about on the rocks hard by, revelling in the smell of the decaying carcasses, and enjoying the scene of death and desolation spread out on all sides. Behind a line of low rocks facing the road, little piles of empty cartridges showed where our men had endeavoured to make a stand against the scathing fire of the Boers, whose bullets had left their mark on many a sheltering stone. Here the struggle for mastery must have been hotly disputed ere our men commenced their slow retreat on the Ingogo. The hot fire directed against the artillery showed its results plainly enough in the close proximity to each other of many of the fallen animals. Poor brutes! they must have been shot down one after the other in quick succession, dying as they fell, the innocent victims of the passions and disputes of man. Following the gradual slope which extends from the battlefield to the river, it

becomes to the eyewitness a matter of congratulation that the Boers did not persist in their attack. Believing as they did that the swollen state of the river would prevent our escape, they desisted with the shades of evening from any further fighting, with the intention of following up their success the next day. In this they were disappointed, for under cover of darkness the feat of getting his men safely across was accomplished by Sir George Colley—a feat which only those who are acquainted with the danger attendant on crossing a rapidly rising South African river can fully appreciate, and realise the magnitude of the undertaking. Not only once but twice it has to be crossed, the road running through the drift shaping its course for another arm of the river, and it was here that one whose act was heroic perished in his endeavour to bring relief and comfort to the wounded and the dying. I refer to Lieut. Wilkinson. This gallant officer plunged his horse into the rushing torrent and endeavoured to gain the opposite bank. It was safely reached by the animal, but Lieut. Wilkinson was carried down stream, and being dashed against a rock lost his life. It was not until many days later that the body of the unfortunate man was recovered. Will the memory of this heroic act

be allowed to grow dim, and forgetfulness o'er-shadow the hearts of those for whom he died? Many lie beneath the ground on the Ingogo battlefield, but of those who remain let it not be said they have forgotten him; or that the country in whose service he died ceases to remember that gallant act.

Having crossed both streams, which were at this time of year quite shallow, we halted for a few minutes' refreshment at the hotel of Mr. Firmeston, not a hundred yards from the Ingogo, after which we continued on our way, reaching Smith's Hotel after a further ride of half an hour. It was a poky, miserable little place, with few resources. Food was decidedly scarce, and had it not been for the timely arrival of some mutton and bread from the camp of the 2-60th at Mount Prospect, we should have been obliged to seek our couches dinnerless. Talking of couches, the whole place could only produce one cramped little bedroom, which was made over to me, but politely declined. Nor could I endure the stuffiness of the house itself, and managed in consequence to fabricate, out of the pack-saddles and other gear strewn outside in the porch or verandah, a very cosy bed. My companions sat up late that night playing cards. Awaking once

about one o'clock, I with difficulty recalled my whereabouts, but the cold night air soon brought recollection, and the clear moon burned overhead; its pure soft flame reminding me of days gone by, when, in lands far removed from this, I had nightly sought my couch under the starry vault, on Patagonian soil or amidst the warm snug jungles of the Uruguay. Thinking on those distant scenes I fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT GOD SUN—COLOSSAL DREAMS—A GENERAL IN
JEOPARDY—LANGE'S NEK—THE ASCENT OF THE AMAJUBA
—UNFORTUNATE BUT BRAVE—HUNGRY AS HUNTERS—
FEASTING AND PLEASURE.

GRAY and misty broke the dawn of day as I opened my eyes and peered out from under the blanket that covered me. Oh! how cold it was, and the dew lay heavily on everything around. Not a soul was stirring in or around the house; the majesty of silence reigned; and with a tremendous shiver I drew back into my shell and cuddled beneath the blanket. It was no easy matter to get warm again, and as for renewed sleep, my efforts proved quite ineffectual in that direction; so, resigning myself to the inevitable, I endeavoured to await patiently the arrival of the sun. He came at last, rising like a great ball of fire behind the distant hills. First a trembling, golden atmosphere gave warning of his approach, and then the earth grew softly tinted with purple shades, which changed to the brilliant colours of