

Don was somewhat staggered at the numbers that sought his hospitality; but this is only a surmise, and, if he was, he certainly proved equal to the occasion, as the plentiful and luxurious spread to which we sat down testified. A tame quagga¹ which he kept running about loose was very persistent in its efforts to prevent our entering the house, and it was not until it received a stern reproof from its master that it at last desisted in its interfering attempts. After a bit, however, we became great friends, and I would gladly have accepted it as a gift—for, as such, our host was good enough to offer it to me—had not the extreme difficulty of getting it down-country presented itself as an almost insurmountable barrier; in addition to which it appeared to me little less than cruelty to remove it from a home to which it evidently was greatly attached. All thought therefore of taking the insinuating little beast with me had to be at once relinquished.

Luncheon was served as soon as we entered the house, and I must confess that we did it justice. There was a great assemblage of good things on the table, and our hospitable host was very pressing that we should partake of them all. He was gifted, too, with an immense fund of

¹ Small kind of zebra.

conversation ; so that, while we satisfied our appetite, he carried on the principal burden, enlivening us with much information and many an anecdote about the Boer leaders and the Boer people in general, to whom he seemed much attached. He had remained on his farm throughout the whole length of the recent disturbances, and assured us that he had been neither molested nor annoyed in any way. At this, we ventured to express an opinion that there was small cause for wonder, it being hardly probable that they would attempt to annoy so devoted and friendly a partizan.

Luncheon finished, we strolled outside, where Walkinshaw was found awaiting us with the horses. In batches of twos and threes we mounted, and, bidding farewell to our courteous host, rode slowly along the winding track which pointed for Pretoria. It was a different road from that we had come by in the morning, which relieved the ride of any monotony which "glimpses of oft recurring scenes" sometimes engenders. Another halt occurred ere long at the farm of one of the name of *Muntz*, with whom I believe Sir Evelyn had had previous acquaintance. While he was engaged in renewing it, Captain Slade, Mr. Hamilton, and myself amused ourselves by despoiling a

heavily-burdened orange tree of its treasures. The large golden fruit was too tempting to resist, and we refreshed ourselves thereon with few pangs of conscience.

The remainder of that day's ride we took easily enough, frequent stoppages occurring for the purpose of stalking *pow*, or *coran*, or even partridge. Though we only possessed one rifle between us, that was found ample for the requirements of the party; and although we were unsuccessful in securing any game, we made up for it by shooting a jackal, which, unlike those found farther south and in the Cape Colony resembling a fox, had all the appearance in shape, colour, and markings of a young hyena. The distant view of Pretoria, nestling in a hollow, and surrounded on all sides by ranges of hills, was very striking; these, bathed in the glow of a magnificent sunset, brought to mind the fabled golden mountains of the far west, and magnified the beauty of a naturally impressive scene. Imaginary visions, born from the flashes of departing rays, would flit across the mountains, seeking refuge in the valleys below; and it was not until another day had worn its wrinkle on the brow of time, and the gloom of evening settled on all around, that these flitting shadows vanished, bearing with them

their wealth of imagination and wondrous store of dreams, and we all, having enjoyed our day's ride, might have been seen entering Pretoria. We found Sir Hercules in the verandah, with his military secretary, Major St. John, and Mr. St. Leger Herbert, awaiting our return. A misgiving that we should be late for dinner was doubtless the cause of Sir Hercules' anxiety, from which by our appearance he was relieved. Half an hour's law was given for dressing. To many this was a serious business, though to us two it consisted simply in indulging in a warm bath each, during which our things underwent a good brushing at the hands of Tom. They were then brought back again, and took the place of evening dress. Poor faded garments, their well-worn appearance looked hardly presentable next to the brilliant uniforms worn by Captain Slade and others! but then Sir Evelyn dressed more simply, which helped to keep them a little in countenance.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION—SECRECY—A NATIVE DEPUTATION—
THE BLACK MAN'S PRAYER—THE WONDERBOOM—A STRONG
POSITION—IN FAIRYLAND—THE LAST NIGHT.

THE business of the Royal Commission was resumed next day, the greater part of the morning being occupied in the discussion of its affairs. A scene of bustle and activity, with business and importance pervading the atmosphere, was the attendant result. Newcomers kept arriving at every moment, and, a little late on the scene, President Brand and Meinheer Joubert made their appearance. They were ushered at once into the apartment which was respectively called the drawing-room, sitting-room, or Royal Commission room, as it suited the occupiers to term it; and soon the buzz and hum of many voices came floating forth through the open windows on to the verandah, in which I had comfortably ensconced myself, outside the pale, to rest and watch proceedings. Now and then some one from within

would close the windows abruptly, which impressed me with the supposition that a matter of intense importance was about to be discussed. These discussions, however, generally proved of short duration ; or it may have been that the inmates of the room of many names felt the atmosphere too confined and stuffy to permit of a lengthened discussion, for the windows which had aided to withhold the secret from the outside air would be as suddenly thrown open, and out once more would float the buzz and hum of many tongues, presumably those of her Majesty's Royal Commissioners. A few hours so spent were decidedly pleasant. It seemed almost as though the buzz and hum was the result of some machinery, set going for the purpose of lulling one to sleep ; anyhow, it had that effect, and soon the busy scene without, the animated discussion within, seemed to fade and die away,—darkness took the place of light as I indulged in a comfortable siesta.

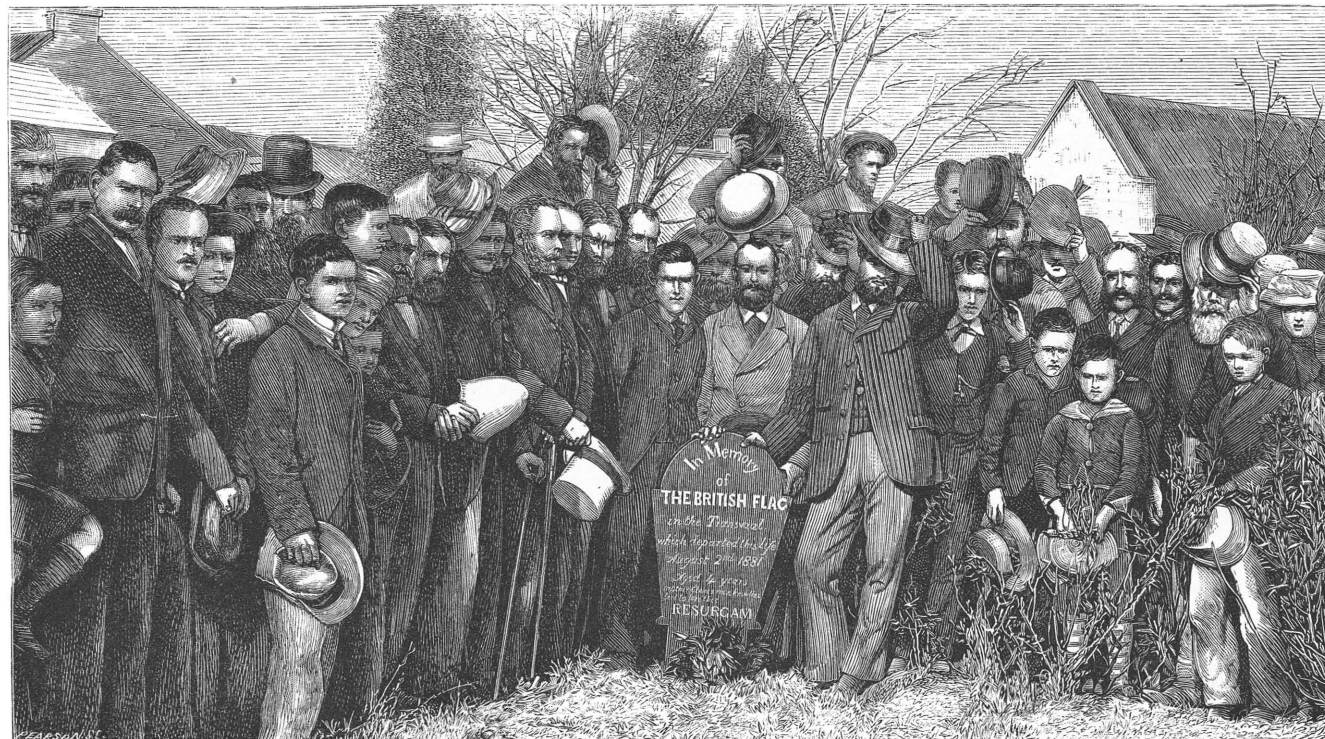
What my dreams were I cannot say, though the tail end of them I am able to recall. Cannon thundered, Boers advanced from all sides, and the measured tread of soldiers echoed around. It was somewhat disappointing to awake and find

I have described had vanished, that the cannon was nothing but the spasmodic cough of old President Brand close by, and that the martial tread of soldiers was the result of the shuffling of many feet caused by the departing attendants of the Commissioners. The only way in which the Boer advance could be accounted for was in the fact that on opening my eyes I encountered those of Joubert fixed upon me. He was doubtless meditating a polite salutation and speech in English ere he advanced, and was getting together his stock of knowledge in that line for the occasion. I, however, saved him all further trouble and hesitation by rising and shaking hands, after which I turned my attention to President Brand.

After a short conversation the old gentleman took his departure, and the Boer leaders proceeded to follow his example. Silence and quiet appeared to be falling over and around Government House, unless it were for the noisy scratching of a pen which seemed to be racing along with its work in the office of the General close by. By whom it was wielded I did not attempt to discover, but in all probability by that hard-working, indefatigable specimen of a military secretary, Major Fraser. Just as silence and quiet appeared established,

another hum, distant at first, but coming nearer and nearer, smote upon my ear. While I was wondering whence it proceeded, the gateway entrance to Government House became black with dusky forms, behind which a large crowd seemed to be pressing. From Captain Slade, who at this moment made his appearance dragging some half-dozen chairs after him, which he proceeded to arrange in a line on the verandah opposite the steps leading down into the carriage-drive, I learnt that the cause of so many black figures in the gateway was a native deputation which Sir Evelyn was about to receive. About three hundred of them were ushered into the grounds, and squatted down on the carriage-drive opposite the row of chairs. They were all chiefs, or representatives of chiefs, occupying territory around Pretoria and under the protectorate of England. One old man, who seemed the chief of most importance in the whole deputation, had a small wooden, three-legged stool, such as dairy-maids use in England when milking cows. This stool was entrusted to the care of a young lad, whose proud duty it appeared to be to carry it while attending to his aged master. The greatest difficulty seemed to be experienced by the old man in retaining his seat, and had it not been for

the steadying hands of his attendant I am convinced he would have fallen back on several occasions. While I was engaged in watching his painful struggles to maintain a dignified bearing on this cranky little stool, Sir Evelyn made his appearance, accompanied by Mr. Osborne, the British Resident of Zululand, and a Mr. Guerdon, who had arrived from England to undertake the duties of Assistant Finance Commissioner to the Royal Commission. As soon as we had all seated ourselves one of the Kaffirs, who appeared to be the spokesman of the deputation, began his harangue. It lasted some time, and was interpreted to Sir Evelyn by a white gentleman present. The substance of the remarks which flowed so eloquently from the black chief's lips was to the effect that the important body of black rulers present had assembled to tender a strong protest against the threatened act of the English Government to restore the Transvaal to the Boers. Very distinctly and very plainly it was pointed out that, did we—the only people to whom they would acknowledge allegiance—so commit ourselves, the result would not be long in showing itself, and that result would be bloodshed and anarchy. Their past fidelity was also advanced as a plea against our surrendering them to such a



FORSAKEN BY ENGLAND.

“ Burial of the British Flag at Pretoria by the English Residents on the Cession of the Transvaal to the Boers.”

fate, and the harangue ended with an earnest prayer that England would not forsake them, because they had been loyal and devoted.

To this petition Sir Evelyn returned a soothing reply, it being no easy matter to inform them of their future fate until the Royal Commission had finished sitting. He, however, requested the deputation to wait upon him again in a month's time, when a more definite and comprehensive answer would be given them. This filled the poor fellows with hope, and, still trusting in the good faith of the country for which they entertained both affection and respect, with the salutation "Inkos" they took their departure. I was not present a month later, when they assembled to learn that the gratitude of nations is as fickle and wavering as that of kings, but the account which an eyewitness gave me I have no doubt faithfully represented the scene. In the string of laws laid down for their better protection they read their own doom—what to them was a long list of meaningless commands given to their future rulers, who, the moment our backs were turned, would set them at defiance? Suffice it, they learnt that the country to which they had been loyal had deserted them, and knew at last that the protection of their lands and simple homes

must for the future be relegated to their own means and powers of defence. The result of this policy they too surely predicted; and even as I write this we hear daily of the unrest and disquiet which is agitating the Transvaal, and detect in these rumours the first rumblings of a great storm.

The business of the morning being over, and lunch disposed of, a large party of us accompanied Sir Evelyn, General Bellairs, and Colonel Gildea on a ride to visit the Wonderboom Pass or Poort, which lies six miles north of Pretoria. The natural strength of this position is immense, consisting as it does of a narrow gorge, commanded on either side by high rocky hills. A newly-constructed road runs through the pass, but ere it was made, the only passage through for waggons consisted in the bed of the river Apies, which, though by no means deep, is nevertheless very rough and stony, and must have proved difficult travelling both for man and beast. It was on the summit of these hills that the large gathering of baboons, mistaken by the outposts for advancing Boers, took place during the war; but either they were taking their afternoon siesta, or had trekked altogether from these scenes of war, for on this occasion, though we kept a sharp look-out, we never saw any.

Away to the eastward before entering the pass we could make out the Nek Road, across which the Boers built a stone breastwork as a means of defence and occupied it. They thus held the only two means of communication with the country north of the Wonderboom Poort, and, in addition, a laager of some twenty waggons on the right bank of the Apies River, still farther north, was selected as their headquarters.

The ride through the pass was exceedingly grand, the gaunt rocky heights overlooking us on either side like two defying demons about to fall and crush us with their massive weight. Trees and ferns grew everywhere luxuriantly, and the gurgling of the river over its rocky bed was a pleasant and soothing sound, which added to the charm of an impressive, an awe-inspiring scene. But one of the principal sights which we were bent on seeing that day was the great Wonderboom or Wonderful Tree, which had grown and extended to such a size as to give it this appellation. Under its wondrous canopy several hundred people, it was said, could find shelter, and indeed, when we had threaded the pass and skirted a reedy lake from which the cry of the wild duck arose, the tree, with its heavy massive foliage, hove in sight, looking like some huge

giant amidst the comparatively dwarf vegetation that surrounded it. Putting spurs to our horses, several of us raced to reach the spot first, which foolish exploit under a hot sun made both ourselves and our horses very hot, and rendered the dark, cool shade of the great tree doubly acceptable and refreshing. Examination proved it to be of an ambitious and progressive nature, the larger branches, as soon as they become developed, drooping earthwards, until, taking root, fresh life springs forth from the younger scions of the old stem. We regretted that we had not started on our ride earlier in the day, and sent on our lunch to this delightful spot, where a very pleasant picnic might have been organised; as it was we were very thirsty, and the river Apies lay too far off to return for the purpose of slaking our thirst. We were forced, therefore, to patiently await a convenient opportunity, and proceeded to follow the Generals, who had already, bearing to the eastward, commenced the ascent of the narrow, steep, and rocky path which led over the Nek mentioned by me on a former page. In single file we scrambled after each other, the horses slipping and stumbling over the rough uneven ground; altogethèr we had our hands full for a short time in trying to keep them

on their legs, as well as in doing our best to avoid losing our eyes in the thorny branches which overhung the path. On reaching the summit of the Nek we paused to give the horses their wind, the while making an inspection of the stone breastworks thrown up by the Boers during their occupation of the pass. The position was decidedly a strong one, and the enemy must have felt pretty safe in their mountain fastness; they could afford to be arrogant, placed as they were, secure from the assaults of man.

A pleasant ride home in the cool of the evening brought another day to its conclusion, and regretfully we recalled to mind that the time was fast approaching when we must leave these scenes of comparative luxury and ease for the sterner realities of the daily march and its attendant hardships. The dinner hour generally banished, however, these disagreeable thoughts; guests we never lacked to make the party a large and festive one, and these few hours of relaxation from diplomacy and hard work were as much appreciated by the Royal Commissioners themselves as they were by the rest of us.

So the days flew by all too quickly, varied by rides, lawn tennis, polo, and other amusements. On the last of our stay I rode with my husband,

Major Fraser, and Captain Slade, to a place a few miles out of Pretoria, in search of ferns and flowers wherewith to decorate the dinner table for a farewell banquet. There were to be a bishop and a Roman Catholic priest and all manner of important personages to grace the board that night, and our worthy aide-de-camp was anxious that no pains should be spared to make everything a success. It was quite the prettiest ride of the many we had taken around Pretoria, and it was hard to dispossess one's self of the idea that one had been transported to the tropical regions, so rich and varied was the vegetation. In a snug little avenue redolent with the scent of a kind of wild honeysuckle we dismounted, and having made our horses fast, proceeded to push our way through the thick jungle, bent on expeditions of discovery. It was not long before Captain Slade and myself had made good progress, and it was with a simultaneous exclamation of delight that we suddenly emerged from the brushwood of the jungle on to a green open space, which might well have vied with the most carefully kept lawn in England. Gradually as we advanced over this green sward it became studded with lemon and orange trees, until at last we found ourselves in a thick, shady grove

formed almost entirely of these trees, all being heavily loaded with masses of their yellow and golden fruits. Not far off a winding lane of canes and weeping willows betokened the close proximity of water, whose murmurings and gurgling sounds could also be distinguished as it splashed along over the stones of its rough and winding course. Along the banks ferns of all kinds and descriptions grew in abundance, the maidenhair carrying away—so I thought—the palm for size and beauty. We could now hear the shouts of our companions, who were endeavouring to ascertain our whereabouts, so with answering shouts we guided them to the lovely little spot to which we laid claim as discoverers, and on their arrival pressed them into our service as fern gatherers. It was not long, though not without one or two wettings, before we managed to lay in a good store of the required article; after which we amused ourselves after the manner of children in pelting each other with fallen lemons and oranges. Assaults and counter-assaults began to wax somewhat hot, until a well-directed shot from Major Fraser having landed full, straight, and with some force, in the right eye of Captain Slade, put our side *hors de combat*, and we surrendered without any further struggle;

Lemon Grove was taken, and its discoverers made prisoners !

Gathering together our spoils, we returned to where we had left the horses, and made our way back to Pretoria by a different route, arriving just in time to decorate the table with the ferns and flowers which we had collected that day.

The dinner was quite a success, and I am sure the bishop and the Catholic priest and the other guests must have enjoyed themselves, for they lingered on some time after it was all over, and did not seem inclined to take their departure. But they went at last, when we turned our attention to arranging plans for an early start on the morrow ; our last day at Pretoria had come to an end, and the long and weary trekking was to commence once more.

We then learnt from Captain Slade that Sir Evelyn had sent our horses on that day in the charge of an orderly to a wayside inn twenty miles on the road to Heidelberg, and that Sir Hercules Robinson had kindly placed his spider at our service to take us thus far, thereby giving our horses the advantage of a night's rest and twenty miles off their journey next day. This we regarded as a very satisfactory arrangement ; and having settled everything with a view to as

much comfort as possible, bed was next talked of as the right place in contemplation of an early rise on the morrow. In the office hard by Sir Evelyn and Major Fraser were closeted at their work, and as we did not like to disturb them, we went to our rooms without saying good-bye, counselling Walkinshaw on the way to be sure and call us at daybreak next morning.

CHAPTER XVII.

DEPARTURE—AN EARLY BREAKFAST—AN UNCOMFORTABLE
DRIVE—A SIMPLE MEAL—PATAGONIA ONCE MORE—
HEIDELBERG AT LAST—A DRUNKEN CONVOY—STANDERTON
ONCE MORE—AN ALARM OF “BOERS”—LUDICROUS
THEFTS—MEMORIES OF MAJUBA.

It was with feelings of regret and a strong disinclination to arise, that I awoke with the dull gray hours of early morning. Never before had a bed felt so comfortable, and with a sigh I recollected that the time had come for these luxuries to be ended. A knock at the door and the voice of Walkinshaw informing me that it was half-past four, had a beneficial effect, however, and the weakness of the past few moments became dissipated as I sprang from my bed and commenced the operation of dressing. Outside my door I found hot water placed and a cup of hot chocolate, the result of Walkinshaw's kindly forethought, all ready to hand. It was with some difficulty that my husband could be induced to

understand the necessity of rising, the terrible truth that a long day's journey lay before him taking some time to dawn upon his sleepy thoughts. When, however, he eventually woke to the fact, I am bound to acknowledge that sloth was at once banished, and a little after five o'clock saw us ready for the start.

At the gates of Government House stood Sir Hercules's spider, with its eight mules ready harnessed and in waiting. An intense silence hung over Pretoria; the whole town was buried in sleep; not a bird's twitter could even be heard, and silently as possible, so as not to disturb anyone within, I made my way from my room to the verandah, thence into the dining-room, where hot coffee and chocolate were ready for any one who required them. It was too early to eat, but a cup of hot chocolate is not a thing to be despised on a cold morning, and we both accordingly indulged in one. While so doing General Wood and Captain Slade made their appearance, our courteous host informing us that he could not let us depart without seeing us off and wishing us a God-speed on our journey. It was with no little difficulty that we scrambled into the curiously-shaped vehicle, which was to convey us twenty miles on our way before joining our horses.

Captain Slade had called it a spider, but to me it much resembled a prison van! Shaped like one it certainly was, with the exception that the two drivers and the mules could be distinguished at the far end, which gave us a sort of idea in which direction we were going.

The luncheon, or rather breakfast basket, having been handed in after us, and received with due care, everything was ready for a start. Farewells were exchanged with our host and Captain Slade, in the midst of which the ponderous whip cracked forth its admonishing sound to the mules, and, rumbling and jolting over the uneven road, we were once more wanderers.

After half an hour spent in the vehicle I fully appreciated the remark Sir Hercules had made, when he observed that the journey from Newcastle to Pretoria was a very wearisome one. Poor man! there can be little doubt of it, and I pitied him all the more when I reflected that the return journey was still before him. Lazier mules I never sat behind, and the same remark might be applied to the drivers. At the end of every five miles they expressed a wish to outspan, and even when, after six hours' weary jolting, we at length sighted the storehouse where our horses awaited us, the driver could

scarcely be induced to proceed until he had outspanned and rested the mules for an hour. By dint, however, of threats and promises we managed to get him to proceed. In six hours we had barely accomplished twenty miles, and a long distance yet separated us from Heidelberg ; it was necessary to push forward with all possible speed ; the road was a lonely and desolate one, and we had no Mr. Latour on this occasion to act as our guide and interpreter. It was with real feelings of thankfulness that we at length came to a stop, and, descending from our uncomfortable seats in the mule vehicle, found Tom ready waiting us with the horses. We did not envy the orderly who had helped him to bring them thus far his return ride in the spider, and many times we congratulated ourselves on the termination of our drive.

On mounting our animals, we found that the horse ridden by my husband was very lame in the near hind foot. The day of his arrival in Pretoria he had trodden on a sharp nail, which became imbedded in a tender part of the hoof. Though it was at once extracted, and the wound attended to on the following day by the General's blacksmith, it still continued tender and painful ; and, in spite of the week's rest, he seemed none

the sounder. This was extremely annoying, as the animal was the strongest we had with us, and a speedy and successful journey greatly depended upon his staying powers. There was, however, nothing for it but to change horses ; so, relinquishing my mount on "Nancy," doubtless much to her horror—for there is some material difference between eight and fifteen stone—I got on to the lame horse, and bidding farewell to our lazy coachman and his equally lazy mules, we were off on the trek once more.

A ride of forty miles on a horse lame behind is decidedly no joke, as I was not long in finding out. The poor beast was doubtless in great pain, and his canter was rough beyond all description. Each time the injured foot touched the ground, a jarr ran through my whole body, and before long I began to feel quite exhausted. Though I felt very sorry for myself, I was still more so for the horse. He was a brave animal, and performed his task pluckily and well ; but the profuse way in which he sweated testified to the greatness of his sufferings, and we were unable to push along at more than five miles an hour in consequence. At four o'clock, when we called a halt, we had only ridden twenty miles, and the same distance still lay between us and Heidelberg, which we calcu-

lated we should not reach much before nine o'clock that night.

Water, too, was scarce in the part of the country through which we were passing. Vast dried-up stretching plains, on which few living things could be distinguished, extended on either side far as the eye could reach, bearing all the appearance of a great desert. On the Lys Vley, a small offshoot stream of Riet Spruit, we stopped to off-saddle. The horses were much distressed for want of water, and we, who in our hurry to start had forgotten the contents of the luncheon-basket, which the lazy drivers and the orderly at that moment were doubtless enjoying, began to feel decided pangs of hunger. Fortunately, we possessed a few pieces of bread, on which we proceeded to make our luncheon, while the horses slaked their thirst and enjoyed their roll in the dust, wandering hither and thither in search of a few mouthfuls of young grass. A Dutch trader on the trek arrived while we were resting ourselves, and out-spanned close by. It was the first sign of human existence we had seen since parting with our mule conveyance that morning; and though we did not enter into conversation or exchange salutations even with the man, who appeared a sour, sulky-looking fellow, the presence which he and his

waggon and his oxen brought, not to mention two savage dogs who were continually on the bark, was welcome enough, and dissipated the silence which seemed to have taken possession of the barren Veldt.

Three quarters of an hour's law having been given the horses, they were then driven up and packs and saddles replaced. This job occupied about a quarter of an hour, and at five o'clock we started on our last stage that day. A very weary one it proved too, the poor beast I was riding going lamer than ever, so that from discomfort it became positive pain to ride him.

For some time a distant range of hills ahead of us had engaged our attention, and from our bearings I made them out to be a portion of the Zuikerbosch Rand or range, on the other side of which I knew Heidelberg and the district bearing the same name would lie. Anxiously and eagerly we kept our eyes on these hills, now and then giving vent to the would-be cheering impression that they appeared to grow larger. Riet Spruit was crossed, and as this was the last opportunity of obtaining water before reaching Heidelberg that we knew of, the horses were permitted to slake their thirst, while we followed their example. It was at this place that, for the

first time during my wanderings over the South African Veldt, I sighted in the distance two wild ostriches. The old instincts of the Patagonian chase seemed to return, and I could hardly restrain myself from turning my horse from his course and dashing after them. The reflection, however, came in time that such a chase would be not only useless and unavailing, but that by law it was also forbidden. The strictest rules were in force in the Colony against shooting or destroying the wild ostrich, and though by stealth these rules were occasionally infringed upon, they had the timely effect of preserving from complete destruction the few that remained of this magnificent and noble bird.

All this time we were riding a race with the sun, the result of which was already a foregone conclusion. Steadily it had descended on to the western range of the Zuikerbosch, and we watched the multifarious and gorgeous lights which it eliminated steal along the brow and slopes of those western hills. Every little cranny and nook appeared revealed, and the architecture of the rocks bade fair to rival in their domes and spiral heights the most exquisite works of man. Here, apparently, an old castle of bygone days, associated with the scenes and deeds of those

olden times, would set the imagination stirring, peopling it with knights and squires and men-at-arms, bidding defiance from the donjon keep to their assailants ; now a stately Gothic pile would arise on the fading ruins of that transient scene, and with it the mind would turn from the thought of angry strife and gallant deeds to wander in the dark silent cloisters of that sacred pile, while the harmony of Mozart or the thrilling beauty of Beethoven rings through the dome, floods every corner of that vast building, and, stealing forth on the evening air, wafts its sweet message to the God from whose gift of feeling it was first conceived and shadowed forth in the work of man. As the sun sinks lower, purple shades steal along those varying scenes—the delicately-tinted rose, the palest green, the softest opal, transform those rugged rocks into living glittering gems. Far and wide they flash their brilliancy around ; and then, as the author of their being passes on to flood another land with light, they fade gently, swiftly from the scene, dying where their life-giver has vanished,—dying but to arise again in the presence where death is unknown.

Dreaming in this wise, I watched the sun go down, and with its disappearance the cold chill of evening at once set in. Every moment it grew

darker, and we experienced the greatest difficulty in finding our way. Ten good miles yet lay before us, and we calculated that nothing under two hours would be occupied in accomplishing that distance. Even if the horses had not been tired we could not have pushed along any faster, as it was impossible to see where we were going to, and we had to leave it chiefly to the instinct of these sagacious beasts to find their own way. About eight o'clock the moon rose, when we became better off, and were able to increase the pace a little; and it was with real delight that an hour later, just as we were beginning to despair of even reaching Heidelberg, a turn in a winding hill brought us in sight of the town. We quickly made our way to the hotel, which to our chagrin we found again crowded with noisy, dirty Boers; so, procuring some oats and mealies, we rode on to the outskirts of the place, and, off-saddling close to a little stream, ministered to the wants of the horses. While I fed and blanketed them up for the night—making them as comfortable as possible under the circumstances—my husband and Tom got a fire to light, and we were soon enjoying some hot coffee. It was too late to eat, and though we had had nothing but a piece of bread each that day, we all felt more inclined to lie

down and sleep than eat. For myself, I felt utterly exhausted, which I put down to the roughness of the lame horse I had been riding. We had placed, however, sixty miles between Pretoria and ourselves, and on the whole it was considered a matter of congratulation that we had managed so far so successfully. It was ten o'clock when, rolling myself up in my blanket, I lay down close to the horses. The bed was certainly a contrast to the one at Government House, Pretoria, and I found myself ruefully contrasting the same. The ground was also decidedly damp and spongy, and I had grave misgivings of rheumatism, and all manner of evils, in consequence; but sleep soon banished these fears from my mind, and the potent effect of weariness made rest in any shape or form acceptable. It must have been past midnight when I was awakened by the shouts and unmusical songs of some drunken Kaffirs and Boers, who were passing close to the place where we were sleeping. Behind them rumbled an unwieldy waggon, drawn by a large span of oxen, which brought the conclusion to my mind that they were on a night trek—a custom which is frequently practised by the connoisseurs of the country in these parts—the cool hours of night being considered better travelling for the oxen than during

the heat of the daytime. The moon being well up, I could make out that the animals had neither a forelouper nor a driver to guide them, and, as they passed close to me, I found myself wondering how far this drunken convoy would effect a safe journey. Probably the first awkward spruit arrived at, a catastrophe would occur which would have the potent effect of bringing them to their senses.

On turning my attention to renewed sleep, I found that the place I had selected for my bed was, without doubt, a veritable swamp. The blanket in which I had rolled myself up was wringing wet, and I lay in a regular pool of water. Picking myself out of my damp couch, I proceeded to make search for a more suitable spot, which I at length discovered; but though it was dry, it was decidedly hard, and afforded but scant comfort to my aching bones.

Five o'clock on the following morning saw us ready to renew our journey. My mount of the previous day we found in a sad condition, and quite unfit to bear any kind of weight. He was therefore adjudged the comparatively easy task of carrying a portion of our light packs, the sumpter animal being handed over to Tom as his mount for that day. I was glad to return to the easy

and confidential amble of my little Punch, who stood ready waiting, sleek and fat and consequential, but rather sulky-looking, though none the worse for his journey of the day before. He had need, however, of freshness, as a distance of quite sixty miles at the least separated us from Standerton, which we desired to reach that day, being unaware as to the exact movements of the troops, who we calculated would be due about the same time from Potchefstroom.

Sixteen miles on the road, we off-saddled at "The Grange," a store belonging to one MacHattie, and the scene of one of our former encampments on the march up-country with the troops. While the horses contentedly munched their oat hay in a large, cool stable, we in turn sat down to a cosy little breakfast of eggs and bacon, and some excellent tea, with real cream. This was the first regular meal we had indulged in for over forty hours, and we appreciated it accordingly. The next stage was a long one to Bushman's River, the scene of that dangerous hunting-day on our march up-country, when everybody endeavoured to do their best to shoot each other! The memory of it had evidently not forsaken the breasts of our four-footed brethren in peril, for of the large herds that had been seen on our way

up, but a few solitary representatives remained. Further inland they had probably wandered, seeking refuge from the devastating hand of man.

We reached Standerton that night tired enough, but to find a tent and many luxuries prepared for us by my cousin. The troops had not yet arrived from Potchefstroom, so that our waggon was of course not forthcoming; but we made ourselves comfortable with the property of others, and were not sorry for a few days' rest, both for our horses' sakes as well as our own. The poor lame animal was at once relegated to the care of the farrier-sergeant, and the foot placed in a poultice; but for many days, weeks—even months—after this period, he continued lame and unfit for use of any kind; and it was not until long after I had left South Africa that I heard he had been sold to an officer in the Inniskillings, one of the unfortunate victims condemned to remain in Natal after the departure of the troops. Even then, I believe, he went feeling, and it will probably be long ere the poor beast forgets the sorrows of that 120 miles ride.

Two days after our arrival at Standerton, the troops made their appearance. For several days they had been wandering about the Veldt, having

lost their way. The plan had been to return to Standerton by a different road from that by which they had come; and the consequence resulted in a good deal of time being lost, and the short cut which they had counted on making proving a very long one. Misfortunes never come singly, and in one of their bivouacks, the horses of the Inniskillings got amongst some poisonous herbage, the result being seventeen dead in one night, and many mules dead and dying. General Buller lost two of these latter animals out of his span, one of them trotting into Standerton, and right up to our very tents, where it proceeded to lie down and die. Everything was done to save the poor beast; but nothing availed, its sides became inflated like a balloon, and its death must have been of a most painful nature.

Two other incidents which occurred about this period created no little stir and a good deal of amusement. The first of these excitements was caused by the suspicious disappearance of General Buller's interpreter, who had separated himself from the troops on their start that morning for Standerton, with the avowed object of searching for game. Several hours passed away, and the mid-day outspan took place; but with it nothing was seen of the missing man, and on the arrival

of the squadron at Standerton he was still absent. As every one was busily engaged pitching their tents, and getting the camp into order, the interpreter came suddenly galloping into the midst of the busy scene. He was pale and excited, and looked very frightened. In reply to the numerous questions which were pressed upon him from all sides as to what had occurred to upset him so much, he managed to stammer out a disjointed and almost incoherent tale in which "Boers" and "prisoner" were the only words that could be rightly distinguished. Under the soothing influence of a strong drink, he became more calm, and thereupon proceeded to relate how he had, while stalking a blesbók, suddenly fallen in with a large force of 300 armed Boers, from whom he sought to escape by flight. He was, however, pursued, captured, and brought back a prisoner. The leader of this formidable party asked him many questions about the troops that had been to Potchefstroom, and those that garrisoned Standerton, to which he affirmed he returned evasive replies, and, watching his opportunity, managed later on to effect his escape. His story at first caused no little excitement in camp; but on reflection it appeared so improbable, that every one at length came to the conclusion

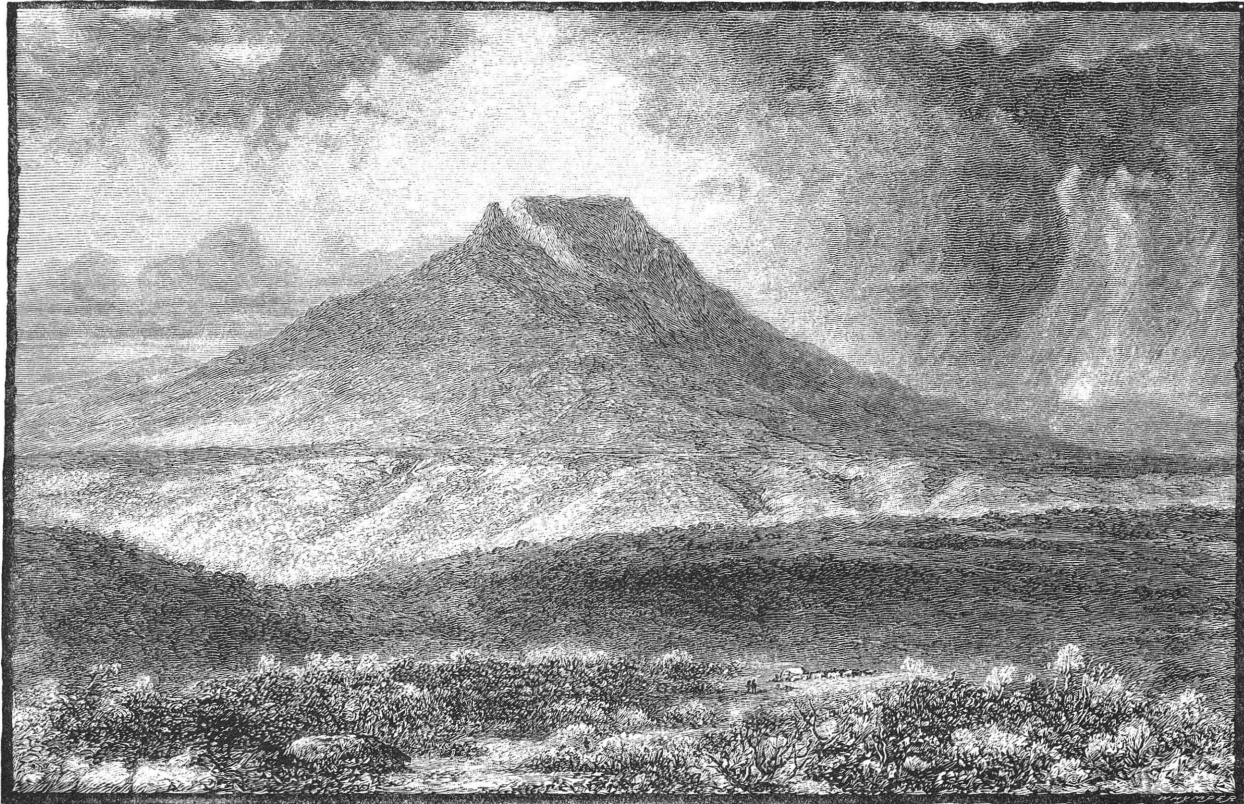
that it was nothing but an invention, and the poor fellow had to bear a good deal of chaff and bullying in consequence. He, however, stuck to his statement like a man, continuing to assert its veracity; and not long after, in a conversation with one who had been a rebel Boer, I learned that such a force, about that time, had been posted in the neighbourhood of Standerton, with orders to watch the movements of the marching squadrons, and report thereon to the authorities in and about Pretoria.

The other incident which occurred, though disgraceful in itself, had its ludicrous side as well. A Boer farmer arrived at headquarters, bringing a complaint to Colonel Curtis to the effect that his farmhouse had been broken into and rifled by a party of soldiers. Acting upon information received, the Colonel caused every tent to be examined, and the kit of each man inspected, when, in several of them, many strange articles of wearing apparel, from babies' stockings to women's petticoats, were discovered. One man who had secured and slaughtered a pig had concealed it in his blankets; a young Inniskilling had congratulated himself on having secured a gun; and a gay hussar had laid in a stock of ladies' clothing to his complete satisfaction. Knives,

forks, and spoons, were discovered, and unearthed from their hiding-places; and when the whole of the stolen articles were at length recovered, they presented a curious and ludicrous spectacle indeed. Not the least laughable matter of the whole affair was the joy of the farmer on beholding his stolen property, and when his claim for £60 damages was acknowledged by a donation of £40 down, his delight knew no bounds. A Kaffir was at once despatched in search of a waggon, and the last thing seen of our injured friend was his little, fat body, perched on the top of his household goods, awaiting the arrival of the vehicle which was to bear back to his rifled home his recovered property. The perpetrators of the outrage were of course at once placed under arrest.

That evening a telegram arrived from Sir Evelyn Wood at Pretoria to General Buller, requesting the latter's presence in the capital of the Transvaal. Captain Beresford likewise received instructions to repair in the same direction, and hurried preparations were accordingly made to get everything in readiness for an early start next day. The troops also had been ordered to march down-country, and with them we decided to remain, returning at once to Newcastle. It was

with no little joy that we bade farewell to Standerton ; few, or rather none, were the regrets which we left behind, and it is to be acknowledged that we did not envy the unfortunate 94th Regiment, who remained to garrison the place. Proceeding down-country at a slower rate than that at which we had marched up, the fifth day of our departure from Standerton found us encamped under the south-eastern slopes of the Amajuba, and close to O'Neill's Farm. At this place we halted a day for the men to clean, pipeclay, and smarten themselves up for their triumphant return from so many dangers ! Once more I climbed the Amajuba, and found the graves in tidiness and order. It was my farewell visit to these scenes of exceeding sadness, and I lingered for a long time ere I could make up my mind to quit them. There was something irresistibly fascinating in this spot ; the clear, free air, the vast panorama extending over many lands, and the sense of loneliness and isolation with which the height and steepness of the mountain impressed me, made it a scene that, once viewed, will never be forgotten. Lying on a projecting rock which overlooked the wooded western slopes, and the fair and fertile valley below, I found myself recapitulating the tragedy



THE AMAJUBA OR ROCK OF MANY PIGEONS.

On Amajuba's heights they sleep,
And 'neath its darkling shelter lie ;
O'er its gaunt crag soft zephyrs creep,
In mourning dirge and wailing cry.

There stars will ever shed their light,
The sun will gild each rising morn,
And Nature's carpet soft and bright
The soldier's lonely grave adorn.

F. D.

which, a few short months before, had been enacted thereon, and living over again in imagination the hopes, and fears, and vain regrets which must have filled the hearts of those who fought and fell that day. Looking ahead, the future must ever remain veiled ; but in whatever lands I shall wander, amidst whatever novel scenes I shall find myself, the memory of that vast, silent pile will never be forgotten. Beyond all memory, however, it will stand ; and long after the thoughts of generations shall have passed away, a fit monument it will ever remain to memorialise the gallant dead who sleep upon its summit and beneath its shades. A short march was made next day, and we halted once more at the Ingogo. Here another day's rest was given the men, which every one grumbled at, and seemed to consider unnecessary ; but the fact of its being Sunday probably accounted for the order, and every one was forced to while away the day as best he could, and after his own fashion. On Monday, the 4th of July, the final march was made, and that afternoon saw us encamped in our old quarters at Bennett's Drift.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PROJECTED RIDE THROUGH ZULULAND—A FORBIDDEN EXPEDITION — AN AMUSING DISCUSSION — MILITARY HOSPITALITY — A BOER'S SLAVE — THE SLAVE'S GRATITUDE — ROUGH TRAVELLING — DE BEER'S PASS — CLIMBING THE DRAKENSBERG — CROSSING THE BOUNDARY — MUSIC HAS CHARMS.

A FEW days spent in camp at Bennett's Drift were sufficient to weary the most patient of people, and the utter want and complete absence of anything to do soon goaded us to fresh action. At first a return to Pretoria was contemplated in order to obtain news of the progress of the Royal Commission; but that project was no sooner made than abandoned in favour of a more seasonable plan which occurred to us of a ride through Zululand. This having been decided upon, an early date was fixed for our departure, and the few preparations needed for the journey were gone through; but at the last moment an objection to our entering the country was put forward by

General Buller, who sent word of news that moment received from John Dunn, relative to an outbreak in the Umlandela district, which the white chief appeared to think would spread. Under the circumstances, it was deemed advisable that our visit should be deferred, and a telegram from Sir Evelyn Wood which I received, and in which he gave it as his opinion that it would not be advisable to proceed to Zululand, left me no choice but to accede to the wishes of the General. It was, however, with extreme reluctance that I did so, and the disappointment was at the time very keen.

Something, however, we felt must be done to pass the time until the sitting of the Royal Commission terminated, and the General returned to Newcastle. Wild ideas of rushing off to Basutoland several times flashed through my mind; but the plan, on reflection, appeared unfeasible in consequence of the time it would have occupied; and the prospect of a probable march ere long into Zululand helped to deter me from any further serious contemplation of the project.

In the midst of this uncertainty as to what was to be done, the suggestion which came from my husband to visit the Kimberley Diamond Fields was hailed as a solution and settlement of the

difficulty. True, they lay many hundreds of miles distant; but what is distance in South Africa? and to Kimberley we resolved to go. This decision arrived at, I immediately rode into Newcastle, and telegraphed down-country to Maritzburg to Captain Hallam Parr, begging him to secure two seats in the post-cart which would leave in a few days for Harrismith, and which we could join at a place called the Rising Sun, about twelve miles the other side of Ladysmith.

On the following morning behold us once more mounted, and in readiness for a fresh start, Punch and Nancy being the mounts. A chestnut pony whom we called "Fatty Cavendish" was entrusted with the saddle bags and horse rugs, which were all that composed the pack on this occasion. This pony held the position of second favourite in Punch's heart, and he was accordingly very pleased and contented at finding the two objects of his dearest affections trotting alongside him.

We were accompanied for the first few miles of our way by several friends who rode so far to see us off. Outside Newcastle we separated; they returning to their different camps, while we proceeded on the trek.

At the Ingagane, twenty-two miles on the road, we made the first off-saddle for breakfast, thence continuing on another stage of similar distance to the Biggarsberg. But on arriving we found the hotel in dirtiness and discomfort, in no way improved from that in which we had discovered it on a previous occasion, so, hardening our hearts for an extension of that day's journey, we pushed on for Sunday's River, distant thirteen miles. The difference made in a long journey by knowing the road is wonderful. Fifty-seven miles we had ridden that day, but neither ourselves nor our horses were in any way fatigued, though we had come along at a pretty good pace. We found comfortable quarters awaiting us at Sunday's River, a good dinner and soft beds, and everything clean and airy. The proprietor, Mr. Mitchell Innis, was at home, as was also his indefatigable housekeeper, an old lady of ninety years of age, who was trotting about superintending the affairs of the establishment, scolding the cook, rating the black waiting-girls, and declaring that she would have to do everything herself to get it properly done. While waiting for dinner I had a rather amusing conversation with a Boer, who had dropped in on a visit to Mr. Innis. This personage, who spoke English fluently, in-

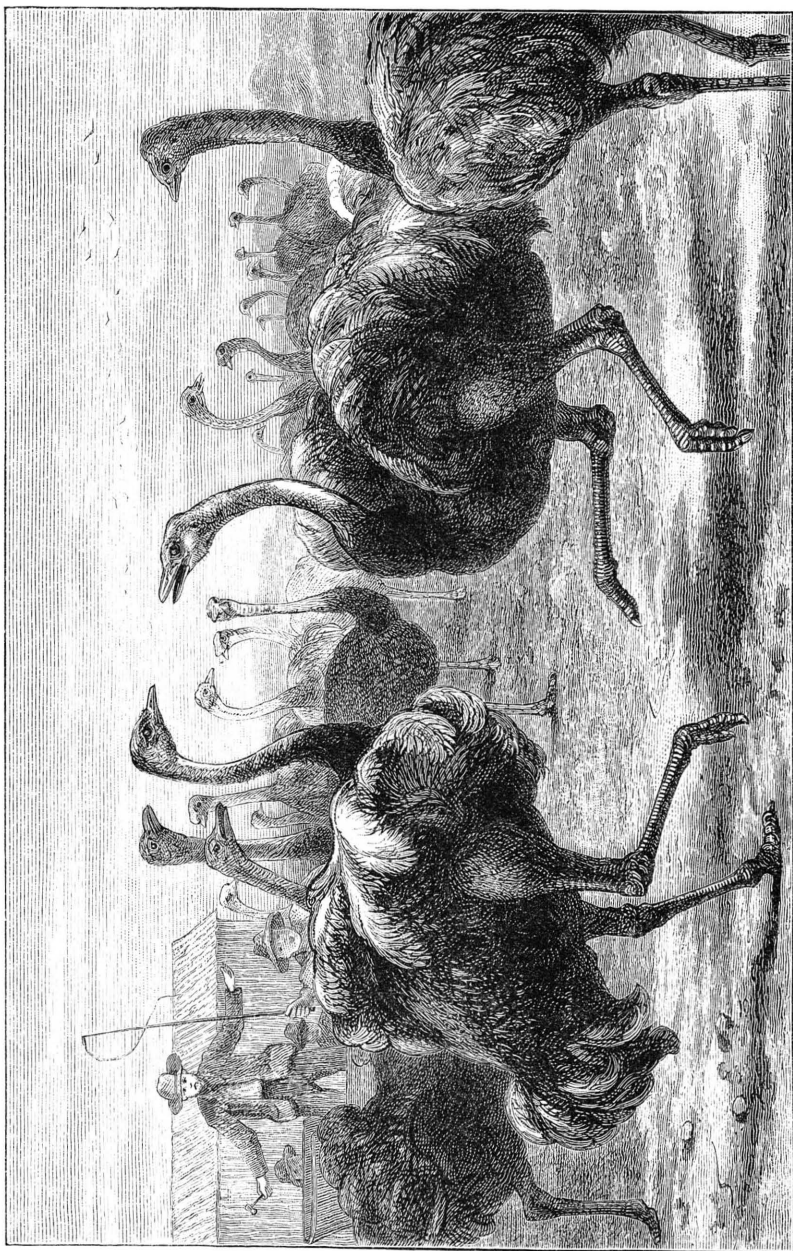
formed me that he was the possessor of large farms in Natal, the Transvaal, and the Orange Free State. While residing on the former he considered himself a subject of the Queen of England, and as such felt loyal to her Majesty; "but," added he, "on my Transvaal farm I at once become what you would call a rebel, for in that country I do not acknowledge the Queen's authority, and should have no hesitation in fighting against the English troops." For the Orange Free State he confessed to feeling a preference, and proceeded to enlarge on the might and power of that country. London, he assured me, he felt was nothing, when compared to Bloemfontein; and as for the wonders of the eighty-one ton gun, why, at Bloemfontein there were many to be found of a much larger size! Much laughter was provoked by this assertion, which greatly irritated him, whereupon he proceeded to give us a sketch of the difficulty which England would find in coping with the united forces of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, ending in a long tirade of abuse of the English nation. Seeing the man was becoming excited, we left him explaining to an empty room how "the Boers could smash the English with their little fingers;" and the remainder of this interesting information

was therefore lost upon us. When, half an hour later, we returned to the room for dinner he had departed, doubtless in exceeding disgust at our want of appreciation of the wonders of Bloemfontein, and the might and power of the Orange Free State.

A ride of twenty-four miles on the following morning brought us to Ladysmith, where we put up at our old quarters at the Crown Hotel. We had hardly arrived an hour before numerous invitations to lunch and dine, from several of the regiments quartered in the neighbourhood, were received; and I was much pleased by the kindly welcome and hospitality which were shown us on all sides. That afternoon we went up to the camp of the 14th Hussars, where luncheon was served in a large double marquee, which felt deliciously cool after the outside burning sun and atmosphere through which we had come. I was very anxious to go through the horses, there being some beautiful Arabs and Persians to be seen; but the inspection was delayed until we should return from Kimberley, on account of the absence of several which would have made the show incomplete. As we had brought no servant with us, Major (now Colonel) Knox, commanding the regiment, kindly promised to send an orderly

on to the Rising Sun early next day, in order to bring back our horses, it being our intention to ride thus far before joining the post-cart, in which we had taken seats for Harrismith. He further promised to take charge of our horses until our return, thus setting our minds at rest on that score.

Taking it easy, we arrived on the following afternoon at the Rising Sun, where very fair accommodation was obtained. Here we learnt that there was small probability of the post-cart passing that day, but that very early next morning it might be looked for. The departure of the orderly, leading our three horses, was an amusing sight, which gave us a good hour's occupation, the road along which he was proceeding being in full view from the inn for over three miles. Mounted on his own horse, he vainly endeavoured to induce the three ponies to follow him. They one and all evinced the greatest reluctance, and the spectacle presented by their three heads obstinately thrown back, and their noses extended outwards as they wended their slow march along, was ludicrous in the extreme. After an hour, they were still in sight, and I must confess we did not envy the unfortunate fellow his homeward ride. The moment the sun went down, it came



AN OSTRICH SALE AT LADYSMITH.

on to freeze hard, and there being no moon, the night was very dark. As I was standing at the door of the inn, after supper, trying to obtain a little fresh air, for the interior was somewhat stuffy and redolent with Boer tobacco, a spider, drawn by two horses, pulled up in front of me, and a fat puffing Boer descended, having previously committed the care of the reins to a confused, shivering heap of something, which at first I could not distinguish. The voice of the visitor was then heard calling loudly for brandy, which was followed by an explanation that it was taken to warm himself. He had fat on him, however, enough and to spare to protect himself from cold, and I am afraid the excuse was not believed by any one, though, for all anybody cared, he was welcome to drink twenty tots, as he called them, so long as he did not make himself obnoxious afterwards.

While he was indulging in his potations I advanced close up to the spider for the purpose of making an inspection of the shivering heap that held the reins. Examination proved it to be a poor, half-naked Hottentot or Bushman, who, cowering in a ragged blanket, was endeavouring to get warm. "Here is a subject to whom a glass of brandy would do some benefit," I called out

to the landlord inside, and upon his making his appearance I requested him to bring forth a good strong tot. The Boer at this juncture made his appearance, rather drunk, and decidedly an unpleasant neighbour. Mounting his spider, he was proceeding to take his departure, when, springing to the horses' heads, I restrained them. "What is de matter?" he called out. "What do you stop zee horses for?"

"Nothing," I answered, "except to give that poor, shivering slave of yours a drink, and you are not going on until he has had one, either."

"What! you give zee dog a drink?" questioned my drunken friend, full of astonishment.

"Dog?" I replied. "I don't know what you call dog; if he is one, all I can say is that he is a much nicer creature than you are."

"But I am in zee hurry," continued the Boer, with a drunken hiccup, "and I want to get on," he added, touching up his horses.

The animals sprang forward, but I managed to restrain them; and my husband coming to my assistance, they were effectually stopped. By this time the landlord made his appearance, and, taking the glass from his hands, I told him to run quickly for a pipe, a box of matches, and some tobacco. I then proceeded to give the Hottentot

his drink ; but for a long time he could not be made to understand that it was for him. When, however, this dawned upon him, his face of astonishment, wonder, and gratitude was worth seeing. His eyes filled with tears as he took the glass with his poor, trembling hands, and in broken English I heard him thank me, though in a low voice :

“ Good lady—kind missus,” he said, “ English lady you are—English very kind, not like the Boer.”

I next proceeded to make him happy with the pipe, box of matches, and tobacco I had sent for ; and presenting him in addition with a warm blanket, I then told my drunken friend that he was at liberty to proceed. The potations, however, were taking effect, his head had sunk on his chest, and the reins were dropping from his hands. Having called the Hottentot's attention to his master's state, the man took the reins, and thanking the “ kind missus ” once more, proceeded to act the part of Jehu. The spider was speedily lost to sight in the darkness, and, somewhat cold and very sleepy, I retired to my room and couch in anticipation of an early rise next morning. An early rise it proved to be too, and almost ere morning had begun to dawn, I was startled in my

sleep by the winding blast of a bugle, which I knew to herald the approach of the post-cart. Hastily dressing, we heard its wheels rumbling and grinding over the gravel stones in front of the inn, while another loud and prolonged blast, ending in a merry tune, announced that the vehicle had pulled up. We were quickly in the public room, fearful of being left behind, and here we found Mr. Welch, the driver, and several passengers seated at the table negotiating coffee. Proceeding to follow their example, we entered into conversation with the former, who proved to be a little man so enveloped in a closely-drawn cap and high fur-collar, that nothing but two little beady, black eyes could be distinguished twinkling from beneath their numerous wrappings. He informed us that the two front seats on either side of him were reserved for our use, the accommodation at the back of the cart being taken up by four young ladies who were on their way to Harrismith. Bolting his hot coffee in a manner which made me wonder if he was half a salamander, he next began to fidget, then consulted his watch, and finally declared, in a gruff voice, that it was quite time to think of starting. To this we agreed readily enough, and our saddle-bags having been placed in safety at the bottom of

the cart, we proceeded at once to take our places. They were certainly the strangest and most uncomfortable seats imaginable, in which the occupiers were obliged to sit bolt upright, no space for ease or comfort being allowed, and very little sitting room forthcoming either. I could not but compare our positions to that of two statues stuck into a niche in a wall, stiff and motionless, and very uncomfortable both in reality and in appearance.

I say stiff and motionless; but this we did not long remain. The cart could boast of few springs, and the pace at which the six horses that drew it were sent along was not conducive to the easy run or motions of the vehicle. The joltings and bumpings were terrific, and we had not proceeded half a mile before I felt certain that both my arms would present that night a sorry spectacle of blows and bruises innumerable. "If this is to go on," quoth I, "what shall we be like at the end of four hundred miles, after three days' and four nights' continuous banging and jolting?" The prospect was neither a pleasant nor encouraging one, and I allowed it to slide from my thoughts, or rather endeavoured to banish it from my mind as often as it presented itself. On one thing I felt there was matter for congratulation, and that