

CHAPTER VI.

WE remained a week in Pretoria, during which time all our things had to be removed from the waggons that had brought us from D'Urban, and packed on two others which were to convey us to Rustenberg. This was the destination of our party, and it had been arranged that I was to be lodged and boarded at the farmhouse of the farm they were to work on, and there to remain for a year, during which time I was to receive instruction in the superintendence of South African farming, while I intended to employ my spare time in learning Dutch—or what is called Dutch here, for the Dutch talked by the Boers is such a mere patois, with Kaffir, Hottentot, and even English words, mixed up in it, that a real Dutchman, or what they call here a Hollander, neither understands it nor is understood by the Boers.

When I saw the waggons which were to convey us to Rustenberg my heart sank within me. One was a buck-waggon, the other a long tent-waggon. The buck-waggon was provided with a buck-sail or tarpaulin, the tent of the other was supposed to keep out the rain without any tarpaulin; but as one could see daylight through it, it was not likely to be of much avail. It was so packed that it was impossible for any one to sit

up in it, and only a space of about a foot and a half left at the back to allow of dressing, whilst the flap at the back was so ragged that it was easy to see through it, and impossible to fasten it tightly down. Then my tent, which I had lent to the party at their request during my stay in Pretoria, was lost by them during the loading-up process.

We started about the middle of the day; our oxen were a mixed lot—a very bad thing, for if oxen are to pull well, one must span them in their accustomed places and on their accustomed sides. Many oxen will never make either good fore or hind oxen. Our drivers were a half-cast of the name of William, and a Kaffir. William drove the tent-waggon. We were hardly out of Pretoria when, at a very small brook, we broke the “disselboom,” or pole, of one of the waggons, I forget which. This caused a long delay, for William had to go back to Pretoria to get a new one. In the meantime we remained outspanned, in a valley about two miles broad and about sixty long. It runs between the Magaliesberg and the Witt-waters Randt; and if any one wants to know the positions of these big hills, or ranges of hills, let them look at the map. The next day William brought the disselboom in a donkey-cart, and we started rather late in the afternoon. There are three high roads by which one can go from Pretoria to Rustenberg in a waggon. One goes over Mosilikats-nek, commonly called Silikats-nek, one over Commando-nek, and another over Oliphants-nek. We were to go over Silikats-nek, and hence took the turn which leads to it. The tent-waggon was leading, and was well ahead of the other; and the Kaffir driver of the other went along the main road

without troubling himself to look where the leading waggon was. Some of the men were with one, the rest with the other waggon. The blankets of the party were on one, the food all on the other. It was nearly dark by the time we outspanned, and this division of property made the evening and night agreeable for both divisions of our party.

The buck-waggon joined us the next morning, and we got as far as the foot of Silikats-nek by mid-day. The scenery here is fine. The waggon was outspanned under some trees in the middle of thick bush; above us rose the rugged sides of the Magaliesberg, now beginning to show what becomes its characteristic farther down the valley, namely, a precipice of some hundred feet high crowning its wooded sides. This formation is here called, not inappropriately, a kranz, or crown. Creepers hung in festoons round the bushes, turning them into bowers or impenetrable barriers, as the case might be.

I rambled about in this refreshing maze of verdure until dinner was ready, and then I determined to walk on over the nek in front of the waggon, and so not only enjoy the scenery undisturbed, but avoid the flogging of the oxen and accompanying yelling, which was sure to ensue as soon as the oxen took the hill. I inquired particularly of William as to what road I was to take, and he instructed me to keep to the left. William spoke a little English. Arrived at the top of the nek, where the road is, as it were, cut out from between two masses of rock, I looked down on a park-like scene, the well-made road, of a reddish colour, winding through clusters of trees, some of a good size, others small, and most of them festooned by graceful creepers. Leaving an apparently

old road to my right, I kept along this pretty road until I saw another one turn off to the right. Here I hesitated, but my instruction having been to keep to the left, I did so.

Presently a sudden thunder-storm caused me to take shelter under a thick bower of trees and creepers. This was, however, not thick enough to prevent my being wet through by the rain, which came down so quick and strong that it soon turned the road into a river. The storm passed, but no waggon was to be seen or heard, and I, although soaking wet, still wandered on, keeping in the grass by the side of the road. I was tempted on by the quiet beauty of the scene, and by a love of solitude, which had been denied to me for some time. Presently a small tax-cart, drawn by two weedy-looking ponies, came along the road towards me. In it were two men, one an oldish man with a big beard, the other a sleek but dirty-looking little fellow in black clothes, with a sanctimonious look about him. The former said "Good-evening!" as he passed, which made me stop and ask him if I were on the Rustenberg road. He asked where my waggon was; and I told him I had left it at Silikats-nek. "Then," he said, "I think you probably have passed the turn you should have taken, to the right. You can go to Rustenberg by this road, but it is a little out of your way. There is a farmhouse not far off, but I can hardly recommend you to go to it, for the people are not very nice." I thanked him, and he drove on. I now considered that as it was near sunset, if the waggons had taken the other road I could easily pick them up, as they would be outspanned for the night, and that I should be able to know whether they had done so by the fresh marks of wheels and oxen's feet, and hence I determined to walk a little

farther, until the farmhouse should come in sight. Commando-neck, with its high kranz towering above its brother hills, and showing sharp against a dark bank of cloud with edges gilt by the setting sun, and the queer piping of some pretty birds with crests that darted in and out amongst the trees, and whose nearer acquaintance I was anxious to make, were too much for me. Presently the small white farmhouse, built in a clearing, came in sight, and I stopped. The thunder was beginning to growl once more, and bright flashes of lightning to light up the dark mass of cloud behind the precipice of the nek, whilst the nearer hills and the trees were burnished by the setting sun.

I stood and looked, then turned, but only to stop and look again, although in front of me when I turned the sky looked unpleasantly lowering. Presently, however, a tremendous crash of thunder, accompanied by some very large drops, warned me to be moving. But I had waited too long; before many minutes the sky was as dark as night, the rain began to fall, though not very heavily, and when I reached the road I thought the waggon might have taken, I could only see it by the flashes of lightning. It was evident no waggon had passed there. It was now pitch dark, and I had some difficulty in finding the old road which I had remarked on my way out. By the flashes of lightning I again discovered that no waggon had been there. I now concluded that the waggon had had some mishap on the nek, and soon I heard voices, and came up to the party and to the tent-waggon, outspanned on the very top of the ascent. The buck-waggon with all the eatables in it had stuck half way up. The rain was coming down pretty sharp now. There was

nothing to eat or to drink but some rum, of which the men were partaking, and I, being still wet through, thought it best to follow their example before rolling myself up in my damp blankets, for the tent leaked, as I expected.

When I woke the next morning I found it still drizzling, but with a look in the sky as if the day would be fine. If our former conductor insisted on starting early, and ruled our party, William let them do as they liked, the result being that they did not get out of their blankets until long after the sun was up. The waggon on the hill was presently brought up, and we started late. We made but one short trek, which brought us to the Crocodile River, where we did a very foolish thing, namely, outspanned before crossing. It is better even with tired oxen to make them take their waggon through a river at the end of a trek, than try to make them do it just after they are inspanned and before they are warm. It was a very pretty place, with tangled brushwood and tallish trees scattered over the grass and forming a bower over the river in parts. The next morning broke beautifully, and I enjoyed the pretty view, and had early coffee from William's kettle long before the rest of the party thought of stirring, so that it was late in the morning before we spanned in. The ford, or drift, as it is here called, is a nasty one at this place. However, the tent-waggon, in which I was, went through all right. The buck-waggon stuck. There was much flogging and swearing, the end of which was that the disselboom broke, and the waggon remained in the middle of the stream. The oxen were then attached to it behind, it was pulled back to where it had started from, and the oxen turned loose whilst the dissel-

boom was being mended. This took some time, and when it was at last accomplished it was discovered that the oxen were lost amongst the thick bush. They were not forthcoming till late in the afternoon, when they took the waggon once more into the middle of the stream, where William and the Kaffir driver between them managed them so well that the disselboom was broken for the third time. It was near sunset, and a heavy storm was coming up. William, who said that getting into the water made him ill, and who hence contented himself by dancing about on the bank and shouting, determined to leave the waggon in the middle of the stream for the night, which, considering that in this country, as in many others, an hour suffices to turn a small stream into a roaring torrent, was a very prudent thing to do. No one objected to it, however, as far as I know, and so the waggon remained.

That evening, before going to sleep, I made sundry arrangements in anticipation of the storm that was evidently coming up. I put on my mackintosh, spread my waterproof sheet over me, placed a few articles, which I prized, under me, put a candle in my lantern, a box of matches in my pocket, rolled my blankets nicely round me, and then awaited what was to come.

I was wakened by a rattling crash of thunder, followed by a series of explosions which seemed as if they must rend something in pieces; the lightning was terrific, the wind howled round and battered the waggon as if it would overturn it, the rain poured down in torrents, and I could hear the rush of the rising river. I lit my lamp, with difficulty protecting my match under my mackintosh. The sight was absurd! The rain was coming into the waggon like a

shower-bath, and after forming lakes and pools all round me, was finding its way through the different articles down to and out of the bottom. Many of the men were sleeping under the waggon, and they presently began to become aware of this; then it was amusing to hear their surprise and disgust. The people in the tent, too, began to rouse up; altogether it was a lively night. The spectacle presented by our party the next morning was most comical, garments of all sorts being hung about on the bushes in a vain effort to dry them (for the day began and remained very showery), whilst their owners wandered about disconsolately. A new disselboom had to be got from a farmhouse at some distance, and it was rather late before the waggon was at last pulled out. The river had risen so much in the night that the water was nearly into it, and the buck-sail having been badly fastened down had blown off, and everything was drenched.

We made a short trek that evening, and outspanned just as the sun was setting. Shortly after, the grey-bearded man whom I had met in the cart near to Com-mando, rode up and asked us if he could do anything to help us, as his farm was close by. I asked him if he could get me a horse, or any other conveyance, to take me into Rustenberg. I felt sure that we should have some more mishaps before arriving there, and having been now three days without having been able to change my wet clothes, and obliged to sleep in damp blankets, I was getting tired of it. He said that he could not get me a horse, either to hire, or to buy, or to borrow; that the horse he rode was a borrowed one; and that it was very difficult to get horses, owing to the fact of the "horse disease" being so very bad behind the Magaliesberg—so bad that

very few horses ever "salted," i. e. recovered from the disease. He said, however, that he would do his best to get a trap to drive me over to Rustenberg, and that he would let me know in the morning.

True to his word, my new acquaintance sent a Kaffir boy early the following morning to show me the way to his farm, where I was to have breakfast, and to find a cart and horses to take me to Rustenberg. I had managed, by taking a little walk, to find a bower of trees suitable for a dressing-room; there I carried some water in a gutta percha pail from a neighbouring brook, and was able to make a little toilette; then putting a few things into my valise, I started with the Kaffir. About a quarter of an hour's walk along a bridle-path took me to a little three-roomed and thatched cottage, built on a grassy slope at the foot of a spur of the Magaliesberg, with luxuriant orchards of orange, lemon, fig, peach, apricot, and quince trees in front of it, whilst a few healthy-looking coffee bushes testified to the mildness of the climate.

Inside, the house was dark and comfortless. Its mistress, a kind-faced woman of about forty—bed-ridden with a painful and chronic disease—welcomed me kindly, and we attempted a conversation. She understood a little German, and my knowledge of German enabled me partly to understand her Dutch, so we scraped along. Her husband told me that he had had great difficulty in getting a trap for me. The one I was to have, belonged to the sanctimonious-looking little man I had seen driving my acquaintance. He was a Dopper, i. e. belonged to a very sanctified sect of the Dutch Church. The sleek little man had shuddered with holy horror at the idea of his

committing the impropriety of driving alone with any woman not related to him, neither would his conscience allow him to hire out his vehicle so as to facilitate any such improper action on the part of his neighbour; at last, however, his scruples had been overcome to the extent of consenting to drive me to Rustenberg, provided his neighbour (my new acquaintance) acted *chaperon* to him.

We three, therefore, set forth in the dewy morning through a park-like country. The little Dopper sat in front, and said never a word. Mr. Deckbird, on the contrary, was very talkative. So was I at first, the relief from the dreadful waggon being so great that I really felt in high spirits; but gradually it began to dawn on me that my companion was mad, and I confess that I was very glad that the little Dopper was in the front seat during that day's drive. As I say, I believe that man was mad, but he was very kind for all that; and although I was certainly afraid of him, I shall always remember his kindness with gratitude. We outspanned three times, once near a farmhouse, from whence Mr. Deckbird brought me a basketful of beautiful fruit; once at another farmhouse, where the women came out and insisted on my getting down, and where Mr. Deckbird introduced me in Dutch as his second wife, which, considering that I could not say anything to the contrary, owing to not knowing Dutch, although I understood what was said, and had to confine myself to shaking my head vigorously, was not pleasant. The good people all laughed at the joke, and gave me some very good coffee, and milk, and bread, and sat and looked at me. I, in return, looked at them, and once more observed to myself that many of

these Boers, if dressed up in antique fashion, would look like the models from which Rembrandt and others of the old masters painted.

Our third outspann was in sight of pretty, diminutive Rustenberg, and was in the open veldt, near, I think, a quarry. The cause of this outspann was original.

"We must outspann here," said Mr. Deckbird. "I must change my trousers before I go into Rustenberg; I know some people there." And retiring to the quarry in mufti, he reappeared in magnificence.

Before we reached the little village I was introduced to a habit common to the Transvaal, and which is not a pleasing feature in the life here.

"You will be sure to meet Mr. Lestrange," said my companion. "A charming man; you will be delighted with him. But you must take care; don't trust him."

This was the first time I heard this; I have heard it now *ad nauseam*. Mr. A. tells you to beware of Mr. B., he is very nice and all that, but to be on your guard; Mr. B. says he sees you know Mr. A., that it is all very well to be friends with him (friends!), but that you must not trust him too much; both Mr. A. and Mr. B. caution you in a friendly spirit against Mr. C., and Mr. C. in the same manner cautions you against them; and this sometimes even when the people who speak thus appear to be on the most intimate terms.

CHAPTER VII.

THE village of Rustenberg, from which one can see the last place inhabited by white people, and through whose streets numbers of Kaffirs and Kaffir women troop daily, dressed in skins, and adorned with barbaric ornaments, appeared to me to be a sort of *Ultima Thule*. It had some little shops as stores, and a little prison, and a little post-office, and three little churches—for even here the population is large enough for sects to exist; and it had also numerous rose-hedges bounding its grassy streets, and a missionary station, and a mill. Everything looked as if it were just winking between two sleeps. There was no fort then to suggest that poor little Rustenberg was destined in two years from that time to sustain a lengthened siege, the result of which is, as I write, uncertain. Amongst other things that Rustenberg possessed was a little inn, kept by a big, jolly Dutch woman, a Mrs. Brown, by virtue of her marriage with an Englishman. In this worthy couple's house I spent a month, and if I never see Mrs. Brown again, yet shall I always remember her as the cheeriest, heartiest, most kind-hearted, and sturdiest of housewives. Her heart was open to everybody, whether the body walked on two or four legs. Did she see a half-starved Kaffir dog look in at her kitchen door or crawl

trembling towards the dresser, it was not "Furtseck," or "Get out," that she would cry, but "What a shame to starve that poor thing so!" and a piece of bread or meat was sure to be offered. Did she see an ox being ill-treated, she would rush out and interfere. The horses in her stable, whether her own or her lodgers', were well cared for; her oxen sleek, and dire was her anger if she saw marks of heavy stripes on their glossy backs. Her cows all knew her well; and a bevy of dogs, amongst which was one little spaniel she had rescued from a cruel master, sat round her every morning and at every meal, for her to give to each its portion.

Then, as to her own species, she had brought up and portioned one orphan girl, had opened her doors to another, whose mother was dead and whose stepmother was unkind to her, and was talking about the necessity of taking a third because she was so unkindly treated. Her husband was a carpenter; he left her the principal management of the hotel, but was fond of, and kind to, all her various *protégés*; whilst his special favourite was a large tom cat, who always sat by his side at table, and whom Mrs. Brown averred he spoiled by feeding it whilst he was eating himself.

My little room was in a row of small chambers, built outside the hotel but quite close to it, for the accommodation of travellers. The hotel itself was simply a big Boer cottage. It was kept scrupulously clean, and I felt as if in a farmer's family—which in fact I was; it was an hotel in name, but really a farmhouse. There was a gentleman, the doctor of the place, who came there for his meals, and who, strange to say, had known some friends of mine in England intimately during his boyish days; but there

was seldom any stranger to break the monotony of the hotel routine. We had early coffee in our bedrooms, breakfast at eight, dinner at one, supper at six, and then a chat in the big sitting-room till we went to our bedrooms. Often visitors for Mrs. Brown would drop in of an evening, and then I heard Dutch talked. Mrs. Brown could not speak English at all perfectly, and was delighted to hear that I wanted to learn Dutch; she was, however, a dangerous preceptress, for she would teach me all sorts of phrases, assuring me that their signification was so and so, and then, upon my repeating them innocently, her ringing laugh and the wink she would give, showed me that she had been putting me up to say something very different from what I thought. Of course I soon made friends with her four-footed pets; and the little dog "Gip," which she had taken in compassion, got so fond of me that she made it a present to me. I remember one day we passed the afternoon in washing all the dogs in a big tub, and putting them to bed afterwards, rolled up in counterpanes like babies.

But with all Mrs. Brown's kindness and merriment the time at Rustenberg was very trying. On arriving there I soon found that what I had suspected for a long time was only too true. The scheme about the farm was a snare and a delusion; both the men who came out to work on it, and I, who had counted upon getting instruction there, had been utterly deceived. The party arrived some days after I did, and it was a week or so before the whole affair was quite shown up; but when it was so, two or three of the men, and Jimmy, went on to the farm, such as it was, the rest went as volunteers, and I had to shift for myself.

It was evident that I could do nothing in the farming line until I could understand and speak the Boer tongue; evident also that unless I were to earn money somehow, my small stock would rapidly dwindle to next to nothing, for living at an hotel, or boarding, in the Transvaal, is frightfully expensive.

In this dilemma I was helped by Mr. Richardson, the clergyman of Rustenberg, to whom I had brought a letter of introduction from the then rector of Pretoria. He asked me if I would go as a governess in a farmer's family; and on my answering in the affirmative, he said he would write to an English Africander farmer, who had two young daughters whom he was anxious to educate well. This farmer's name was Higgins, he told me, and his farm was about thirty-five miles from Rustenberg, on the southern slope of the Magaliesberg. From all who spoke of Mr. Higgins I heard a good account of himself and his family; and his house, I was told, was the finest farmhouse in the Transvaal. The post only goes out once a week from Rustenberg, and hence there was some delay before Mr. Higgins's reply came. It was to the effect that he would come in to fetch me as soon as he could. My engagement was that I was to be paid five pounds a month, with washing, and that I might take other pupils besides Mr. Higgins's two daughters at any terms I chose to make, while Mr. Higgins undertook to give any such pupils their dinner.

Several days passed, and I neither heard nor saw anything of Mr. Higgins. I used to pass my day in writing a story, without which amusement I should have collapsed under the combined heat, dulness, and anxiety of that time at Rustenberg; but it is wonderful how one can

forget oneself and one's own troubles in inventing the joys and woes of creatures of one's imagination! I used to sit up late writing, and so soon as day broke get up to write again. Little Gip was my constant companion now. He would not remain an instant away from me, and many a time his little paw scratching my dress would stop my pen, and call upon me to take the small beast up and give it the caress it wanted; for Gip never cared for being fed, but only for being coaxed and played with. He was a very delicate little dog, having had his constitution undermined, Mrs. Brown told me, by his former owner's cruelty, and was the victim of a species of St. Vitus's Dance, which at times made him go through the queerest contortions.

One beautiful evening, after a very hot day, I was standing at the door of my little room, enjoying the cool air, and admiring two fine grey horses that were cropping the grass in the street, watched by a mischievous-looking Kaffir boy of about nine. They were evidently fresh arrivals, for I had not seen them before. While I was standing thus and chatting to Mrs. Brown's *protégé*, a fine-looking man, dressed in a riding-suit, with high boots and a wide-a-wake hat, and with a sunburnt honest face, merry blue eyes, and a fine reddish-brown beard, sprang up the steps that led to my little door, and touching his hat said, "Mrs. Heckford, I think; I'm Higgins. I came while you were out," he went on; "those are my horses," pointing to the animals I had been admiring. We settled everything in five minutes. I told Mr. Higgins that he might inquire about me from Mr. Richardson, who would be able to tell him who I was, and what were my antecedents; but he said it was of no use, that he was quite

satisfied with what he had seen and heard of me, and only wanted to know when I could start. I said I should be ready to start early next morning ; and so my stay in little Rustenberg, and under the friendly roof of Mr. and Mrs. Brown, came to an end.

CHAPTER VIII.

EARLY the next morning I packed all the things I could into the tax-cart with a canvas hood to it which was to convey me to my new home, the farm "Surprise;" my heavy luggage I had to leave behind in Mrs. Brown's charge. Then after breakfast, and amidst much shaking of hands and many good wishes, I got into the cart, climbed on to the back seat—Mr. Higgins and the mischievous-looking Kaffir imp jumped up in front—little Gip was lifted up to me, and Mr. Higgins having said I might take him, I joyfully tucked him under my arm—and I was launched into my new life.

That asking whether I might take my dog seemed like the first plunge into a cold bath on a frosty morning; it was part of the part I had to play now, and I wondered how I should play it. I had always pitied governesses, and had also always objected to be an object of pity myself, even to myself. I never could see the use of self-commiseration, which to some seems to be so delectable. How I wondered what Mrs. Higgins would be like, what my pupils would be like, what the whole life would be like, and what sort of a governess I should make, as we bowled along the pretty road, over Oliphants-nek, and then along the southern side of the picturesque Magalies-

berg once more, into the long valley, up and down which I had looked on the day of our breaking the disselboom a little outside of Pretoria, but distant about sixty miles from the spot. Mr. Higgins in the meantime chatted away pleasantly. He was not an educated man, as he said himself, but he was evidently a very good fellow. He said his children were respectively eleven and nine, the name of the elder was Augusta, of the younger Sarah. He said they had had no teaching to speak of, but that their mother was very anxious they should have good schooling. Then he told me the names of the two greys that were drawing the cart were Sam and Dick, that they were brothers, and that he had another horse, a fine brown horse, called Free State, or, as a pet name, Baby; and then he talked about other horses he had had, and about a little dog his youngest daughter had. We outspanned twice, and twice stopped for Mr. Higgins to pay a little visit at farms we passed, and on each occasion he piled my lap and filled his pockets and handkerchief with peaches. At last, just as the sun was setting, and as we were turning round a spur of the hill all wooded with thorn-trees, Mr. Higgins said, "Now you'll see the house;" and in a few minutes I saw a good-sized red-brick house with a verandah, standing in the middle of the grassy slope, the wooded sides of the mountain and its high kranz rising behind it, an orchard of large fruit-trees and a fine stretch of cultivated land lying below it, and a background of mountain range and wooded slope running down into the long valley beneath it.

At the same moment Mr. Higgins said, "There are Mrs. Higgins and the children;" and I saw two tall black-robed figures and one small one (the family were in

mourning for the youngest child), and a little black and white dog, coming to meet the cart. It was alongside of them in a minute; and Mr. Higgins jumping out, little Sarah was lifted up and took the reins, whilst her dog Fido, who jumped up with her, went through a series of frantic antics ending by nearly tumbling out, all meant for demonstrations of joy at her master's return.

Let me introduce my employer's wife and children. Mrs. Higgins was a very tall, fine-looking woman, with a stately grace about her movements and manners; she talked bad grammar, and misplaced her "h's," but I felt at and from the first that I was in the presence of a lady. Augusta, a child of eleven, was as tall as most girls of fifteen, and looked almost grown up. Slight, with beautiful fine brown hair hanging over her shoulders and down to her waist, with soft almond-shaped blue eyes fringed by long dark lashes and over-arched by pencilled eyebrows, with a sweet but haughty little mouth, and with a white and rose-pink complexion, with long, slender, refined hands too, I thought I had rarely seen such a lovely girl. Everything about her breathed of refinement and indolence; you would have sworn she had been bred in some luxurious drawing-room, and waited on by obsequious servants.

Little Sarah was a contrast to her sister. Small for her age, and with a baby chubbiness still clinging to her; with mischief, wilfulness, and bright intelligence sparkling in her eyes and ringing in her voice; with an expression ever changing, with still unformed features, and with a shock of wild-looking hair hanging about her face, in some ways she reminded me of an unbroken Shetland pony, and in my mind I installed her as my pet.

We were soon at the front of the house—a house not after the Boer model, but built on Mr. Higgins's own plan. A raised "stoop," or flagged pathway in front, was covered by an iron verandah, and ended in two small rooms, one used as a visitors' room, the other as a lumber room. Three doors, two of them half glass, and two windows, opened on the stoop, besides the half-glass doors of the end rooms. The two half-glass doors led into rooms which were respectively my bedroom and the school-room. The centre door opened into a passage which led to the dining-room, a long room at the back, with the kitchen and a pantry at one side, and a big store-room at the other, the two former opening into it, the latter having to be entered by a side door outside. Two doors opened into the passage besides the dining-room door at the end of it, leading to side rooms, one the sleeping-room of the family, the other the drawing-room, from which a side door led to my bedroom. The school-room had no door but the one on the stoop. There was a fireplace in the drawing-room and kitchen only.

I was taken first into my bedroom, a very pleasant one, large and lofty, with a canvas ceiling under the rafters, papered walls, large strips of a bright coloured carpet on the floor, and a comfortable-looking French bed with white hangings, besides the other furniture of a bedroom in it. From a side window which opened like a double door there was a pretty view of part of the crest and of a wooded spur of the Magaliesberg, and then one looked over undulations in part studded with trees, and across the valley to the distant range of Witt-waters Randt.

There was a big old thorn-tree close by, under which were two little mounds, the graves of two little children

the Higginsons had lost; and at a little distance, just round the turn of a rose hedge, which here bound the cultivated land, a Kaffir house could be seen, where farm-servants lived; while between the tree and my window was a sort of dust-hole—a hollow place where refuse was thrown—the outside door of the kitchen being close to it. This place was half overgrown with stramonium, a big bush-like plant, with a coarse but not ugly flower. A little beaten path led from the kitchen door up to the cattle and sheep-kraal, an enclosure made of bushes of thorn on the side of the hill, and well sheltered from cold winds by the spur of the mountain. It was in all a very pretty look-out.

We had supper in the dining-room, and then we went to the drawing-room—a prettily-furnished apartment, with a fairly good piano, and a nice harmonium in it. I got the children to play on the former. They performed a duet from ear—for they did not know their notes—and kept exact time. Then I was asked to play. I had no music with me, the little I had, having been left behind with my heavy luggage, and I had not touched a piano for months, nor practised on one for years. They particularly wanted to hear me play a piece called “The Battle of Waterloo.” It was one of those pieces that sound more difficult than they are, and I read it easily enough. Then followed “Shells of Ocean” with variations, and “Home, Sweet Home,” and some others with variations, all arrangements new to me, but with which I did my best. It was very encouraging to hear that I gave great satisfaction—I was so dreadfully afraid I should not; but it was evident that the pleasure caused by my playing was genuine. Then an old copy of the

entire opera of "Norma" was brought out. The family did not much care for "Norma;" but, oh! how strange it did seem to listen to that well-known music, which carried one back to the gorgeous Italian opera, and recalled faces and voices—some of them passed away, some of them never probably to be seen or heard again—in that little drawing-room of the farmhouse on the Magaliesberg, with listeners around to whom the very names that were household words to me, were utterly unknown!

Life is a wonderful romance for many of us. It never struck me more forcibly that it had been so, and was still for me, than on that evening, when, having bid the family good-night, and having been kissed by the children with heartiness that showed they were prepared to like me, I stood for a while at the open window, with the dark outline of the mountains before my material eyes, but with visions of all that had passed since I had first listened to "Casta Diva," shutting out the present, and substituting for a short while scenes widely different. Before I went to sleep, however, the present reasserted itself in the shape of Gip. Gip was determined to sleep with his little head touching my shoulder. He had not been accustomed to do so, but I suppose he felt strange in the new house, and wanted a sense of protection. At any rate he was determined on this point. It was useless putting him off the bed; and he would patter on the floor, and scratch at the side of the bed, and make little springs, and whine in a manner that rendered sleep impossible, and I felt that sleep was necessary; so at last I took him up and let him have his own way, although I wondered in my mind what Mrs. Higgins would think of a dog sleeping on her nice white counterpane.

CHAPTER IX.

I Woke early the next morning, and took a survey of my new abode, and a stroll towards a wooded spur of the mountain, where I was told Mr. Higgins's father and mother and two young sisters lived, in a little cottage. The road, if road it could be called, passed along the top of some upper cultivated lands, on which a fine crop of Indian corn was standing, and which were shut in partly by a low stone wall, partly by a rose hedge at the top and sides; whilst an orchard of big orange, lemon, peach, almond, apricot, and fig-trees separated these, the upper lands, from the lower lands, which were much larger. At the bottom of the upper lands stood an old thatched house, used as a stable and outhouse, with two enormous syringa-trees overshadowing it. This was the oldest house in the Transvaal, and had been built by old Potchierter, who was afterwards made mincemeat of by the Kaffirs—in days not indeed far distant, but when elephants might be shot on the place where Mr. Higgins's house now stood, and when the cultivated valley beneath me was still covered with bush. A little farther on the road passed over a broad stone bulwark, which served to dam up a rivulet, which, gushing out of the precipitous crown of the mountain, found its way down its side through a

ravine overarched by trees, and carpeted with ferns, to a place at which it was compelled to form a big pond or dam.

From this dam as much or as little water as was requisite could be let out, by means of two wooden pipes, to water the lands, sluits (or what are here called furrows) having been made on purpose to convey it to different parts. From these furrows it had to be let on to the lands by opening them here and there with the spade, and so directing the various little streams that, without touching each other, they yet wet all the ground. This process is called "letting water," and is a very important one in this dry country, also a very troublesome and tedious one. The stream of water and the dam are the first things to be looked to in buying a farm out here, also their relative position to the ground to be cultivated. The dam has frequently to be made by the purchaser, then he must be careful to see that he can make one of sufficient size above what he means to be his lands.

From the dam the road took me over a little rise, on which some Kaffir houses were built, and then down towards the valley. It was a pretty walk. As I was returning I observed that the house had a loft, but no outbuildings of any kind. It is the same with all the best farmhouses in the Transvaal. They are comfortable in many ways, but they lack what we consider the commonest conveniences of a dwelling; and this applies to some even of the houses on the outskirts of Pretoria.

The children came to meet me near the dam, and we went in to breakfast. This was Friday, and Mr. Higgins

said I had better take it easy, and not begin lessons till Monday. My life now seemed settled for a time. I was to give the children what is called a good English education, and to teach them to play the piano, to draw, and to sing. Foreign languages are not much cared for in Africa.

Besides Augusta and Sarah, it was arranged that I was to have Mr. Higgins's two sisters—Alice, a girl of sixteen, and Ada, who was thirteen—as pupils. Their mother, a pleasant-looking old lady, came over from her cottage, and made the arrangement with me. Alice, a small, plump, and pretty girl, with something very sweet and yet determined in her look, and with activity stamped on her every movement, was engaged to be married to a young man who was half farmer and half trader. Ada, almost but not quite so tall as Augusta, was yet a tall girl for her age. She was slight and graceful, with hands as delicate as those of her niece. With a pretty impertinent nose, arched eyebrows, and eyes that could coax you, or calmly overlook you, according to the mood of their pretty owner, with a scornfully-turned upper lip, and a pouting under one—very rosy, and which could part into a delightful smile when she was pleased, or wanted to please—with a prettily disdainful languor in all her movements (except, by the way, when she went in for a romp, at which she excelled), Miss Ada Higgins looked like a little princess in disguise. Like her niece, she had masses of brown hair hanging from her well-set-on head, but her hair was even heavier in its flow than Augusta's.

I had to begin with the very simplest lessons. Even Alice had to learn to spell monosyllables, and be

taught the meaning of words which a child of eight in England would laugh at you for asking her to explain. They had no idea of the points of the compass, and had never heard of an article; but they were on the whole very good pupils, and only Sarah was wilful and idle at times, making up for this afterwards by the greatest attention and intelligent comprehension. It was a terrible trial to this small girl to be kept at lessons—she who, up to the time I came, had been allowed to run wild, and romp all day with the Kaffir children on the property. Many an excuse would she make to escape from the school-room, and forthwith perform a dance with Makee or Vittaree, or have a sparring-match with Fiervaree, the Kaffir imp who was supposed to look after Sam and Dick. Many a day would she pretend to be ill until she persuaded her mamma to let her off school, and then set to, with gleeful enjoyment, to help Sannee, the Kaffir girl who assisted in the housework, to clean the pots and pans; or turning up her sleeves, and tying her doll on behind her back as the Kaffir mothers tie their babies when at work, she would get a pailful of cow-dung and water, and proceed to smear the floor of the little lumber-room with it, pretending that it was her house. This smearing operation, unpleasant to English ears, is a necessary part of house-keeping here, where most of the floors are made of mud—or rather, of a mixture of ant-heap and water, stamped and levelled down, and where, without the aid of cow-dung, one would be stifled with dust and eaten alive by fleas.

The life was monotonous, but not unpleasant. Breakfast at between seven and eight, then lessons till one (dinner-time), then lessons again till about five, when

there was afternoon tea, then supper at about seven, a chat or a little music, and to bed. I worked my pupils pretty hard, but I tried to make them fond of me, and I think I succeeded. I certainly became fond of them, but little Sarah was always my pet, though I used to make her cry about four days out of the seven. There was a great difficulty in getting books, &c., for them, Pretoria, the nearest town, being forty miles distant, and it was often difficult to explain common things to them, owing to their experience being so very small. It is not easy to convey the idea of a bridge even, to a child who has never seen any nearer approach to it than the wall of a dam with a road over it, or a piece of plank stretched across a furrow; or to convey the idea of a steam-engine, or a steamboat, to one who has never seen anything of the sort; or to create an idea of a large town in one who looks upon a tiny village as a very imposing place. However, all things considered, the children got on well, and their parents were satisfied. Mr. Higgins let me ride "Free State" occasionally, on one occasion taking me to a small Kaffir kraal that was on his property, where I went into the neat huts and admired the cement-like mud floors.

The Kaffirs living in the kraal were what is called raw Kaffirs, the men indeed being in some sort clothed in old European garments, but the women wearing skins, and the children being naked. Mr. Higgins, as landlord, had the right to their services for taking the crops off the land, without paying them; and also of commanding their services at other times, for the wage of a shilling a day, at most, to the men, and of something much less to the boys. He also had the right to order the women to weed

or to scoffle, as it is called here, giving them a basket of peaches in return, during the fruit season, or without payment if there was no fruit. Besides these, he had several families of what are called Urlams, or civilized Kaffirs, living in mud houses on his property. These families dressed like Europeans, and had food like Europeans, even to the drinking of early coffee. They also went to school to the missionary station at Rustenberg periodically, and learned a little reading and singing of hymns. I don't think the school did them much good. I heard of one Kaffir woman saying, that when she came back from school and had been made a Christian, she would sit on a chair and eat with a knife and fork, and not let the raw Kaffirs eat with her, for that then she would be better than they.

Sannee, the girl who helped in the house, after her return from school refused to help her mistress, who was very ill at the time, saying that the missionary had told her that she must not work for some months, only study. Mr. Higgins was a very kind, indulgent master, partly from good nature, partly from indolence. He could get Kaffirs to come to squat on his farm when other farmers could not get any; but then they squatted and did little else, except when a sudden fancy to do a little work seized them.

I also rode to old Mr. Higgins's little cottage, a small structure stuck on a very picturesque spur of the mountain, with a big wild fig-tree in front of it. It was simply a mud and stone cabin, with the bare rafters and thatch showing overhead, its one long room divided into three by rude canvas partitions, without a trace of paper on

the walls, and with planks supported on the rafters doing duty as shelves. Outside, a straw house did duty as out-house, stable, cow-house, or anything else, a conical straw hut, with a hole at the top, was the kitchen, and another small straw structure close to the sheep kraal served for a fowl-house. There was an old piano, however, in this funny little building, and on it Alice and Ada practised their music. Old Mrs. Higgins kept no servant; she and Alice cleaned the house, cooked, washed in a washing machine, ironed, and made the dresses of the family. Ada, the princess, did nothing, not even mend her own clothes. How Alice managed to do the work she did and learn her lessons I don't know, but she did manage it.

There were no windows to this odd little building, only square holes in the wall, with movable frames stretched over with calico fitted to them, and there was no chimney. Old Mr. Higgins, who had been a great hunter when younger, was now a victim to chronic bronchitis of a very bad type, and how he managed to live in that cabin I do not know. He had not even the convenience of an armchair. He was a small grey-bearded man, much bent, but with a keen look about the eyes that spoke of his hunting days, and with a still easy seat in the saddle—a thorough old gentleman too in all his ways and thoughts, and with a fund of queerly assorted information. Often he has startled me by the things he knew of, having been all his life a great reader, and given to buying books in lots on sales.

Mrs. Higgins the younger did the principal part of her housework herself, and wonderful was the amount of

needlework, or rather machinework, she would get through in the day besides; yet she never seemed in a fuss or a hurry, never spoke loudly or crossly, but was always stately and ladylike, even with her dress turned up, her arms bared, and a broom in her hand. Augusta, like Ada, did nothing but look ornamental. This was what the two girls were meant for by nature, and they could not, I believe, be useful if they tried; but they didn't try. Little Sarah was already a famous housekeeper, but she scolded the servants well.

There was a wonderful old Hottentot maid, "Khrid," the second wife of a certain Jonas who squatted on the farm—a good sort of creature, who was very helpful in the house, and of whom Sarah was a special pet and persecutor. Sometimes she would spring on the woman's back, and tightening her legs round her waist, pinch her and beat her—in fun it is true, but pretty hard for all that—until the old woman would lie down and roll, to get her off.

In this family I was treated not like a governess, but like a welcome guest. The best of everything was at my disposal without my asking for or even thinking of having it. Whatever there was unavoidably rough in the life, Mrs. Higgins did her best to shelter me from. A stranger would, I am sure, have thought that I was there teaching the children as a friend, not as one paid for it. When poor little Gip got ill and became troublesomely dirty at night, Mrs. Higgins expostulated with me for having cleaned and washed up the things myself; and when my poor little dog died, she got a Kaffir to dig a grave for it, and in no way objected to lessons being interrupted to attend to it before its death, or to see it

buried afterwards. I was dreadfully sorry for the little dog that had been so fond of me when I was a stranger in the land, and it was true kindness to me to indulge me as she did. But it was not to me alone that she showed tact and delicacy of feeling. It was the same with even a raw Kaffir. The true politeness of quick sympathy and unselfishness, was always there, for the benefit of any one coming within her sphere of influence.

It must be remembered that all this time the Boer scare was going on. Horrible tales used to be told at meal-times and in the evening as to what the Boers meant to do to the English, or any of the Africanders who held with the English; and the Higginses were very loyal. There was even talk of its being as well for the family to go into the Free State. This being the case, I began to feel unhappy about Jimmy, who was away on a farm with three or four other English. This farm was about thirty miles from Surprise, and I had no horse or any other means of conveyance to take me to him. I therefore began to be very anxious to buy a horse, but it was not easy to get one.

The scare had for a time subsided, when one day, while I was in the schoolroom, one of the children cried out, "Oh! there is Uncle Walter," and of course they all wanted to go out to see Uncle Walter—an unmarried uncle who, with a bachelor brother, kept a store at Marico. I remained in the schoolroom. Presently Mr. Higgins called me, and said he wanted me to meet his brother. I went out, and saw a fine-looking man standing by the side of a handsome dun horse, and with another horse standing close to him with a rein in its mouth for leading it by.

"That's a nice little horse," said Mr. Higgins; "what do you think of it?"

"It does not look bad," I said, not much prepossessed by the lean animal with a draggly tail, that I was looking down on from the stoop.

"Do you think it would suit you?" he asked.

I looked closer at it then. It was a good horse at all points, with a little head, taper neck, and fine ears, which spoke of good blood, better than generally seen. It had been roughly treated, evidently, not over well fed, and ridden hard, and was very dirty, but that time would cure. It was a light-red roan—what is here called a red grey—with white stockings, a white streak down its face, and chestnut mane and tail. The eyes were full, but a little mischievous-looking, in spite of the otherwise very mild appearance of the creature.

"I think it might," I replied, "if the price be not high."

"Would you give twenty pounds?" asked Mr. Higgins.

"Yes, but not more," I answered.

He inquired of his brother whether the horse, which was his, and which he had had for some time, was sound and fit for a lady to ride. He said it was so; and the bargain being struck, my new acquisition, "Eclipse," the grandson of a famous old colony racer, and himself the winner of two races in the colony, was turned loose to graze, whilst Walter Higgins rode off on his handsome dun—a horse whom everybody said was thoroughly "salted," and for whom he had refused sixty pounds, but who died a few days after, it was said from "horse sickness," but I rather fancy from the bots.

Not long after, a neighbour came in. "Have you bought that red-grey horse?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Are you a very good horsewoman?"

"No."

"Then take care; he'll break your neck. Why, he bucked Walter Higgins off him—and Arthur Sturton—and he nearly threw me, only I jumped off. I never saw a horse buck so cleverly as he does."

This was pleasant, the more so as before a day was over I heard further confirmation of it. However, the thing was done, and I had to make the best of it.

Mr. Higgins allowed me forage for my animal, and I groomed him, fed him, and bedded him up myself. No hand but mine touched him. He was stabled in the stable with Dick, Sam, and Freestate, and I now saw how the Kaffir boys who had charge of these horses neglected them. Anticipating buying a horse, I had brought all the articles necessary for one with me, and Eclipse soon showed his change of owners. At first he was troublesome to groom, but he soon got accustomed to it and fond of me, nor, though a very lively horse, did he ever attempt more than a little playful jump with me; but his character was bad. The Dutch farmers seeing me ride him would exclaim; and even men who had ridden him could never account for the change in him, although it was easily enough accounted for.

Eclipse knew as well as most horses how to distinguish between a master who treated him well and never punished him except when he deserved it, and one who neglected him and spurred him to make him show off. I certainly felt much happier after getting my horse,

although I had to be up early to groom him, and had trouble about his bedding; and although I had no time to ride much—for it is not good during the summer months here to have a horse out of the stable early in the morning or late in the evening—and I was occupied during the day on weekdays. Still many a ride I had, generally with one of the children with me on Dick, and I felt now that if there were danger I could get hold of Jimmy.

Some little time after I got Eclipse—about the beginning of March—it was decided that we should all go over to visit two married brothers of Mr. Higgins (James and John), who had a farm and kept a store behind the Witt-waters Randt, about twelve miles from Surprise. We started early, Mr. and Mrs. Higgins and little Sarah in the cart, Alice on a pony borrowed from her brother-in-law, Arthur Sturton, and Augusta on Free-state. I, of course, rode Eclipse. In parts the road was pretty, particularly at a point not far from our destination, where we saw several monkeys sitting on a low kranz above us. Here we had to ford a river three times, owing to its rapid turns. We passed several farm-houses, and at last came to the one we were to stop at.

It was not so nicely arranged a house as Surprise, being, in fact, two houses tacked together. There were several little children playing about, and the hosts were very hospitable and kind to me. Each of the wives had a piano, on which I played in the evening, and I slept on a comfortable bed made up on the sofa in one of the sitting-rooms. Here, too, the mistresses had to do almost all the housework, the Kaffir servants being either too lazy or too stupid.

The Boer scare now set in again. Plans used to be discussed as to what was to be done in case of an attack, and at last even Mr. Higgins, who generally took things quietly, began to look serious, and to check me when I laughed at the idea of danger—for I thought there was too much talk for anything to come of it. One day a neighbour rode up to say that there was a Kaffir commando marching on Pretoria, that a son of Cetewayo had ridden through the valley and over the mountain to Rustenberg the night before—that he had told the farmers from whom he had commanded a horse and money, that a great outbreak of the Kaffirs was close at hand, and that all who did not wish to be murdered had best go into lagers. The veldt-cornet had ridden late at night to warn some people in his district; all was authenticated beautifully. Surprise was alarmed: no shame for it, for Pretoria trembled in its shoes at the same rumour. I can't say that I felt frightened, but then it is difficult for any one accustomed to profound peace, and a civilized country, to bring his mind to realize the possibility of a sudden outbreak of savages. The Higginses knew what it was from practical experience, old Mrs. Higgins having had to fly with a child under one arm, and a money-box under the other, alongside of her husband, who was laden with another child and the powder-bag. My employer had seen his parents' property swept away more than once in the old colony by Kaffirs, and hence it is no wonder that he felt more concern than I.

It was the most absurd hoax that ever was practised, and the Kaffir who personated Cetewayo's son, and ordered the terrified Boers to give him horses and money must have had a laugh at the success of his piece of fun. Their

having obeyed the dictates of a half tipsy Kaffir was a sore point with the Boers afterwards, and this absurd escapade did not serve to raise my opinion of their courage. But hardly had this blown over, than the Boer scare broke out again. Mr. Higgins wanted to take loads down to Natal, and ride transport up—transport was very high then—but waited and waited for the *Beenkommste*, which was then sitting, to break up. Terrible threats were current as to what was to happen to the dwellers on outstanding farms, if the demands of the committee were not listened to, still worse was it to go with us if the English Government attempted to lay hands on the leaders.

Time went by, and at last Mr. Higgins said he could wait no longer, or that he should have too cold weather on his return journey for the oxen; so he loaded a big pistol for his wife, and hung it up in the hall, told her she must do the best she could in case of any disturbance, and on a fine April morning he started off the waggons loaded with wool-bags, and prepared to follow them on horse-back. Great had been the preparations for starting the waggons, biscuits having to be baked for the road and other provisions provided. A Mr. King, a small farmer and a great friend of Mr. Higgins, went with the waggons, he came to breakfast before he started, and a starved-looking rough black and white terrier with big beseeching eyes all covered by his long hair came with him. The dog did not belong to him, but was loafing about, and came to Surprise for something to do, I suppose. We all turned out to see the waggons start. The one with a splendid span of eighteen black oxen in it—their sleek skins shining in the sun, and with their driver, a Kaffir called Saul, alongside, looking proud of his beasts, and

glad of the change—made a great impression on me, and I said to myself, “I will never go down to the coast till I can go with such a span as that.” Soon after Mr. Higgins saddled up, and bidding us good-bye, took a short cut after the waggons. We all felt very flat as the last flick of Freestate’s tail was seen through the long grass; how I did envy Mr. Higgins to be sure, but we soon settled down, and I began to like being alone with Mrs. Higgins and the children. The rough black and white dog stayed behind, and in process of time came to be my dog, and developed into a very pretty playful little animal, up to any amount of fun, and a good watch-dog, but with a terror of being lost or stolen from me. He would often go off visiting on his own account, but his dread of being taken hold of by any one strange, and the way he would struggle and bite, were amusing; a terrible dog for fighting too was this little animal, whom we christened “Rough.”

Winter was now beginning, and though I regretted the summer in some ways, I was glad it was gone; for the dreaded “horse-sickness” goes with it. It is strange that no one has ever found out exactly what the “horse-sickness” is; the only thing certain about it is that horses that eat the grass after the sun is set, or before the dew is off, are more liable to it than others. Opinions vary as to whether mere exposure to the night air affects horses in the matter. It is averred that horses that have once had the “horse-sickness” rarely have it again, and if they do get it, have it very mildly; one is told many other things regarding this curious disease, but authorities disagree. I believe that numbers of horses are said to die of “horse-sickness” when in reality they die of

bots and of neglect. In this country, where horses are so seldom kept decently clean, the bots make terrible ravages amongst them. I have frequently been told, and that, too, by people who ought to have known better, that it was impossible to clean the bot-eggs off horses that were roughing it in the veldt, and it stands to reason that if the eggs are left on the animals for them to lick off, they will soon be full of bots. I speak now of horses that are ridden. In the case of a herd of mares and colts, it would of course be impossible to prevent harm, grooming in such cases being out of the question.

There are two species of disease called "horse-sickness," one of them is also called "Dick-kop," or "thick-head" sickness. They both come on very suddenly. In the case of simple "horse-sickness," the horse perhaps appears well, and eats and works well, when suddenly it begins to pant and blow, gives a short hacking cough, then a discharge comes from the nose, and the animal seems choked with mucus which it cannot expel. Its distress is very great, and in the majority of cases, death supervenes quickly. In the case of the "thick-head" variety, the head begins to swell first in those hollows over the eyes, which, probably, even my unhorsy readers will have remarked, and soon the entire head is enormously swollen, and the animal appears to die from suffocation. In both cases there is high fever. No satisfactory cure for either disease has yet been discovered, but even were a cure known, I doubt whether it would be of much avail in the majority of cases, for it would have to be accompanied by more "sick-nursing" than is generally practicable whether with man or beast in

A Lady Trader in the Transvaal. 89

this rough country. The great thing, therefore, is, if possible, to prevent a horse from getting the disease, and I was as careful about Eclipse not being exposed to the early or late air as a mother with a delicate baby.

CHAPTER X.

NOT long after Mr. Higgins's departure we were all startled one day by Arthur Sturton's riding up from his farm in the valley to tell us that a neighbouring farmer—an English Africander—had just come back from Pretoria, and had brought the news that Sir Bartle Frere had met the Committee of the Boers—that there had been much angry discussion, and that at last the Boers had leapt from their seats, overturning the chairs and crying, "War! war! We give you notice that we will march on Pretoria to-morrow." He had told Arthur Sturton that every waggon was being pressed into Government service, and that his own had been seized; so that but for a chance he should have had to walk all the way from Pretoria, whither he had gone with a load. Arthur Sturton said that he had sent a Kaffir to his father's farm (which is half-way between Surprise and Pretoria), there to wait for further intelligence; Moyplas, as it is called, being on the high-road, and any one coming from Pretoria being likely to call there. He said that when the Kaffir returned he would send news to us.

Mrs. Higgins and I held a council of war on the verandah that afternoon, and it was resolved that if the

Boers came to Surprise, we would receive them civilly, but when we saw them coming, we would put the girls into the bedroom and lock it. The invaders were to be allowed to take what they liked, but if they wanted to enter that room we would first expostulate, saying we had put the girls in there to prevent their being more frightened than necessary, and that if the men insisted on forcing an entrance, we would use our pistols and knives; also that we would do the same if they attempted any liberties with either of us. Mrs. Higgins had told me that many of the Boers around had said that they would not kill the women of their enemies; but that they would strip them, and make laughing-stocks of them.

Two days passed, and we heard nothing; the third morning, very early, I was half awake, when I heard what sounded like a very distant cannon-shot. I thought sleepily, "I suppose that is at Pretoria," but roused up when I heard a second and similar sound. I meant to lie awake, but sleepiness overcame me, and I was just dropping off, when I heard a third sound of the same character, after which I went fast asleep. In the morning, however, I told what I fancied at breakfast, and proposed that in the afternoon I should ride down to the valley in search of news. When Alice heard that I was going, she said she would go too. We did get news of rather a surprising character, to the effect that all the inventive young farmer had narrated was pure fiction. My heavy guns have been a laugh against me ever since!

We really felt quite dull after the Boer excitement was over; of the story we had heard, so much alone was

true that the Beeinkommste had broken up after Sir Bartle Frere met the Committee. It seemed to me quite stupid to settle down to common-place life again, after talking of pistols and knives; and I know the children had the same feeling in a different way. They quite enjoyed the Boer scare, and once Ada dressed herself in my mackintosh, and girding on my belt with knife and pistol, blackening her eyebrows, and putting on a cork moustache, she gave the Kaffirs in the kitchen a fine start. Mrs. Higgins and I were still sitting at the tea-table talking after tea, when we heard a violent knocking at the back door of the kitchen; Sannee, the maid, opened it rather reluctantly, being dreadfully afraid of the Boers, when a gruff voice exclaimed,—

“Var is Bob Higgins?” and presented a pistol in her face.

Sannee and two little Kaffir children uttered a succession of unearthly yells, and rushed into the dining-room, where they clung to Mrs. Higgins’s dress, hiding their faces, whilst the Boer dashed past, pistol in hand, to search the rooms. We had a good laugh, and Ada was delighted at the success of her scheme.

Winter now came on in earnest, and soon great grass fires were to be seen every evening on the opposite randt. One day Mrs. Higgins came into the school-room and said she smelt that there was a fire coming our way across the Magaliesberg, and that she had sent some Kaffirs to see. It did not, however, come close, greatly to my relief.

In the beginning of June, Mr. Higgins came home. For days before, the children, Mrs. Higgins, and the Kaffirs had been on the look-out for him, and at last a

Kaffir ran in just as we finished dinner, to say that the "boss" was coming. We all went quickly out on the stoop, and saw a mounted Kaffir-boy with a led horse, and Mr. Higgins with another led horse, coming up the short way from the valley. Of course there was great excitement. The new horses were two handsome young black stallions (brothers), for whom Mr. Higgins had exchanged a farm in the Bush-veldt, and a bay pony for old Mr. Higgins. Freestate had come, too, but so changed that none of us knew him at first. Eclipse was grazing close by as Mr. Higgins dismounted, and I remember his first remark to me: "Eclipse is looking well. I see you *have* kept him clear of bot's eggs;" for Mr. Higgins had asserted his conviction that I should not do so. I had already remarked that his horses were thickly covered with them.

I had forgotten to say that during Mr. Higgins' absence, Mrs. Higgins had kindly sent in a waggon to Rustenberg for my heavy luggage, and had allowed it also to call at the farm where Jimmy was, to bring him over to Surprise, with whatever luggage he had—the whole affair of the farm, &c., having come to complete squash—and Arthur Sturton having offered to take him on his farm, where he could learn and make himself useful, in return for his board and lodging.

A few days after Mr. Higgins's arrival, he rode to Pretoria, and on his return rather late in the evening, he said he did not know what was the matter with Freestate; he had seemed so tired on the road. Mrs. Higgins and I were alone when he came in; all the girls and Harriet Sturton, who was paying them a visit, having gone off on horseback and in the cart with Sam and

Dick to Fahl-plas, the farm of James and John Higgins. They were escorted by Alfred Sturton and Alice's intended. Alfred was a younger brother of Arthur. The occasion of this festivity was little Sarah's birthday, and there had been great excitement among the young people, for they were to have a dance.

The next day Freestate seemed very ill, standing about listlessly and eating but little, and Mr. Higgins said he ought to have a bran mash, but the Kaffir never gave it to him. At about two o'clock we were startled by seeing the cart with Ada and Alfred in it, and Alice and Harriet on horseback. I shall never forget the sharp ring of terror in Mrs. Higgins's voice as she greeted them with, "Where are my children?" Little Sarah, the told us, was very ill with sore throat—diphtheria had been fatal in the family—and Augusta was ill too. It was decided to start at once for Fahl-plas, Mr. and Mrs. Higgins in the cart, and I riding, for Mrs. Higgins said she would like me to go to see the children. The two greys did their return journey well. We got in before dark. Little Sarah was very ill with high fever, and her throat dreadfully inflamed—she was almost delirious at times. Augusta had simply a bad cold.

Then, for the first time, did I see the misery of illness in this country. The two houses at Fahl-plas could muster but eight rooms together, counting the kitchens. Into these eight rooms, or rather six rooms, had to be stowed four men, five babies, or children little more than babies, two little girls, and four women—fifteen people! Mrs. Higgins, Augusta, Sarah and I were all in one small room, and its one window had to be kept shut! Its door opened into the dining-room where two of the men slept

and it had no chimney to admit air. Then the impossibility of keeping the small children quiet! I remember two little boys inventing a dreadful species of drum made out of an old biscuit tin, which could be heard for miles off, and when it was taken away, their shrieks were worse than the drum itself.

Augusta was well enough in a day to be driven over to Surprise; the rest of us stayed with little Sarah. Her throat ulcerated and was dreadfully bad, but finally the ulcers broke, and she began to mend. Before this, however, Mrs. Higgins expressed a wish that I should return to Surprise, to be with Augusta and Harriet, and great was their astonishment at my appearance alone just as it got dark one evening. Poor Freestate was dead—killed by the bots. I had heard of many things which were suppose to kill bots—one excellent remedy, I had been told, was thick sugar-and-water—also strong coffee. I determined now to make the experiment, and getting a live bot from the stomach of the poor horse, (the creatures had eaten through the stomach in places), I put it into all sorts of baths. Strong solution of tartar emetic—so strong as to be an impossible dose for a horse—alone seemed to make the objectionable little worm feel ill; *that* nearly killed him, and would have killed him altogether, only that just as he was at his last gulp I put him as an experiment into a bath of strong coffee, when he instantly came to and looked quite lively. Sugar, too, he seemed rather to like; and at last I gave my experiments up, having tried all the medicines in my medicine-chest, besides other simples, such as coffee.

Harriet Sturton was a very pleasant addition to our party, and except for my anxiety about little Sarah, I

should have quite enjoyed this time, but I now felt how fond of the child, and still more of her mother, I had grown. I could have cried for joy the day she was brought home.

Mr. Higgins now prepared to leave home for the Bushveldt, and here I must explain what the bushveldt is.

Lying towards the northern borders of the Transvaal are large tracts of land, unfitted for cultivation except in parts, owing to there not being much water, and hence given over to nature, and such trees as nature causes to grow there. There are not many parts of this bushveldt where the trees are fine, owing to the constantly-recurring bush-fires; but the bushveldt of Zoutpansberg, which is called the Wood-bush, produces fine timber, and steam saw-mills have been established there lately. Along that part of the Crocodile River which runs through the bushveldt there are some large trees, and I believe in the bushveldt, bordering the Swazee country, trees of good size are also plentiful. The bushveldt generally has few Boer houses in it, although it is divided into farms, whose proprietors live elsewhere in summer, leaving their possessions there either tenantless or tenanted only by Kaffirs. In winter, however, they trek there with their flocks and herds, also generally with their families, and then the bushveldt is full of waggons and tents. The Boers greatly enjoy this annual picnic; the men hunting, the women and children sitting and playing about under the trees, and enjoying the verdure, which, to those who live on what is called the high or Urveldt, a barren but healthy tract of the Transvaal, is a luxury. The bushveldt is fatal to horses during the summer, but is safe for them in winter; and the grass there remaining, as a rule,

green under the bushes all through the winter, the oxen and sheep have nice feeding, whereas in the other parts of the Transvaal the grass is either long, hard, and dry, or burnt off by the grass-fires. There are, however, great drawbacks to going every year to the bush-veldt. Poisonous herbs grow there, one of which is fatal to sheep, the other to oxen. It is easy to lose animals in the thick bush, and when lost they are liable to fall a prey to wild beasts. It is also difficult to keep the herds of different owners separate, and hence the disease called "lung-sick" (which is contagious amongst cattle) often does much damage; whilst a long pod which grows on one sort of thorn-tree has a poisonous effect on cattle that eat it, lowering their condition, and sometimes even killing them. Many also of the farmers live at a great distance from the bush-veldt, and the long journey tells against their animals. On the other hand, if cattle and sheep are to be kept in the higher parts of the Transvaal in the winter, good shelter for them must be erected, and hay and other food laid by for them. This would necessitate outlay and trouble, both things that a Boer detests. He and his wife are so accustomed to the detestable jolting and discomfort of a waggon that they think nothing of the long journey; so much accustomed to the higgledy-piggledy arrangements in their cabins, or small houses, that a tent is far preferable—and indeed a tent can be most comfortable. But the idea of cutting grass for winter fodder, or growing turnips or mangel-wurzel! They would stand and laugh a broad he-haw at such an idea in most cases, only a few being sufficiently enlightened to confess it might be well to carry it out. Their plan is to put a match in the grass when it is dry, to burn it and

get rid of it, so that the fresh grass may sprout, and trek to the bush-veldt. Grass-fires are very dangerous. Waggon, stock, and dwelling-houses are sometimes destroyed by them; but then it is only sometimes, so what does it matter? The result of this trekking to the bush-veldt is, that for about six months in the year milk cannot be got except in the bush-veldt; and the same may be said of butter, for the Boers make butter so badly that it will not keep. They do not, besides, make much, and cheese they never make. In Pretoria milk sells readily at a shilling a bottle in the winter, and butter sometimes runs up to four, or even five shillings a pound; three shillings is considered a moderate price.

Even at the best of times, in this great pasture country (for, as a whole, the Transvaal is that) the cows give very little milk. I have seen over twenty cows give about two buckets when they were in full milk! It is usually said that the cows of this country are bad milkers, and only good for breeding oxen; but it strikes me that even good cows, treated as they are here, would soon become bad. Exposed constantly to the weather, whatever it may be, every night driven into an open kraal, sometimes knee-deep in mud, with their calves left close to them all night, only kept from sucking by a barrier of thorn bushes, or a few poles, or at best a stone wall, by which a division is made in the big kraal; sometimes trying all night to break through to them; never given any food but grass—what can be expected from them? Boers, too, will assure you that no cow will give milk unless her calf is first allowed to suck, and that if the calf dies she will run dry. Like many other things in this country, a little good management would set it to rights.

Why Mr. Higgins sent his cattle to the bush-veldt I really don't know, for he said himself the journey was bad for them, and that they could get as good eating in the kloofs (or ravines) on his property as they could anywhere, instancing the fact that the cattle belonging to his kraal-Kaffirs, that grazed about the mountains in the winter, looked better than his did when they returned from the bush-veldt. However, he had sent them under the care of the Nell family as soon as his waggons came up from Natal, leaving only one span of oxen to do the farm work, and one fine ox that was too sick to walk, at Surprise, and now he prepared to follow them. His father and mother had gone before, leaving Alice and Ada at Surprise, and we once more settled down in our quiet life.

Before going farther, allow me to introduce the Nell family. It consisted of a hulking black-bearded father; of a stout garrulous mother, who had unlimited powers of invention, and who could speak a little English; then followed two big sons, and a whole bevy of little boys and girls, ending with an infant in arms. Krishian (I spell as pronounced—I believe his name is Christian) was a young gentleman who wished to be elegant. Whenever he got any money by working—an occupation he objected to—he spent it in making himself lovely in velvet coats, &c., occasionally investing in that most perilous possession in the Transvaal, a horse, but when he had one he took no care of it. As may be imagined, the ups and downs of this young man were frequent. The second son, Dahl—I don't know what his real name was, Dahl being, I heard, his mother's abbreviation of darling—was a big hulking fellow with a baby's face, and the most