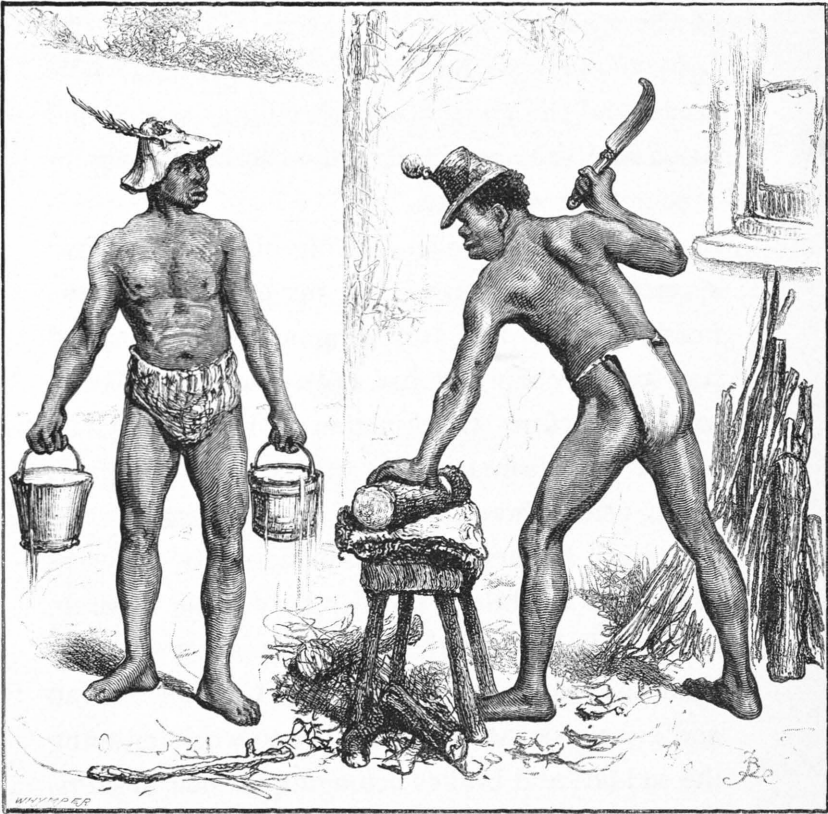


the rainbow as they danced in gladsome joy on all around. Fancy could conjure them into many varied forms, and I found myself weaving imaginary scenes and visions from these heralds of the approaching king of day. Then a warm light of intense brightness flooded the whole scene, and the glory of all other lights waned and paled and vanished in the all-absorbing magnificence of the rising sun.

After this a hideous-looking biped of the fowl species came and crowed in my ear, startling me nearly into fits and banishing all meditation and repose. Probably he had been allowed to live in order to perform the function of Rouser-in-Chief to the establishment, for with the sound of his shrill voice there appeared on the scene two shivering Kaffirs, who disappeared in different directions, doubtless in search of their separate duties. Following them, after a short interval, came the two soldier-servants of Captain Sullivan and my cousin, who at once set to work cleaning the saddles and bridles belonging to their masters. Unseen, from beneath my blanket, I watched the operations with much interest, and profited not a little in the lesson I learnt thereby as to how to clean and burnish steel and brighten up the leather of the saddle. I was also a good



KAFFIR SERVANTS.

deal amused in listening to their conversation ; it chiefly related to the much-longed-for period when they should find themselves in England after an absence of nearly twelve years ; while the bright visions and elaborate plans of Evelyn, my cousin's servant, were only outrivalled by the colossal dreams of the other man !

The saddles and bridles having been cleaned and burnished to their satisfaction, the boots of their masters next underwent a violent brushing. This process was enlivened by the favourite soldier-song of "Come into the garden, Maud," until the eye of the singer suddenly and for the first time catching sight of my amused countenance watching him from beneath the blanket, he came to a dead stop, and with a confused "Oh, I beg your pardon ; look there, Fergusson—we are disturbing her ladyship," picked up boots and brushes and blacking pot, and disappeared in the twinkling of an eye, followed by the servant to whom he had spoken. The next appearance on the scene was that of Captain Maude, who emerged from the house carrying a lot of blankets, which he offered to me. As, however, the rising hour had come and the cold hours of morning had passed away, they were not of much service, as may be imagined ! A visitor at this juncture

made his appearance, proving to be Mr. Pilkington of the 60th, the same who had sent us the mutton and bread overnight, and he had now come to see how we were getting on. We invited him to remain and breakfast with us, of which meal at the same time we had no brilliant anticipations, knowing too well, alas! that the *menu* of the last night's dinner would be repeated with painful similarity. Mutton and stale bread and black coffee, in which latter article the element of chicory smothered every pretension, was to be our fare; such luxuries as eggs, butter, and milk, being things unknown. However, early rising produces a keen appetite, and hunger relishes the humblest food. We were therefore all pretty keen to set to, and impatiently awaited the arrival of Sir Evelyn Wood, who, we expected, would pass this way on his road to Pretoria. In fact it had been already arranged that the General was to stop and breakfast with us, and the hour had already passed at which he had intimated he would arrive. While we were all wondering what had happened to him, and listening for the sound of the spider's wheels, the General suddenly made his appearance, mounted on an artillery horse. His clothes were dusty and soiled, and it hardly needed the explanation that followed to be

aware that an accident had occurred. It appeared that in descending the incline from the Ingogo battlefield, one of the horses that drew the spider had made an effort to bolt, and, communicating his restiveness to his companion, the animals had made at an alarming pace for the river. The postilion found it impossible to restrain them, and the consequences might have proved disastrous had not the near horse suddenly crossed his legs and come down with so much force as to render him powerless for the time being to rise again. The spider was overturned, and Sir Evelyn and his servant thrown violently on to the road, one of the wheels passing over the prostrate form of the General. Fortunately, beyond a severe shaking and a few bruises, no one was hurt, and he was able to mount the postilion's horse and gallop on to join us, leaving his servant to pick up the pieces and follow him as soon as possible.

Having despatched Mr. Pilkington on an errand to procure a fresh pair of horses, and Captain Maude in search of another spider at a store not far distant, the General, with the rest of us, proceeded to breakfast. I regretted the poorness of the fare, as he appeared a good deal shaken and scarcely touched the food that was set before him.

The return of Captain Maude with the spider,

and the arrival of Walkinshaw, the General's servant, with the damaged vehicle, made it necessary to get ready for a fresh start, and it was not long before Sir Evelyn was again settled in the position from which he had been so summarily ejected, and was once more bowling along the road *en route* for Pretoria.

After he was gone we ordered our horses to be got ready and started off for Lange's Nek. A broad irregular road led up to the position in question, and wound along the base of a chain of hills, of which the Inquela Mountain formed one of its principal features, being of remarkable shape and size, and joined to the more interesting Amajuba by a long ridge. With this mountain we rode on a parallel for some time, and had ample opportunity to remark on the impregnable position afforded by its eastern face, whose steep sides, intersected with innumerable gullies and crevices, give it a dark and forbidding aspect. Dipping into a little hollow or valley, we suddenly found ourselves at the foot of the long rising incline which led up to Lange's Nek. When I first beheld the place I was greatly disappointed. All accounts which I had hitherto read of it led me to believe it to be a second Killiecrankie Pass. Past descriptions of the Nek had repre-

sented it as a defile, but the road which led up to this position simply followed its old course through the Veldt, passing over Lange's Nek in a straight line. A line of forts extending from the right of the road from a north-to-easterly direction could, from our position, be distinctly discerned, and it was from these places that the defence was mostly conducted. Once on the summit of the Pass, and looking down from the Boer trenches on the ground up which our troops had to fight their way, the folly of attack became terribly apparent except with a large force. Truly 'twas but a fit imitation of the unnecessary charge of the gallant six hundred; and in the many valuable lives so uselessly thrown away we mourn the loss of friends, of relatives, and of men, who, we cannot but feel, were sacrificed in a hopeless cause, and died, alas! in vain.

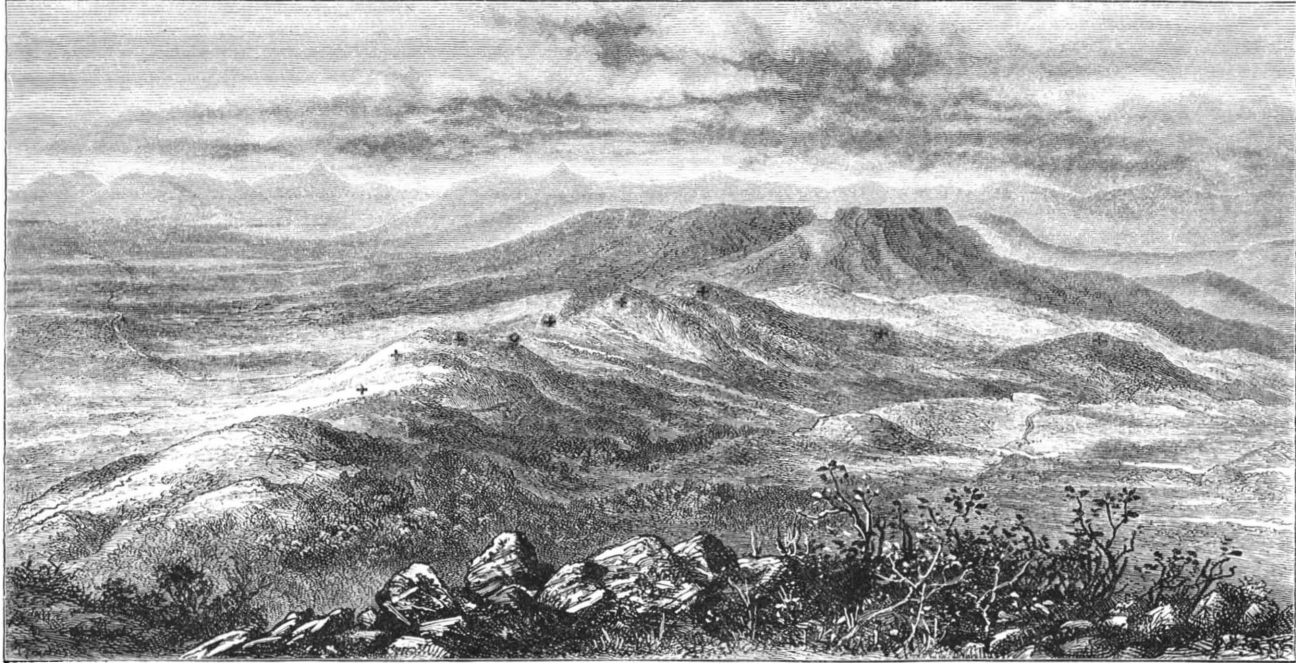
Traces of the late occupation could be seen on all sides; the grass was battered down and close-cropped, while old boots, pots, and pans lay scattered about in every direction. We were not very much struck with the way in which the trenches were dug or thrown up, but probably and not unnaturally the Boers looked upon the heights as a pretty secure fortress, and in themselves a sufficient protection against any attack.

Turning to the westward, we rode along the eastern ridge which connects the Amajuba and Lange's Nek, until, reaching the base of the mountain's northern face, up which the Boers had ascended, we dismounted and prepared to follow in their footsteps. In some places the ascent was very steep, but had the advantage of complete shelter in large disjointed masses of rock, behind which the attacking party could advance almost unperceived by those above, to whom they must have presented a somewhat similar appearance to rabbits amongst rocks and ferns—no sooner seen than immediately lost sight of—mere snap shots, not practicable with a rifle. This inability to cover the enemy contributed, I should imagine, in a great manner to our defeat on this occasion; and the impossibility of directing our fire until the Boers were within some forty or fifty yards of the summit must have been trying and disheartening in the extreme.

Much has been said about the daring attack of the Dutchmen. But in this ascent it must be borne in mind they were simply operating in their own element, and the slopes of the Amajuba were to them little more than child's play; indeed, when following the line taken by them myself, I do not remember to have paused once to take breath,

Lange's Nek.

The Pogwane Hill.



LANGE'S NEK AND BOER TRENCHES AS SEEN FROM SUMMIT OF THE AMAJUBA.
o x

nor did I feel more blown upon reaching the summit than a breath of fresh air could dispel. What must it then have been to men who from their earliest childhood were familiar with and accustomed to such feats of hardiness, and to whom the ascent of any mountain was an easy task? Had the tables been turned, and the order given to charge across a plain and take an open position, this courage which has been so much applauded in the ascent of the Amajuba would not have been so apparent. Give honour to whom honour is due, and it will then be found that this assault, when looked at in all its bearings, was not the glorious affair drawn on the long bow of triumph by the Boers.

The summit of the Amajuba is very irregular, and the rocky ridge seen from the valley below extends nearly in a circle. In the centre the ground falls away to a hollow, and we therein came across the wells that had been dug by the order of General Colley. It was here the reserves of the 92d and 3-60th were placed, and not far off, under cover of a rocky ridge, the hospital was organised. I walked round the line occupied by the 92d; it appeared to be a very enlarged one, the defence of the brow assigned to them extending from a south-westerly position

to west, and from west to north. They must decidedly have had their hands full, inasmuch as from this it will be seen that the defence of three parts of the mountain fell to their share, the 58th occupying the north-west and westerly ridges, whose precipitous sides appeared to me sufficient protection in themselves; while the Naval Brigade, who had posted a small reserve with the others, had left traces in the south-west corner of the plateau of their recent occupation.

I picked up a letter evidently written by some sailor's sweetheart at home, but the paper was soiled and damp with many dews, and beyond the words "My dearest Jack," I could not decipher much. It was at this point that the gallant Captain Romilly was shot by men from below, the fire by which he was struck proceeding from advancing parties who had crept round unperceived to the south-west, and scaled the steep slopes, coming unawares upon the Naval Brigade. All who knew Captain Romilly will mourn his loss; in him passed away a charming and accomplished gentleman, and an officer rigid in the performance of his duties, one of distinguished merit and courage,—a life of bright promise and noble aims.

I wandered over the plateau and across the ground where the gallant 92d made their determined stand; cartridge cases lay thickly strewn along the brow, and impromptu fortifications were still left standing. One stone in particular, about half the size of a man's body, was seared and scarred with bullet marks, and presented a strange appearance. This had evidently been a hot corner, and the pile of empty cartridges testified to the determined stand which must have been made by the occupier. Down in the hollow, and close to the wells, I came across a tiny cairn of stones; it marked the place where the gallant but unfortunate General, who had thrown his own fortunes in with his men, fell with his face to the foe. The condemning tongue grows silent in the presence of true valour. There, where the fight was thickest,—where the bullets rained their deadly shower,—he fell; he is now dead, and praise and blame fall on his ear alike. Let us admire the courage and compassionate the misfortune of one who died a soldier's death. Not far removed from the cairn I could see the grave of Captain Maude, and the tiny cemetery wherein were interred the men who fell that day. A small wooden cross headed the former, with the words "Captain Maude" rudely traced thereon; some immortelles

had been laid on the grave, that of the soldiers being similarly decorated. When at a somewhat later date I again visited this spot, a beautiful marble cross had replaced the wooden one, and the graves were in perfect order.

While my companions completed their rounds of observation, I went and seated myself on the summit of a precipitous rock on the north-west side of the mountain. A grand view could be embraced from this position, which overlooked a vast expanse of country, in which the distant peaks of Basutoland were visible, and the countries of the Orange Free State, the Transvaal, Zululand, and Natal, extended in circling panorama around. Beneath me the rocks fell away in sheer precipice some six or seven hundred feet, terminating in thickly wooded slopes and grassy banks; and far away below wound a fertile valley, watered by many streams, the home, no doubt, of some farmer, whose house could be just distinguished peeping out from amidst a thick clump of trees, the blue smoke circling from their tops giving evidence that man lived therein. We descended the mountain by the path up which our troops had come. In some places it was extremely steep, and it cannot be wondered at that, heavily laden as they were with greatcoats, waterproof sheets, three days'

rations, and their arms and ammunition, besides six picks and four shovels per company, they found themselves too exhausted to intrench on reaching the summit.

When we got below we mounted our horses, which our servants had brought round by a path on the western side of the mountain over the combined Nek of the Inquela and Amajuba, and rode towards the camp of the mounted infantry, which lay not far distant. On our way we passed close by O'Neill's Farm, distinguished as being the place where an ignoble peace was signed; but, not caring to stop to visit so painful a spot, we hurried on to partake of the hospitality of the mess, our appetites being of the keenest. Indeed, in recalling that time, I cannot help thinking that we must have presented the appearance of sharks or famished wolves more than anything else in the greedy manner with which we begged to be at once introduced to our food. It would seem that the gallant major commanding had quite anticipated our wants, for on being ushered into the mess tent we found a repast that made our mouths water ready awaiting us. As may be imagined, we did ample justice to everything; indeed some of my companions, much in the fashion of schoolboys, gorged themselves

to such a degree that, in my indignant remonstrances, I could only liken them to vultures. Remorse, however, came quickly when we were once more in the saddle and galloping quickly in the direction of Mount Prospect. How they regretted when it was too late the over-excesses in which they had indulged! On our way to the camp we turned aside to visit the little cemetery in which so many of our gallant officers lay. It was sad work standing by the last resting-place of many whose faces rose up with strange distinctness, bringing to memory voices not long since heard, now hushed and silent in their last long sleep. Beside his chief lay young Elwes, aide-de-camp to Sir George Colley. We had been playmates in childhood, and friends in later years. Standing by the grave of the gallant boy, I found old scenes recurring with great force and vividness. It is ever thus: old memories arise, each trivial circumstance of childhood returns; old sayings, doings, and pastimes crop up again; voices come back from the far past; and in the recollection of the early and happy years of childhood, for a few brief moments as you stand by the grave of some cherished friend, those golden halcyon days are lived o'er again.

We left Mount Prospect the next day, reaching Signal Hill in time for a cheery lunch with the 15th Hussars. That evening a grand banquet, given by the Inniskillings, in which the element of generals abounded, brought to a close a day pleasantly spent and pleasantly recalled.

CHAPTER VI.

A SOUTH AFRICAN GRAND MILITARY—THE RACECOURSE—
THE FATE OF JOHN GILPIN—A HUNTING EXPEDITION—
SUCCESSFUL TRAVELLING—WATCHING A STALKER—AN
INVALUABLE SERVANT—FINAL DIRECTIONS.

THE morning of the 26th of April opened with unusual stir and bustle. It was a day which had long been looked forward to with the greatest excitement, for which much preparation had been undergone and great anticipations formed. A race meeting! nothing more or less, and dignified under the title of "The Grand Military at Signal Hill." It embraced every kind of race belonging to both the legitimate and illegitimate sports; every manner of horse or pony with any pretensions to gallop filled up the long list of entries; the stakes worth winning were in considerable numbers; and altogether the prospects of the day were of the highest. About an hour before the time at which proceedings were to commence a large party of us rode down to the course, which had been laid out in circular fashion on either side of the road lead-

ing to Mount Prospect. A great gathering of people from Newcastle and the surrounding district had already assembled, the black element decidedly predominating. Waggon and vehicles of every description lined either side of the course nearest the winning post, impromptu betting stands had been erected, and everything done to give the whole affair a business-like appearance. There were several mess tents in course of erection, destined to dispense the hospitalities of different regiments, the most noticeable being a large marquee belonging to the 15th Hussars, in which a lunch worthy of Ascot or Goodwood was being laid out.

With the arrival of the General and his staff proceedings commenced. The saddling bell sounded, the numbers of the first race went up, and the horses one by one began to assemble at the starting-post. There were a great number, and several false starts took place; eventually, however, the flag fell, and they got away in excellent order. This race was won, after a close and exciting finish, by a good-looking, well-bred colonial horse called *Charcoal*. He was steered to victory by Captain Sullivan, who, however, had his work well cut out for him in defeating the second, an animal ridden by Lord St. Vincent. This latter threw

the race away by declaring a stone and a half over weight, in order that he might ride his own horse; had it not been so, the result would have been undoubtedly otherwise.

The second race gave rise to several amusing scenes. In it was entered a mare called *Mooi River*, the property of Captain Beresford, by whom he set great store, and in whom he placed great faith. She had, previous to his buying her, won a Ladies' Purse somewhere or other, and the golden visions of the gay engineer pictured her the winner on this occasion. The services of my cousin as her jockey were secured, and no sooner was he mounted than we all made for the starting-post to see the start for this famous race. The behaviour of *Mooi River* was everything that could be desired, and though many of the others fidgeted a good deal she remained perfectly quiet; but it soon proved a case of "butter won't melt," etc., for no sooner had the flag fallen than she swerved violently on one side, and, taking the bit into her teeth, dashed in amongst the crowd, cannoning every one right and left. Pursuing her erratic course, and notwithstanding all the efforts of my cousin to prevent her, she made straight for a gentleman who, apart from the crowd, was riding a somewhat restive horse, and cannoning up against

him sent the affrighted animal careering wildly over the Veldt, bearing with him his clinging and helpless owner. The sight was ludicrous, and we were at the same time horribly unfeeling, as the shouts of laughter on all sides testified. Away went the unhappy John Gilpin; his horse performed a large semicircle, and brought him round towards the racecourse, which reached, he never paused, but, continuing on his way, disappeared over a high hill in the direction of Newcastle. I never learnt his fate. Poor *Mooi River*, she came in for a good deal of abuse after this, but made up for her bad behaviour later in the day by running very well in the big steeplechase, which should have been won by an English thoroughbred called *Darkie*, who, however, managed to dispose of his rider in a very neat manner. Swerving at a stone wall, the man was sent flying; and thus the race, which would otherwise have been a certainty for the thoroughbred, was thrown away. This horse had previously won that day two flat races, and his performances had all the greater interest for me, inasmuch as I had ridden him in some of his gallops and predicted his sure success.

It was a picturesque sight to see the gallant General commanding stretched out on the grass

under a waggon, entertaining the Boer leaders to a champagne lunch. As I rode by, Sir Evelyn courteously invited me to make one of the party ; but having already accepted the invitation of the 15th I was forced to decline, and rode on towards the large marquee erected by that regiment, accompanied by General Buller, whose blunter nature would not bother itself to whisper soft nothings in the ears of Messrs. Joubert, Pretorius, and Jorrissen. Later on in the day I was introduced to these gentlemen ; but as their knowledge of English was restricted to a few words, and my capability of making myself understood in their *patois* was small, the conversation sustained was not, as may be imagined, of a very brilliant nature ; so I returned to the horses and the races, and with a final scurry over hurdles, in which I was nearly jumped upon and annihilated altogether, a very enjoyable and successful meeting terminated.

Amusements at this period seemed to come all together, and no sooner was one excitement over than another appeared. The prospect of moving could only be looked forward to on some distant and shadowy date, and all hope of a quick return home was out of the question. Amongst ourselves an expedition had been planned and

frequently discussed, and it was over our simple dinner that night that the project was further mooted. At last, after a good deal of discussion, a hartebeest hunt was announced, and my cousin and Captain Sullivan agreed to form members of the party. Having obtained leave, and a further loan from the colonel of a mule waggon and its team, while I was fortunate in securing another in other quarters, we at once set about our preparations. These, however, did not occupy a very great deal of time, and the second morning after the races saw them all completed and everything ready for an immediate start.

Away we went, happy as kings, and like so many children, delighted with the holiday in prospect. The mule waggons rattled along at a tremendous pace down the steep road leading from Signal Hill to Newcastle; the dust rose in clouds and enveloped us in its choking veil, Kaffir dogs flew out from wayside kraals and barked defiance, while the inmates stared and grinned good-naturedly in answer to our salutations. Keeping Fort Amiel on our right, we crossed the drift over the river and skirted Newcastle in like manner. The heat was great, and our horses suffered a good deal, while we found ourselves frequently halting to refresh and water

them by the sides of every drift and stream over which we crossed. About twelve miles from Newcastle we turned off the road, and struck across the Veldt in the direction of a curiously shaped hill which rose from the middle of a vast plain like a great pyramid, and near which we hoped to come across the hartebeest. We could not, however, reach our final destination that day, and in consequence called a halt by the side of a clear sparkling river, into which, the moment they were let loose, every mule and horse speedily found its way, drinking long and eagerly of the refreshing beverage. The only drawback to camping by a river is the swarm of midges which at once assemble to annoy one as the sun goes down. This occasion proved no exception to the general rule, and we were terribly teased and tormented by these tiresome little creatures. The following morning we struck camp and continued on our way, still pointing for the Leo Kop. A lonely Boer farmhouse was the only thing we came across that gave any indication of the presence of man, and a timely raid in search of eggs terminated successfully in our procuring some dozens of these fresh-laid delicacies. We found a good deal of trouble in packing them to prevent breakage, and the basket containing them was event-

ually slung on to the waggon. As we were following no kind of track, we were frequently stopped by deep, treacherous-looking swamps and bogs, into which the waggons sank deeply ; and in the joltings which ensued on the mules' endeavours to extricate their load, it was a perfect marvel to me how every egg was not smashed. Fortunately, however, each danger was successfully tided over, and we at length found ourselves on a smooth hard plain, with plenty of easy going. All obstacles being apparently overcome, we pointed out to our servants the distant position where we wished our camp laid out, and having seen them well on their way towards the spot, we separated for the time being, and spread ourselves out over the Veldt in different directions, taking with us a gun or a rifle in the hope of falling in with game of some sort, which might help to fill the pot and afford sport. I had been riding along for about half an hour without seeing anything, when the Basuto pony on which I was mounted suddenly shied at something concealed in the long grass. Frightened by the action of the pony, a lovely little gazelle-like antelope, not larger than a hare, immediately sprang to its feet, and, after staring at me with large dark eyes dilating with terror, turned and fled across the

Veldt with quick graceful bounds. Poor little beast! it might have saved itself the trouble, and I regretted my inability to assure it of its complete safety from incurring any harm at my hands. To wander amidst wilds untainted by the stain of civilisation, to watch the ways and manners of the untamed denizens of these lonely scenes, to creep into close proximity to them unheard and unseen, must always possess for the wanderer and the lover of nature a strange charm. It is this very feeling that stirs the heart of the stalker and the sportsman, whose satisfied longing is not, however, satiated until, by the unequal power which he carries in his hand, he has destroyed and laid low that which a few minutes before had stood in all the beauty of life and enjoyment, harmless, unsuspecting, and helpless, but now the quivering victim of man's pleasure. As I rode along I could hear the frequent report of a gun which proceeded from the direction taken by my cousin, and far away to the westward I could at the same time distinguish several herds of hartebeest quietly grazing. I felt sure that Captain Sullivan would not fail to catch sight of them, and I found myself wondering what a nice steak of hartebeest would taste like, and picturing the dish being placed on the table—all the

while counting my chickens before they were hatched. In my conjecture that Captain Sullivan would be sure to see them I was, however, correct, for on riding over some rising ground I caught sight of him moving along under cover of a long low slope, with the evident intention of circumventing their grazing ground and coming upon them unawares. The herd had, however, winded something, and were on the alert, for I saw them moving still farther to the westward, keeping close together, and in the open ground rendering it difficult, if not impossible, to approach them unseen. I watched him for a short time, but, the operation growing tedious, I turned my pony's head in the direction of our camp. Some little white specks by the side of a long dark green line betokened where it lay, and thither I galloped at a good pace, arriving to find a busy scene of bustle and activity going on. Un-saddling my pony, he was quickly careering over the Veldt to join his wandering companions and the mules, who were regaling themselves some way off on the young green grass sprouting afresh from a patch of burnt land. I then turned to give a hand to the general tidying up of the camp; blankets were quickly unstrapped, and our sleeping-couches made up; a cheery fire was set

blazing; mealies and oats ready placed for the mules and horses when they should be taken up for the night, and the clothing of the latter neatly arranged along the picketing lines. Before long the place had begun to assume an air of cosy comfort, which I felt would not be lost upon the others when they returned. After a bit they began to appear one by one, but beyond some winged game nothing of much importance was contributed towards the pot, and the visions of hartebeest steak were, alas, still but dreams of the future! The anticipation of the morrow's sport, however, kept every one in capital spirits, and the dinner and evening that followed was pleasantly spent in discussing the various plans to be made, until the moon, shining brightly high up in the clear night sky, warned us that it was time to seek the couches where restlessness and sleeplessness were unknown.

Hardly had the sun risen on the following morning when I was aroused by the sound of a horse's tramp, and peering through an opening in my tent to learn the cause, I found that it was occasioned by the return of Fergusson, Captain Sullivan's servant, who had received orders overnight to proceed as far as the road drift over the Ingagane River, and there leave word with the

hotel-keeper as to our whereabouts. This was done by previous agreement with the colonel of the 15th, and formed a point for communication should he by any chance require our immediate return. I could not but admire the promptitude with which this man had executed his orders, as the point in question lay some eight miles distant, in consequence of which he must have made at least two good hours' start before the sun rose. A closer and longer acquaintance proved him to be a most valuable servant. There were few things he could not put his hands to; and later on, when I had an opportunity of observing him on the march, the amount of work he seemed to get through was perfectly surprising. His good example in early rising found on this occasion willing imitators, for my own servant Tom, and Evelyn, soon made their appearance, and busied themselves feeding and grooming the horses—the indefatigable Fergusson in the meanwhile having lit a fire and commenced the operation of scone-making. After a bit the others made their appearance, and went down to the water's side for a plunge, while I completed my own toilet in my tent. Ere they returned the whole place had been tidied up, and the table laid for breakfast, a meal for which we were all ready; and I leave

my readers to judge for themselves whether we fared badly or not in the enumeration of the following *menu*. There was hot coffee and tea to be had at will, bread and butter, scones, a beefsteak and potatoes, crisp bacon and eggs, with boiled eggs for those who wanted them. On these delicacies we made a hearty breakfast, and then turned our attention to the grand excitement of the day, the hartebeest drive.

Away to the north-westward we could distinguish a large herd of these animals; and it was decided to send the servants round by a circuitous route so as to get behind them, and endeavour to drive them over a kind of low neck or pass on the eastern side of the Leo Kop, and along which a line of rocks running transversely would afford excellent cover for those lying in wait. Some discussion ensued as to whether we should take our horses or not, but it was finally decided to send them with the servants, who could bring them up as soon as they heard the report of the rifle; so everything being satisfactorily arranged, the three started off to place themselves, leaving me to see the drivers off as soon as I had given them necessary law. As soon as this was done I was to follow the course of the stream running south-

wards, and, keeping under cover of some long grass, take up a position close to a hartebeest trail which had been discovered by Captain Sullivan on the previous day ; so, having given final directions, and seen the men started on the job before them, I took my rifle and set out upon my way.

CHAPTER VII.

ABUNDANT NATURE—THE DOLCE FAR NIENTE—WANDERING ANTELOPES—A WOUNDED HARTEBEEST—A DISAPPOINTMENT—SUCCESS—AFTER LABOUR COMETH REST.

THE course of the stream that I followed ran through a deep gully or cutting in the Veldt, so that in walking along I ran no risk of being seen by any animal on the plain above. Life seemed to abound in these regions, and the tiny steenbuck kept springing up in all directions, darting away with quick graceful bounds until they thought themselves out of danger, when, with the true instinct of the antelope, they would wheel round and follow me with curious and wondering eyes. At a bend in the stream I came across a lot of wild duck, and regretted the absence of a gun, which would have added so materially to the contents of the pot. They rose, quacking forth defiance and disdain on my rifle, and startling in their fishing operations two stately Mahaan birds who were standing by a deep sedgy pool, with

their long necks half buried in the water. As I approached they extended their wings with slow and dignified caution, sailing away to other "pastures new."

It was not long before I reached the spot where it had been arranged I should hide myself. I found the grass growing to a great height, and the place well adapted for a place of concealment. Creeping into the thick cover it afforded, I was soon extended at my ease, and prepared to await the results of the drive, which I knew must be yet some time before taking place, as, though the servants were mounted, they had a great deal of ground to get over. I congratulated myself on having fallen into such comfortable and luxurious quarters as I stretched myself on the soft grass and gave myself up to dreamy repose and the delights of the *dolce far niente*. The ripple of the stream close by struck on my ear with soothing melody, the hot sun shone down with tremendous power, and the drowsy effect produced thereby was to invite sleep and forgetfulness. I was very nearly becoming a victim to the surrounding influences, when some distant objects which appeared to be moving my way suddenly caught my eye. Crouching as close along the ground as possible, I parted the long

grass and cautiously peered through the opening. The animals, whatever they were, appeared to be making at a good pace straight for the place where I lay concealed, and were rapidly nearing the spot. As they approached I could make out that they were not hartebeest; and as we had agreed to confine ourselves that day to securing one of these animals, I judged it best to lay aside my rifle, which I was not sorry to do, and settled myself to watch these wandering gems of the Veldt free from the malicious intention to do grievous bodily harm.

They came steadily on, free from any kind of fear or apprehension; and as they drew near I was able to examine them more closely. A species of very beautiful, dark-coloured, dark-eyed antelope they appeared to me; and to this day I cannot class them, nor did I come across their species again during the whole of my wanderings in South Africa. An old bull was leading the herd, which consisted principally of the cows of his species and a few half-grown young. He appeared a most careful and solicitous pilot; for, on reaching the little incline which led down to the water's edge, he paused and looked round to see if everything was all right before trusting himself and family to the hollow

before him. Finding the surrounding aspect clear of apparent danger, the bull, with a stamp of his right foot and a peculiar cry, trotted down to the water's edge, and soon the nostrils of the entire herd were deeply buried beneath the clear cool waters. They took a long time to slake their thirst, and from the avidity with which they drank it struck me that they must have been travelling long and far, and were probably mere birds of passage passing away from old haunts—rendered insecure by the advance of civilisation—to discover, farther north, fresh “pastures new.”

I suppose I must have moved slightly in my posture of observation, for suddenly, with a startled snort, the bull wheeled round and confronted me. Immediately the cows and calves closed up together and clustered about his heels, while every eye was turned towards the spot where I lay concealed. Finding that I had been discovered, I rose from my crouching position and showed myself. The effect was interesting to watch, as the curiosity of the antelope for a moment overmastered his timidity, and he began to advance towards me. A slight movement of my hand was enough, however, to dispel the latent courage of the moment; and with a terrified snort he turned, and, driving the herd before him,

disappeared over the Veldt in the direction of our camp, leaving me once more to solitude and watchfulness.

I returned to my place of concealment, having satisfied myself with one glance around that there were no hartebeest in sight; the excitement aroused by the past incident related tended to prevent any further desire for sleep, and the look-out I kept up was therefore more attentive. I had not long to wait, when the sudden report of a rifle put me altogether on the alert, and in a moment I was once more peering through the long grass that surrounded me. There sure enough they were!—a large herd of hartebeest, galloping at full speed across a bit of open ground, affording me a splendid view of their movements. To my excited vision the whole herd appeared to be wounded, and I found myself picking them out right and left, making sure that first this one, then that one, was going on only three legs. In my delusion I was a good deal assisted by the lumbering gait of the animals, who to the uninitiated have every appearance of lameness when seen galloping from a distance. I am afraid that my over-curiosity and impatience to get a good view of them frustrated the chance that existed of their coming my way; indeed, the heads of the

whole herd at one time pointed in my direction, but something must have frightened them, for they bore away to the westward; and though they kept stopping, wheeling round, and looking back over the ground they had come, their point had evidently been made, from which danger could alone have headed them.

While watching their slow flight across the uneven Veldt, I was surprised to see one of the hartebeests detach itself from the herd and come galloping in my direction. Occasionally it would pause, as if to rest itself, and then resume its slow canter. The stoppages became at last more and more frequent, and as the animal approached I could see that its fore-leg was broken. Seeing how badly the poor brute was hurt, I became all the more anxious to get a shot at it, and if possible end its sorrows; so, cautiously grasping my rifle, I wriggled myself into a sitting posture and awaited an opportunity to fire. Suddenly, and apparently for no rhyme or reason, the hartebeest swerved away to the left, and altered his course in such a manner that by the time he would get in a line with my rifle, the distance would make it a difficult and hazardous shot. I was at my wits' end what to do, and the fear of losing him filled me with dismay. To advance

was to show myself at once, and thus banish the last chance of getting near him; while, if I wished to make sure of the game, it was imperative that I should get forward a bit. In this dilemma I cast my eye round to see if there was no kind of cover under which I could reach a fresh position, when I noticed a slight fall in the ground not very far away. Without a moment's hesitation I lost no time in crawling on hands and knees to the place in question, which I found to be a kind of sloping bank running parallel with the position I had quitted. This was fortunate, and I started to run at full speed, keeping well under cover until reaching the end of the donga. I cautiously crept up its sides, and peered over a large rock or stone in search of my game. No position could have been better chosen: the hartebeest was barely three hundred yards away, and coming straight for me. I was fearfully excited, and either from this cause or from the exertion of running my hand positively trembled. As he advanced I was struck by the extraordinary formation of the animal's head, the eyes being very high in the forehead, and the great horns curling up and tapering backwards. This, with a long dark nose, gave him a strange and even ludicrous appearance, which made me laugh when I looked at him.

He came on slowly, frequently pausing to rest himself, so that I had ample time to compose myself and get into good position to shoot. I had arranged myself to my satisfaction, and had made up my mind to fire the very next time he should pause,—I had even brought my rifle to my shoulder, so as to lose no time in doing the deed,—when in the distance, and just in the line of fire, appeared five horsemen, who, immediately catching sight of the hartebeest, came galloping towards him at full speed. Of course under the circumstances it was impossible to fire, and, thoroughly disgusted at the turn affairs had taken, I no longer tried to conceal myself, but arose at once from my crouching posture. My appearance seemed greatly to astonish the animal, who, immediately on catching sight of me, came to a dead stop and confronted me with wondering eyes. It was a splendid opportunity for a shot, but I possessed not the confidence of William Tell, and, fearful lest I should miss, and thus jeopardise the lives of my companions, I was forced to remain inactive. How long the hartebeest would have retained his observant position I do not know, had his ear not detected the sound of the galloping horsemen. With a quick movement he turned and made observation of the

approaching danger, which he doubtless thought he had escaped, and in another moment was disappearing over some rising ground, followed in hot pursuit by myself and the enemy which had so lately appeared. Though I got a good start of my companions, they being mounted soon caught me up and passed me, and I was left to struggle on over the rough uneven Veldt. I was, however, too excited to experience any fatigue, and quite forgot that the sun was burning with all the intensity of midday. Being very fit, as fast as I got blown a second's pause would bring me to again, and the farther I ran the more I felt the increasing easiness of my task. On breasting the rising ground over which the hartebeest had disappeared, I caught sight of the quarry and hunters about a quarter of a mile away. They had got close up to him, and my husband and cousin were in the act of springing from their horses. A minute later, and two blue puffs of smoke, followed by the reports of a rifle, told me that one of them had tried to arrest the further progress of the wounded animal. Whoever it was proved unsuccessful, for the hartebeest still continued to canter away, though now his movements were very slow and labouring. It was his last effort, however, and a third shot sent him

toppling head foremost to the ground, where shortly afterwards, arriving upon the scene, I found the *coup de grâce* had been given, and the animal was no more.

“Hartebeest steak to-night!” called out my cousin triumphantly to me as I joined them, and we clustered round the dead beast with that pleasant feeling of success which all sportsmen and hunters will understand and share with me. It was a large full-grown cow in excellent condition, and the visions of untold feasts helped to multiply the satisfaction of the moment. But the animal had to be skinned, cut up, and the head secured for stuffing, eventually to become the property of my husband, whose shot he had been. While my companions occupied themselves with this task I sat down to rest, when, for the first time, I noticed that all the horses had disappeared with the exception of Captain Sullivan's. On looking round, there, true enough, they all were, quite a mile away, trotting back to camp. Mounting the only horse that remained, I set off in pursuit. As long as the animal confined itself to quietly galloping I did not find my seat so very insecure. Mounted sideways on a man's saddle is not, however, the most comfortable position in the world, and when the horse suddenly put his

foot into an ant-bear hole and came down on his head, I too lost my balance and imitated his example. The ground was very hard, and though I broke no bones I gave myself a good shaking. Rising, I ruefully proceeded to remount my steed, who appeared rather sheepish and knocked out of time himself; and, rendered wiser by our late experience, we were both more careful than we had hitherto been. When I came up with the straying horses they showed a strong disinclination to be brought back, and had it not been for the friendly interposition of the river, which helped to turn them from their course, I do not think that I should have been equal to the task of stopping them. One in particular evinced the most rebellious signs against being kept in order, flourishing his heels, neighing and galloping about in his wicked efforts to excite his companions and render them as unmanageable as himself; for I had no sooner collected them together and begun to drive them in the direction whence they had strayed, than Punch—for so the pony was named—would break away and behave in the manner I have described. The timely arrival of Fergusson on the scene assisted in a great measure to restore order, and we succeeded in driving the unwilling animals back to their masters. When I rode up

I found that the hartebeest had been skinned, and the choicest morsels cut off. There remained nothing further to be done but to secure these trophies of our day's sport to the saddles, which we did not find such an easy task, as the meat had not been cut up in a very business-like manner, and the necessary sinews had been omitted.

When everything was completed we mounted and rode slowly back to camp, discussing all along the occurrences of the day. The hartebeest drive had not produced the immense results which our morning dreams had anticipated ; nevertheless we could not but congratulate ourselves on having secured at least one, and by no means dissatisfied with the result of our first attempt we returned in the highest spirits to camp. Plenty was there to be done on our arrival, and the cooks at once set to to prepare the soup and hartebeest steak for that night's dinner. Occupied one way and the other, the remainder of the afternoon sped quickly by, until the sun, setting behind the distant Leopold and far-off range of the mighty Drakensberg, warned us that the time was drawing near when labour ceaseth and rest and enjoyment come. We were soon seated in our snug tent discussing the merits of the result of our day's sport. Harte-

beest steak was pronounced excellent, tender as lamb, and very tasty. Having done justice to the excellent cooking of Fergusson, we handed the remains to the men; and while they ate their dinner round the cheery blaze of the camp fire, cards were produced in the tent, and whist occupied our undivided attention until bed time. What wonder if, in the dreams that visited our pillows that night, the hartebeest and ace of hearts danced strange attendance side by side, jumbling together in all the intricacies and marvels of Wonderland?

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER SUCCESS—AN ARDUOUS CLIMB—A NATIVE LEVÉE—
BAREBACKED RIDING—A ROUGH NIGHT—SURROUNDED BY
FIRE—DISCOMFORT—AN AFTER-DINNER RIDE.

THE rest of the week flew very quickly by. Each day was chiefly spent after the hartebeests, but our success was not brilliant, the wary animals proving very wild and difficult to approach. Captain Sullivan was fortunate, however, in securing one on the last day of our stay in those parts, and returned late that night on foot, having lost his horse, who had taken fright at the report of his rifle, and seized the opportunity to make off. Having spent the best part of an hour in fruitless efforts to catch him, Captain Sullivan thought it best while light yet remained to find his way back to the camp. Luckily Fergusson was with him, and the hartebeest was packed away on to the man's horse, besides a little steenbuck and a fine pow, which had also been bagged that day. The hartebeest proved to be a fine old bull, and

his head, the trophy of the successful stalker, was reserved for stuffing.

I was up at break of day on the morning of our departure, and, saddling a pony before any one was stirring, rode off towards the Leokop with the intention of climbing to the summit to see the sun rise. On my way thither I startled in their morning's nap several old hartebeest bulls, who, after staring at me for a few seconds in petrified astonishment, made off as hard as they could go, doubtless wondering what strange apparition I was. A number of nasty spruits had to be crossed, but my pony was a sagacious animal, and we managed them in safety. A good deal of time was, however, lost at each place, and as I approached the Leokop the sun was already beginning to rise. All around the base of the mountain nestled amidst the long grass numberless little native kraals and villages. Cattle and goats occupied the laagers, and as the sun rose the former clamoured loudly for release; while the appearance of fresh smoke slowly rising from many of the kraals showed that the inhabitants were awake and stirring. I was astonished at the height and steepness of the mountain I had come to climb, distance having greatly deceived my calculation. In some places the grass grew

high above my head, and soon the rugged nature of the ground obliged me to dismount. Tying my horse to a species of mountain ash, I turned to leave him, when a horrible coiling object suddenly raised itself up and hissed at me. I started back, recognising the deadly puff-adder in the animal before me, and hastened to place both myself and my horse in a more secure position. Choosing a spot where the grass grew shorter, I left him to graze in peace, and commenced the ascent of the Leokop. I have seldom had a more arduous or fatiguing occupation, and many a time felt tempted to turn back. Masses of disjointed rocks, whose sides were precipices in themselves, had to be scaled and descended in turn, while the dense underwood and thick high grass rendered progress exceedingly difficult. In endeavouring to cross a kind of chasm or cleft between two rocks, the branch to which I was clinging snapped in two, and before I could catch at another I found myself huddled up in hopeless confusion at the bottom of the crevice. Fortunately I was not hurt, and I at once proceeded to make inspection of my new position. I found myself in a kind of cave, the walls of which were overgrown with a beautiful kind of blue-flowered creeper. Little lizards darted about like so many glittering gems,

and the spot was extremely lovely. But I felt uncomfortable, and found myself dreading the appearance of some venomous reptile, which might render my position both unpleasant and dangerous. Happily the blue creeper I have mentioned proved of the same strong texture as Jack found the beanstalk, and it was to its friendly offices as a ladder that I owed my escape from the prison into which I had fallen. The remainder of the ascent soon after this grew easier, and I was not sorry when the brushwood and rocks came to an end, and I found myself on green grass once more. The view obtained from the summit certainly repaid me for the exertions I had undergone, and the fresh exhilarating air soon refreshed and invigorated me. Far away below I could distinguish my horse still quietly feeding, and could not but admire the simple honesty of the many Kaffirs who kept passing that way between their kraals without an attempt to kidnap the animal. One of them stopped to look at him, and my heart beat for the result; but having satisfied his curiosity, this son of the Veldt, whose honesty I had done him the injustice to doubt, passed along as had the others, and I felt that any danger in that direction was illusory.

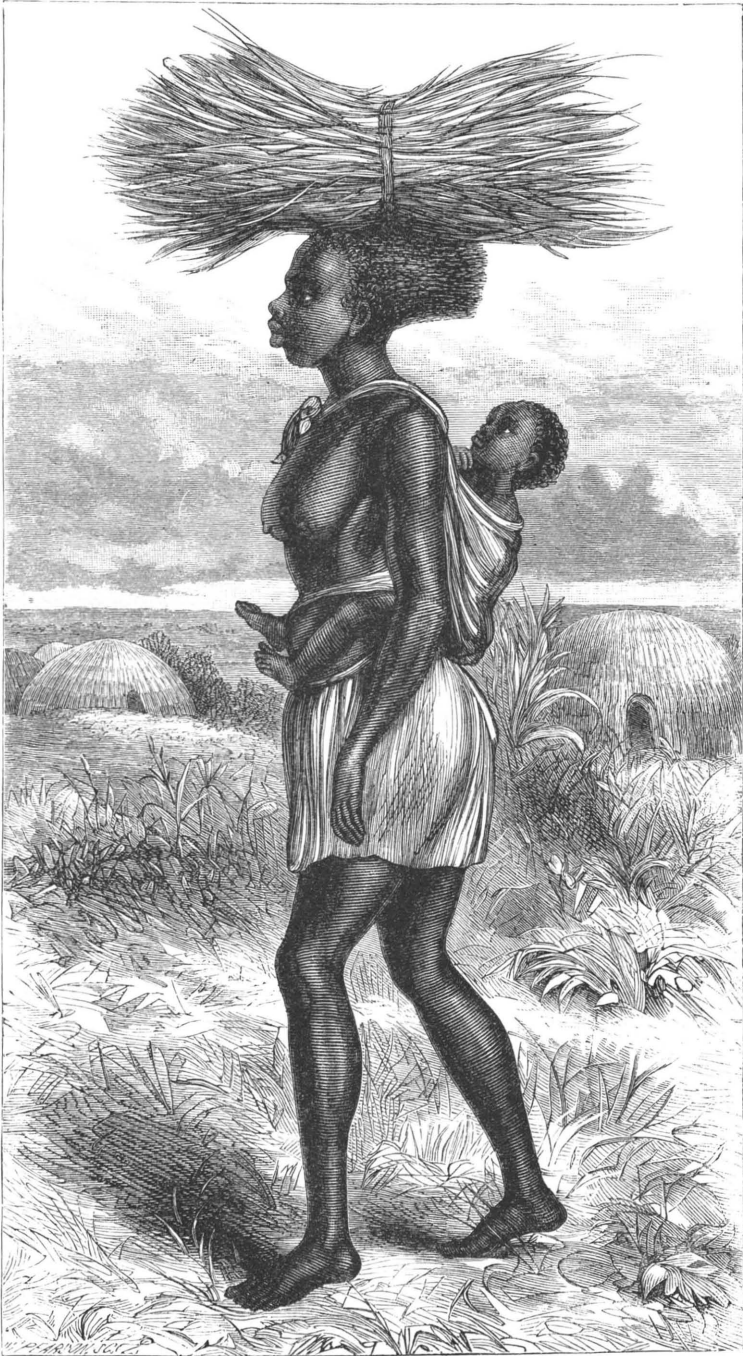
Still farther away I could make out some little

specks close to the glancing waters of a green-lined stream, which I knew to be our tents; and some black moving objects in close proximity told me that my companions were on the move, and that these were the mules and horses released for their morning meal and drink. I was thereby warned that the time had come to think about returning, and having taken a last look at the magnificent panorama that lay around I proceeded to make the descent. This I found to be if possible more difficult than the ascent had been, and many a shave did I run that morning of being buried alive in unknown clefts, whose depths I was fortunately not forced to test. I confess I was not sorry to reach my horse, the riding boots in which I had performed the climb having severely suffered from the effects, so that walking was no longer a pleasure. A group of Kaffirs came, and gathered round me as I mounted my horse; and though I could not understand what they were saying, it was evident that my every movement caused them wonder, fear, and amusement, by turns. "Good morning, Johnnies," said I, at which they burst into shrieks of laughter, the younger women nearly giggling themselves into fits, and deriving immense amusement from the fact of my having spoken. Though

I confess I myself did not see the ludicrous side of the matter, I repeated my salutation, which was greeted with similar evidences of jocularly. Happening to have a piece of bread in my pocket, I held it out towards the group. A great deal of confabulation was the result, and some discussion seemed to be going on amongst the elder men. I put it to my mouth and bit off a little piece, which I proceeded to eat. This evidently satisfied them that treachery was not intended, for, with a long-drawn exclamation, one of the men advanced and took it from my hand. In a minute every one had had a bite of the precious morsel, and the delicacy was duly appreciated.

As I rode away, fresh exclamations of wonder broke out on all sides; and when I turned to look again after riding a little more than a mile, I could see the group still assembled and gazing after my retreating form. On reaching camp I found breakfast awaiting me; I leave it to my readers to imagine whether I did justice to it or not.

We experienced a great deal of trouble that morning in finding our mules and horses. I believe that the sagacious animals were aware of our intended departure, and preferred the sweet fresh grass of the uninhabited Veldt, to that burnt-



KAFFIR WOMAN AND CHILD

up apology for it at Newcastle. Our muleteers too were generally lazy, and declared they had searched everywhere for the missing animals, whereas in reality they had simply, as soon as out of sight, lain down to indulge in a smoke and siesta. On the old principle that if you want a thing done you must do it yourself, I started off to look for the mules. In my search I came across two of Captain Sullivan's horses reclining, in calm and provoking laziness, on some green burnt grass, in which they were indulging. Not in the best of humours, I soon had them on their legs, and, manufacturing an impromptu bridle out of the head-collar and ream on the horse's head, by the help of a friendly ant-heap I managed to scramble on to the back of my old friend of the first hartebeest hunt. His back was very slippery, and I found some difficulty in keeping my balance. In my efforts, my spur touched his side, and a tremendous buck was the result. Of course I at once met mother earth; but as I had slipped from the horse's back rather than fallen, I arose unhurt. At this juncture, and while leading the animal towards some neighbouring rocks, with the intention of remounting, I came across one of the muleteers stretched out under their shade fast asleep. He started up at the sound

of the horse's tread, and appeared rather sheepish, offering no reply to my indignant remonstrances. Not two hundred yards away from the spot where he had lain down to rest, browsed, in a convenient and secluded hollow, the mules for which so much search had been made. I at once sent him to collect them, and though we worked hard we found it no easy matter to manage. The obstinate animals would not be driven towards the camp, and I believe would have entirely nonplussed us, but for the timely arrival of Captain Sullivan, who appeared leading a pony saddled for myself. Changing mounts, I found myself more at home, and with this timely and extra help we eventually managed to reduce the mules to obedience. This protracted delay, however, resulted in a late start, and we found ourselves compelled to camp that evening some ten or twelve miles outside Newcastle. On riding into the town the next day, we were informed that the 15th Hussars had moved camp to the Drakensberg, some eight or ten miles distant. Thither we followed, and came upon them in a very pretty but very uncomfortable position. The camp was pitched on a steep slope directly beneath the towering heights of tree-covered precipices, and the strong wind which blew off the upper Veldt of the

Drakensberg rendered the putting up of tents a difficult matter, and the dust and general discomfort not small. It was late that night before we got everything into ship-shape order and neatness, without which camp life would be unbearable; but all through the night the wind blew and howled, and I had frequently to get up and hold the poles of the tent to keep it from falling. The 60th, who were also encamped close by, had many of their tents blown down, and some of the hussars' shared the same fate; so that we should have been proportionately grateful to our stout little Indian tent that so bravely withstood the hurricane. As the wind did not abate, the colonel of the 15th, on the third day, gave orders to strike tents and change the camp. We ourselves put off moving our own until the next day, as assistance from the regiment would be then more readily forthcoming.

It had grown dark, and I had paid my last visit to the horses for the night, when, standing outside one of the tents, a strange gleam of light shot up into the air, lighting up the mountains above with vivid distinctness. "What's that?" I called out to my servant, who was bending over the fire close by. The words were hardly out of my mouth when a sound which former experience