

although all along the southern side of the Magaliesberg the mountain grazing is pretty safe ; besides, I heard from several people that Eclipse had marks about him of being surely salted, and I began to suspect that I had got him cheap on account of his viciousness, although, as I said before, he was gentle enough with me.

CHAPTER XVI.

SHORTLY before Christmas the Boer scare broke out again, and Mr. Higgins and Arthur Sturton determined to go into Pretoria. The morning the waggon left Surprise, Mr. Higgins rode up to my cabin from the high road. "Good-bye!" he said, shaking hands as he stood by his handsome black horse Wellington. "Don't be frightened; no one will hurt you." I laughed, and thought it was a very needless piece of advice. I was not at all frightened. A day or two after, Jimmy had occasion to go to the valley; he came back full of the news he had heard from William Sturton and Mr. King. The Boers had declared war; they were going to break out on the outstanding farms, and every Englishman, woman, and child was to be killed. There were all sorts of circumstantial proof of the truth of this piece of news, which interested me too little for me to remember it. However, Jimmy and Barrie seemed impressed. A waggon was going up from the Sturtons to Pretoria, and I told them if they liked they might go up with it. However, they said they would stay; but they were not altogether comfortable. I think it was two days after, while I was busy about the stellassees, I heard an exclamation from both of them as they were working at a little distance from me at the small dam and bridge.

“Look there! What’s that?” And then Jimmy cried out, “There is a commando riding to burn Surprise” (an old threat amongst our Boer neighbours).

“Nonsense,” said I.

“But you should go and look,” persisted Jimmy. “Barrie says too that he can see a party of horsemen riding over the veldt to Surprise; they must be going to burn it.”

Barrie thereupon expressed his belief that such was really the case. Now in my heart I believed Barrie to be a deserter, so I thought he might know something about what mounted men looked like, and I said, “You’re sure they’re not oxen, Barrie?” Barrie was sure they were not; so I went to look—but they *were* oxen nevertheless.

I think it was the next day that a young man, a brother of Alice’s future husband, rode over from Fahlbank, to ask me to ride back with him to see John Higgins’s baby, who was ill. Giving Barrie many instructions as to the proper carrying out of the bridge he was making, we started so soon as the sun began to decline a little. We had to call at Mr. King’s, in the valley, for some medicine which he had, and which I had run out of; and as we saw that a storm was brewing we pushed along briskly, but it caught us just as we touched the top of the randt. How it did come down! In a few minutes the horses could with difficulty keep their feet in many places where the nature of the soil rendered it slippery. I had forgotten my waterproof, and was soon wet through, and before long it was pitch dark. Fortunately my companion knew the country well, and by a *détour* saved crossing the river at the deepest drift. It does not sound pleasant, does it?

but I was getting sick of the monotony of Grünfontein, and the slowness with which the work seemed to progress, my feeling of weariness being increased by the fever, which kept hanging on, and I enjoyed it. The baby was not very ill after all. I slept in the room with the child, its mamma, and its little sisters, and the next day rode back alone to Grünfontein. The bridge was finished, and Barrie was triumphant at its fine appearance.

"If it is as good under as it is above, Barrie," said I, "it will do nicely." I rather doubted the fact in my heart.

"You may trust to me, missus," said Barrie. But the trust would have been misplaced had I done so, for a few days after Mr. Higgins's return, Wellington put his foot right through the bridge, and it had all to be pulled to pieces, and made again under my own inspection.

The new year came, and with it talk of the Higginses going on a visit to the old colony, where Mrs. Higgins's relations still live. The weather was intensely hot, and there was a great deal of sickness about. The fever was steadily taking hold of me, and Jimmy was laid up with a slight attack; but everything went on much as usual, until one day we learned, through the paper that used to come to Surprise, that Pretorius (called Pretors) had been arrested at Potchefstrom. The next day Mr. Higgins started on horseback for Marico, where he had some business; he was to take Fahl-plas *en route*. Before leaving, he rode over to ask me to go to Surprise, as Augusta was ailing, and her mother felt anxious about her. I found the child not only ailing, but very seriously ill. Mrs. Higgins and I sat up all night with her. The next day we were surprised at Mr. Higgins's return. This time the Boers had fairly broken out, he told us. He had met

numbers the day before, riding through the pouring rain to Potchefstrom, armed. He had spoken to many of them. They all said one thing. Pretorius must be given up to them, or they would fight—aye, if they had to die for it. They would rather die than leave their leader under English arrest. Mr. Higgins said he felt sure they were in earnest now. He would like to put Mrs. Higgins and the children into the waggon and trek quickly into the Free State; he had turned back on purpose. They would have gone, had it not been that pretty Augusta lay dangerously ill; such being the case, they had perforce to stay. That there was a general ferment this time among the Boers was certain. There was great saddling in haste to ride to Potchefstrom, although when those who saddled in haste got to Potchefstrom they began to repent at leisure. Many Boers who had not horses talked about the desirability of having them, and some suggested borrowing them from those who had, but did not, on this occasion, use them. The next day Augusta was better, and I returned to Grünfontein in the morning, but rode over again to Surprise early in the afternoon. I had not been there long before a sound something like a cannon-shot was heard. Of course everybody cried out "What's that?" and everybody but myself said it was a cannon-shot. We heard it three or four times. Mr. Higgins stood on the stoop with a field-glass in his hand. We were in quite a state of excitement, still I did not believe that it was a cannon-shot. Presently a Kaffir appeared, who told us all about it, he knew even where the shots came from. Pretorius was being taken under heavy escort to Pretoria. The Boers had attacked—the fighting was sharp. He could not tell the result, but he knew

the place of the battle exactly; as to how he knew it, he was a little hazy. Mr. Higgins brought Wellington up from the stable, and put him into the store for the night, fearful that under these exciting circumstances some enterprising Boer might steal him, or as they say here "jump" him at night. The same idea struck me with regard to Eclipse. I asked if I might put him too in the store; but hearing that if I did he would have to be left loose as well as Wellington, I desisted; for Wellington was very fond of biting and kicking other horses, was shod all round, and was a much bigger horse than Eclipse. When I left Surprise in the evening, Mr. Higgins was still on the look-out, field-glass in hand, and perched on the top of an old stump.

As I rode up to where Jimmy and Barrie were working at the upper dam I was making, I was greeted by "Did you hear the cannon?" I remarked that I did not believe they were cannon; and Jimmy scouted me.

Although sceptical as to cannon, I thought horse-lifting was possible, so I determined to mount guard on Eclipse. The little straw outhouse was divided into two apartments by a rough partition, the stable was the inner one. I directed Barrie to take up bedding for me and also for himself to the outer one, and then taking arms for both of us with me, I camped for the night there. Jimmy wanted to go instead of me; but Jimmy and Barrie as sentinels would have been like two logs—the one slept sounder than the other. The dogs of course came and lay near me. Towards one or two in the morning they woke me by their growls. I sat up, and thinking I heard a stir in the bushes below, I called Barrie—not loudly, because I did not want to give the intending

thieves, if there were any, notice of my being ready to receive them. A snore was the only answer. I called again softly, and pushed him a little with my foot after I stood up—a groan and a mumbled remonstrance was all I got from him; it was evident that if further roused he would remonstrate loudly before thoroughly waking up, so I left him alone, and cocking my revolver took a cautious survey. All seemed quiet, and although I waited and watched for some time, I neither heard nor saw anything, and so went to sleep again. I had a good laugh at Barrie in the morning, who didn't like it, and pretended to feel ill after a night of sleeplessness and discomfort. I was amused at the fellow's absurdity, but when he said he felt too tired to act guard the next night, I contented myself with saying that he could sleep in the house if he liked; it would have been the report of my revolver that would have first wakened him in the stable, it would probably also waken him in the house. He was annoyed, but persisted in his assertion that he was so dreadfully tired he could not act guard. Poor fellow, he did not know how near his fate was upon him! Jimmy now insisted upon being my companion on guard; and although I did not much like to expose him to danger, if there should be any, still it was so clearly the right thing for him to do that I acquiesced. Nothing, however, disturbed the tranquillity of the second night, except the rain, and that was less than the night before. The front compartment of the outhouse, I must remark, was not perfectly water-tight, still one could keep fairly dry in it.

The next day was Sunday, and I was cleaning the stable, preparatory to getting dressed for going to dinner at Surprise, when a delicate, gentlemanly-looking man, in

a sort of blue serge blouse, ran up the little broken pathway leading to the stable, and raising his wide-awake, said he had heard that I was looking for brickmakers, that he and his mates were brickmakers and builders, and would be glad of a job. I glanced at his slim fine-skinned hands, and putting his appearance and mode of speech together, I said to myself "*You're* not, whatever your mates may be." I said aloud that I was in want of bricks, and that I thought of building, and asked where his mates were. He pointed to the cabin, and then I saw a sturdy-looking man of about forty, who looked every inch a tradesman, and a rollicking-looking fellow with a lot of yellow hair about him, who looked anything chance might require him to be, provided it did not ask him to attempt anything polished. I descended from the stable, pitchfork in hand, to greet them, and invite them inside. The tradesman, whose name was Williams, told me they had been thinking of coming to the cottage late the preceding evening and asking for shelter, but that knowing of the Boer scare, they thought they might frighten me, and so slept in the veldt. Of course I knew they were very hungry, and I had eaten up the last bit of meat that very morning; the bread was nearly done; I had no milk, no eggs; Reva was away, and I did not know what to do. So, retiring for a minute, I set Barrie to work to make flat cakes, and despatched Jimmy to get some milk and meat at Surprise, if he could, and to ask Mr. Higgins to come over after dinner. The result was that I engaged the men to make bricks at the rate of fifteen shillings a thousand, burnt out, and that they were to cut the wood themselves, and with the agreement that I was to get the brick-moulds made as soon as possible by a

carpenter who lived at Fahlbank, and that until their completion the three men were to work at the dam at the rate of half-a-crown a day; I was to feed them into the bargain, and they were to sleep in the outhouse.

The next morning early the three men went to work at the dam, and I, leaving Jimmy and Barrie to settle the stellassees, which had been taken in during the night, was walking up through the long dewy grass to see how they were getting on, when I saw Mr. Higgins and a man in a white mackintosh and cork helmet, push aside the branches of the fig hedge of the orchard and ride through. They were some distance from me, but I perceived in a minute from his seat that the man was an officer, and his horse I knew to be an English-bred and groomed horse. A momentary thought that it might be some old acquaintance come to look me up, struck me, but in a minute I felt sure that it was for Barrie the officer had come.

"Where is Barrie?" asked Mr. Higgins, after a short "Good morning." "At the house." "Well, I am afraid you must lose him," said Mr. Higgins. "I thought so," said I; and continuing my walk up to the dam, I left them to carry out their disagreeable duty. It seems that Barrie swore to the last that he was no deserter, and became so violent that the officer had to draw his pistol. It was all over in a minute or so; when I returned to the cabin, in ten minutes, they were already gone. Mr. Higgins's servant was also captured, and from that day to this I have never heard more of them.

It appears that the party of soldiers accompanying the officer had struck terror into hearts of many a Boer on the road they passed along. It had been generally

known the day before that the great Potchefstrom demonstration had come to naught, and the Boers thought this was a party sent out to catch other members of the committee, some of whom lived close to us.

Fat old Hermanns Potchietier slept in a sluit on the night which they passed near his place; and the equally fat Cornelius Vanroy slept, or rather tried to sleep, in a tree. I don't suppose he succeeded.

The first day's work at the dam showed me that the man who had first accosted me was not worth half-a-crown a day at such work. I told him so, politely, the next morning. He said that he had been on the point of speaking to me much to the same effect, and asked me whether I would allow him to help me in such ways as he could, without payment, until the brick-moulds were made. To this I agreed. On the second day the rollicking-looking man sprained his back, and had to have poultices applied, and to lie by. This was not very pleasant. However I made Mr. Letheby useful in the fruit-gathering and drying business, and soon learned that he was the son of a manufacturer in the north of England, had been a clerk in the office, had had a disagreement with his father, and had come out here. He had not got on—met with his present mates in Pretoria—could do lots of things a little—didn't mind what he did. It was the old story, that of hundreds out here. I could not call him Letheby, he was an educated man; so I called him Mr. Letheby, and then had to call the others "Mr." too, to prevent envy, hatred, and malice. These soon showed themselves without any extra incitement. The two workmen hated and despised their social superior after their manner, and he reciprocated the feeling after his;

but they made a butt of him, and he was too yielding, and not sharp enough to be able to reciprocate; besides, they were coarse, and he was not. He used to amuse me by his *naïveté*. I think after his many struggles he had quite made up his mind to the advisability of marrying a rich Boeress if he could; he told me so, in fact, more than once, candidly admitting that all he should absolutely require was money, youth and beauty he should like if they could be got. He did not, I must say, assert that he was ready to take this course, but he used to discuss its advisability in a manner so personal to himself that it was hard for me to keep from laughing. At last, after Williams had been more rough than usual to him, and just when the brick-moulds arrived, he determined to break his ill-assorted partnership, and departed with a letter of introduction from me, which got him a place as tutor in a neighbouring Boer's family. There, I heard, he got on very well.

The yellow-bearded man being restored to a salubrious condition, he set to work at the bricks with Williams, but after a day or two took his pack on his back and silently departed. I heard that he objected to getting meat only once a day, to not having butter on his bread, and to having occasionally too little milk in his coffee. Mr. Higgins wondered why he had not complained to me; but I thought he showed his sense by not doing so, as it was evident that he would have gained nothing, for the good reason that butter there was none, that milk was scarce, and that as I had a limited number of wethers in my flock, I could not kill *ad libitum*. Besides all this, he knew that he fared exactly as I did. I was not left alone with Jimmy and Williams this time,

however, for two days before the discontented one departed, three men had come tramping up to my door while Mr. Higgins was at tea with me, and having declared that they wanted work "bad," and "didn't mind hard work or hard grub neither," and that they "was men as was used to roughing it," accepted the wage of half-a-crown a day, and set to work on the dam. Very rough men—the greatest stretch of politeness could not have extended "Mr." to one of *them*. Jimmy and I had our meals together now, then Mr. Williams, and then the "Philistines," as I called them.

They did not work very hard unless urged thereto, but they ate very hard without any urging. They were respectful and obedient to me, but I felt that they were dangerous, and must be kept well in hand. Jimmy told me certain things he heard them say; and other things which they said to me, without thinking about the impression they were producing, made me aware that they were familiar with violent measures. They, of course, had all been volunteers, as had the others,—you can hardly meet a man in this country who has not been a volunteer,—and they certainly impressed me with the idea that it would have been unpleasant to have been in a farm-house to which they had access, in their volunteering capacity, unless a very strict officer happened to be with them. One story, in which they greatly gloried, was of how, having been rudely spoken to by an unfriendly Boer, they had caught one of his sheep in the veldt and cut its throat, not to eat it, for they had to run away so as not to be found out, but as revenge.

The weather was very wet, and Williams being single-handed got on but slowly with the bricks; but he was a

thoroughly good workman, and a straightforward, honest fellow, and he made more headway than I expected under the circumstances. His idea and mine from the beginning was that he was to build as well as to make the bricks, but I found it hard to get him to state for what sum he would contract to execute my plan. I had drawn this plan before agreeing to buy the place, and Mr. Higgins had estimated the cost for me.

In the meantime Mr. Higgins and his family were getting ready to go to the colony. It was to be a great emigration, for they took a large number of cattle with them, some to sell, and also spare oxen. I felt that it would be very desolate after Mrs. Higgins and the children went away, and the increasing fever did not raise my spirits. Most of my fruit was dried, and packed away in sacks, ready for my friends to take with them to sell in the Free State; but a peculiar sort of yellow peach—a fruit unknown in England but common in Italy—had yet to be dried, and I was hard at work gathering it in, and spreading it on the stellassees. The weather had now become dry again, and the heat was very great—greater than usual. I sometimes felt as if I should break down unless I could have either entire rest or some violent excitement.

One day Mr. Higgins rode over early to my place, and said that he was off to Fahl-plas, and proposed that I should go with him, so as to reply quickly to a letter of interest to both him and me, which I expected to find there—the post being fetched at that time from the distant farm where it was left by John Higgins. I jumped at the idea; it would be a change.

“You look too ill to do it, though,” said Mr. Higgins. “You won’t stand the ride.”

But I knew better, the programme being only so far changed by Mr. Higgins, that instead of riding there and back in one day, I was to dine at Surprise, start immediately after dinner for Fahl-plas, sleep there, and return early on the following day.

It was a very pleasant ride; the day was not too warm, and we got in just in time for a pleasant supper with the James Higginses. The next morning we idled about and talked, and did not saddle up until late, when a fearful storm soon drove us back. We saddled up after early coffee on the next day, and got to Surprise a little after breakfast—so we had our breakfast alone—and as we were talking about how things would go on with me while the Higginses were away, Mr. Higgins said if I chose he would sell me his black span and the old waggon. The span, that had been of eighteen, had now dwindled to fourteen, but it had been twice down the dreaded Natal road, and all that remained were, I knew, salted with both red water and lung sickness. The sum asked was twelve pounds apiece, but I knew the oxen were worth it, and clenched the bargain. I felt perfectly delighted at getting possession of those oxen.

The Higgins family were to start in the early days of February, which were now quite near; and as I was anxious to see the last of them, I arranged to go with them as far as Fahl-plas, going in the waggon with Mrs. Higgins. Mr. Higgins was to lead Eclipse, who would carry me back.

The day before they started I turned out all my dry fruit in the sun, and sorted it well. The weather was

frightfully hot, but I knew a great deal depended upon the fruit being perfectly dry and free from insects before it was put in the waggon. I slept at Surprise that night, and felt very ill—I was not quite sure whether from fever or from the anxiety I felt at being left quite alone; and yet in a certain sense I was glad, for I knew that I depended a great deal on Mr. Higgins, and I knew too that I should never really succeed so long as I was not completely self-dependent. I should be so by the time the Higginsons came back. We started the next morning; it was very hot, and by the time I got to Fahl-bank my bones ached so severely that I had to go to bed, or at least to lie down on the bed the whole afternoon. The next day, Sunday, I was better; but that evening, as we stood looking at the comet, I felt the premonitory shiver of the real set-in of fever. It was curious how much that comet affected even the Higginsons. They were really afraid it was going to do something, and many coupled it with an old rhyme of Mother Shipton's, much talked of here, in which it is set down, in doggerel verse, that after certain curious events happening, all described in allegorical language, the world is to come to an end in 1881.

The next morning we all sat on the stoop having early coffee, and waiting for breakfast, the Higginsons to get into the waggon (Wellington stopped at Surprise), I to saddle up for my return journey. I felt very ill, but hardly expected to do what I did, viz., faint away at a moment's notice. I know of no more annoying thing than to faint in another person's house, particularly when the performance is followed by such prostration that one has to be supported to bed, and has to be lifted

up in bed like a baby. Yet this was what happened to me.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Higgins would not start: they said if I did not get better they would not start at all, but take me back to Surprise and nurse me—but I well knew what a dreadful disappointment that would be to Mrs. Higgins and the children. I ordered myself quinine, but I knew that there is not much use in taking quinine when this sort of jungle fever, which is remittent but not intermittent, is at its height. Robert Higgins asked leave to doctor me, saying he knew a great deal about African fever; calomel was the thing for it. I knew that he had had experience in the matter, for he was an old elephant and ostrich hunter, and many a time of an evening had I listened eagerly to his graphically told stories of adventures, in which fever sometimes had its share; so I obediently said that I would take calomel, although I don't believe much in it, but I would have taken anything they suggested just to show that I was ready to try to get well. Robert Higgins administered the calomel, and the effect of it was that I kept his wife, who slept in my room, awake all night by my half-delirious talking. Robert Higgins was surprised at my being worse the next morning. I think he would have liked to administer another dose; but then James Higgins said no, he could cure me—homœopathic aconite was the thing! I assured him I should be delighted to try it. I did take it. He said I was to take four drops, but I altered his prescription by doubling the dose on the sly. It did me good, whereby I learned something in medicine that I had not known before.

All this time I was being nursed with the utmost

kindness in James Higgins's drawing-room. John Higgins and his family were away, but they came back; and then Mrs. Robert Higgins carried me into their sitting-room, which was more adapted for a sick-room than the other. I remember how every one laughed at a suggestion made by Mrs. John Higgins as to how I could be moved, for walking was impossible and I objected to being carried. "Do you think *you* could carry me?" said I to Mrs. Robert Higgins. "Well, if she can't," said her sister-in-law, "at the worst, there's the perambulator." This suggestion conveyed such a comical appreciation of my smallness that I laughed heartily, in spite of my weakness. Two days afterwards I was so much better that I induced the Robert Higgineses to start. It was very hard to part with them—in my then weak state it was quite a wrench—but the Higgineses of Fahl-plas did all they could to make me comfortable; if I had been their own sister they could not have done more, and although it is a dreadful feeling to be ill away from home, still I admitted to myself that it was well for me that I was with them—not at Grünfontein.

On the Monday after the Robert Higgineses' departure, Jimmy, having heard of my illness, rode over on a borrowed horse to see me. His account of the proceedings at Grünfontein was the reverse of satisfactory. On finding that I did not return on the Monday, Jimmy imagined that I had gone on to Potchefstroom with the Higgineses, and communicated his ideas to the men. The result was a mutiny next day. The Philistines struck for meat twice a day. Jimmy told them he could not go beyond my orders as to the allowance of meat, but that on his own responsibility he would give them no food at all if they

did not work. They held a consultation upon this, and repaired to the dam, where they pretended to work, but in reality hardly worked at all; in the meantime, Jimmy having gone to the valley to ask if any news had been heard of me, they stole the meat that was drying in a tree, and a whole bottle of brandy which Jimmy had removed from where I left it, but thought he had carefully concealed in the bedroom. "They swore by all that was holy they had not touched the meat," said Jimmy, "and looked me straight in the face; surely you don't think they can be so wicked as to do that when they knew they had really taken it?" I assured Jimmy that such was my opinion of human nature that I believed it capable of even that depth of wickedness; and remembering that I had thirty pounds locked up in a desk that might happen to take their fancy, I suggested to Jimmy that the best thing for him to do was to return to Grünfontein before night.

He left me more anxious than before. So innocent a boy was not likely to have much control over the Philistines, and any attempt on his part to enforce his authority might lead to violence. My only hope was Williams. I seriously thought of trying to ride home, but as I could hardly crawl, the thing was impossible. Then James Higgins, seeing my anxiety, offered to drive me over the next day, but the next day his wife was seriously unwell; then torrents of rain set in, which rendered the river impassable. Two day after, the three Philistines presented themselves, and asked for payment, saying they would not work any longer. They swore the strongest oaths that they had worked as hard as men could during my absence, and that the dam was finished.

Of course I knew they were lying, and I also knew that they had no legal right to payment, for they had engaged for a month, and the month was not out; but when they saw that I was not going to be bamboozled, they changed their tone, said that they saw I did not believe them, and that Jimmy had been "a poisoning of my mind;" farther, that they would know how to settle with him if they did not get paid. Now I thought it very improbable that Jimmy would know how to settle with *them* in case they returned to Grünfontein with that amicable intention, so I considered for a few moments, weighing the following facts and possibilities in my mind.

There was a canteen in the Poort near the river, but on the other side of it; there was also a small river between the canteen and Grünfontein, a mere nothing generally, but which the rain, still pouring down, must have converted into a deep and rapid stream. If I did not pay these men, they would have to pass the canteen, with bitter longings for a glass, setting their angry passions ablaze, for they had not a penny in their possession. They would reach Grünfontein in a murderous frame of mind; the consequences might be terrible. Against that, if I paid them, they would certainly get drunk at the canteen, and then they would either stay there drinking so long as the money lasted, and that being expended, until the inevitable "horrors" were over, or they would try to go to Grünfontein with no good intentions, for they were likely to feel rancorous towards Jimmy in their cups; but then there was that conveniently swollen little river. I felt almost sure that a tipsy man, if he tried to cross it, must inevitably tumble into it; it was not very improbable he might be drowned, and in

any case he would hurt himself considerably, and be incapable of walking to Grünfontein after his bath. All these things duly considered, I paid the men, and determined to get to Grünfontein as soon as possible myself.

It seemed destined that the work at Grünfontein was not to make progress ; but the next evening a note was brought to me by an Englishman, who said he had come from Pretoria. It was from old Mr. Higgins, and told me that this man's name was Richard Hall, that he was the discharged soldier who had spoken to Robert Higgins about coming to work on his farm ; and that old Mr. Higgins thought, if his son was gone by the time the man reached Surprise, I might like to engage him. I remembered to have heard of this man from Mr. Higgins, who said he had reason to believe he thoroughly understood farming, and that he bore an excellent character. Mr. Higgins had greatly hoped that he would come ; and now he was there, and I could engage him, at least for a time, I felt very glad. It had been arranged that James Higgins was to drive me to Grünfontein on the following day ; the difficulty had been as to how Eclipse was to be got there, but now I determined to let this man ride him over. In the meantime Richard Hall was taken into the dining-room, and given something to eat. He was a fine, stalwart young fellow, and had a mongrel pointer puppy with him, of which he seemed very fond ; but he was too free-and-easy in his manner towards the Higgins, for me not to see there would be the old difficulty there.

We started the next morning. Eclipse was rather disposed to tricks when the man mounted him, but

quieted down when I spoke to him and petted him, and we all reached Grünfontein safely, passing the Philistines dead drunk at the canteen. Jimmy and Williams welcomed me back heartily, and little Rough was overjoyed to see me; but the fruit I had taken such pains to get settled on the stellassees before I left was all spoiled or destroyed. The horses of Hermans Potchieter had come over one night when the stellassees had been left out, and had knocked many of them down and eaten the fruit, the rest Jimmy had piled one on another during the rain and covered with a waterproof. He had not uncovered them for days, and even the stellassees they were on had rotted in consequence; the fruit was a mass of black corruption. Roughy, too, had been seriously hurt in some way, and was very ill; the cats looked miserable, and were wild and frightened. It was a damp evening, and the discomfort of the house sent a chill through me, in spite of my desire not to feel it. The truth is, I was still so weak that objects had a tendency to waver before my eyes, and Grünfontein was not a place for nursing oneself. Perhaps the worst part of this species of fever is, that so long as it hangs about one, painful sores are constantly making their appearance on different parts of the body; when one crop vanishes another appears; the least scratch turns into one of them, but if there be no scratch they will come of themselves. My hands, legs, and feet were particularly affected by them, and the pain almost crippled me. There was no use in lying by, however, and I began my usual routine next day.

Richard Hall said he would not remain for less pay than six pounds a month, and although Mr. Higgins had told me, when I was making my calculations about farm-

ing, that good European labour could be got much more cheaply, my own inquiries subsequently showed me that it could not. It was evident that I must have some one besides Jimmy and the shepherd boy—and none of the Kaffirs on the property could be induced to work—so I said I would engage Hall for a month on trial. He spoke very confidently as to his own knowledge of farming operations, and remembering what Mr. Higgins had said of him, I thought he might be worth the money. His first task was mere labourer's work : viz., finishing the dam which the Philistines had left unfinished, so I could not at once judge of his skill as a farmer.

CHAPTER XVII.

At this point I must digress to relate a Kaffir idyll. It concerns Mangwan, the father of Moustache's proprietor.

Mangwan was the son and heir of the great and powerful Kaffir chief Mosilikatz, who only a few years ago held sway as far south as the southern slopes of the Magaliesberg. The Higginsons, then dashing young hunters, and their father, an experienced one, used to pursue their game in his territory for months, and were on friendly terms with the old chief, with whom they exchanged visits and presents. Mangwan, too, used often to come to their waggons, and his brother also. At last old Mosilikatz died. The Higginsons' waggons were not far from the place at which he expired. The old chief had many wives, but one was his special favourite. She not only fascinated the father, but the son; and on his father's death Mangwan persuaded her to fly with him to the Higginsons' waggons. By Kaffir law, a son who appropriates one of his father's wives, forfeits both her life and his own, and loses his inheritance, but Mangwan and the girl were ready to risk all for each other. Old Mr. Higgins hid them, and kept them hidden, until he brought them to a place of safety. The property at Fahl-plas was then his, and he settled them on it. For a time

Mangwan kept up state. He did nothing himself, nor would he allow his wife to do anything; he had Kaffir slaves who attended on both (even to cutting and cleaning his nails), but now that his dependents no longer supplied him with food, skins, money, &c., his store rapidly diminished, and old Mr. Higgins pointed out to him that as he had determined to forego his rights as chief for the sake of the Kaffir girl, he must now work for his livelihood. To this Mosilikatz's son could not bend. His flocks and herds dwindled, but he would not work. A son was born, whom he called Magaliesberg, and who grew to be the prettiest Kaffir boy I have ever seen. Little by little the slaves of Mangwan became reduced in number until he had but one, a wretched little girl who was starved and beaten, and made to sleep outside the door of the kraal in all weathers. When the child was dying of privation Mrs. Higgins pointed out to Mangwan the wickedness of letting her sleep in the cold and wet, without even a covering.

"Surely," said Mangwan, "the place for a dog to sleep is outside his master's door."

The little two-legged dog did sleep there until she died, and then the wife had to begin to work in a lazy fashion. When Robert Higgins bought Surprise he asked his father to come and live at Grünfontein, and told Mangwan he might build himself a kraal in the valley beneath. Both invitations were accepted, and so when I bought Grünfontein, Mosilikatz's son became my tenant.

He was an old man then, and very skinny and ugly, and the woman he had given up his kingdom for was a hideous specimen of humanity; but Magaliesberg was a very pretty, active, and graceful boy—also a disobedient,

idle, and mischievous urchin. He would order his father about instead of obeying him, and he was the apple of his father's eye. He was supposed to tend the cattle and goats, but he never did so. Mangwan never worked, and he was not above begging, yet, as he walked along with an old blanket thrown over his shoulders, there was a certain stateliness about him. He never mixed with other Kaffirs, and he always spoke Zulu. Dutch he did not understand. In spite of his poverty he managed to marry two other wives, but the youngest ran away from him, and he never got her back. I suppose she thought the magnificence of his kraal hardly corresponded with his rank. But although Mangwan took unto himself other wives, his first wife was the one he always clung to; and the only time I saw Mangwan's serenity disturbed, was when a coolie servant of mine, who understood Zulu, after enduring her taunts and shrieks, and the snapping of her fingers under his nose, for about an hour, endeavoured to push her forcibly out of my domains—at my order be it understood, for I was fairly tired of the termagant's vociferation. Then Mangwan, who had previously been sitting quite unconcernedly on a heap of stones hard by, leapt up, and throwing his blanket from him with quite a tragic air, gave one yell, and sprang at the coolie. They both rolled down the hill together. Mangwan arose with his nose bleeding, and his old bones sadly shaken, but still looking defiance. Magaliesberg, however, strongly advised him and his mother to keep the peace and retire to their kraal, and this they did. The next day the Kaffir presented himself before me. His dignity as well as his nose had been injured. He was very sad: indeed, I always felt sorry for the old man.

Whether to a European or a Kaffir the sense of having to ask for favours when you once dispensed them, to obey where you once commanded—the feeling of dependence upon a stranger—must always be bitter. Mangwan, looking down from my little eirie on the cultivated valley below, which had once been a wild bush, and his own hunting-country, must in a miserable blind sort of way have felt something of what the exiled French Princes experienced when they looked across the channel to the distant shores of France. Mangwan, climbing from his wretched little kraal in the valley to sit down in front of the door of my cabin, hoping that I might give him a little coffee or the feet of a sheep, or let him pull some fruit out of my garden, must have felt also, in a blind sort of way, the bitterness of the great Italian poet's heart when he climbed the stairs of others! I always treated Mangwan with respect, and the old man felt this, I know. On the occasion to which I refer I fortunately had Saul the driver with me when he arrived, and I made him translate into Zulu what I considered a neatly turned speech for Mangwan's benefit. I alluded to the fact of his being Mosilikatz's son, and of my wish to treat him with respect in consequence, but I distinctly forbade Mrs. Mangwan's reappearance near my cabin. I saw that the allusion to his illustrious birth pleased the old man, and his peace of mind was restored by a present of some carbolic oil where-with to heal his nose. He proceeded to smear on the oil with great satisfaction, and I added the gift of half-a-crown! Mrs. Mangwan was thenceforth no more seen at Grünfontein.

Mangwan had a great liking for the possession of animals, although he never took care of them when he

had them. When the Kaffir Jonas was sent away from Surprise he left his cat behind for Mangwan. But the cat preferred its liberty, and would not let itself be captured by Magaliesberg. Thereupon Mangwan undertook to catch it, and the way he carried out his undertaking was by every morning for about a fortnight, walking up in a stately manner to Surprise with a sack (destined to receive the cat) on his shoulder, and perambulating the vicinity of Jonas's hut for about an hour. He never looked for the cat—that would have been beneath his dignity—but held his head erect, and if he looked at anything it was at the sky. It is hardly necessary to remark that the cat retained its liberty.

On Moustache he set great value. Moved to compassion by the entreating looks the poor little beast used to cast at me when Magaliesberg would come to drag him away, I offered Mangwan two shillings for him. I thought it a handsome offer considering the dog's surpassing ugliness; but Mangwan shook his head, and ejaculated "Pond," by which he meant that a pound was the value he set on the animal. During the Higginses' absence, however, Mangwan began to feel the pangs of hunger, for he used to get subsidies from their kitchen, given, not stolen—I don't believe Mangwan would steal—then he would often come to me and say, "Bow-wow, bow-wow," and hold up his ten fingers. That meant that his price for the dog had come down to ten shillings. I thereupon shook my head and held up five fingers, intimating that I raised my offer to five shillings. At last, one day, when Mangwan was very hungry, we struck a bargain for six shillings, and the absurd antics whereby Moustache testified his delight when Mangwan and

Magaliesberg went off without him, quite repaid me for my extravagance. And so Moustache became a member of my household, much to Roughy's disgust, who, although much the smaller dog of the two, maintained his supremacy in a most lordly manner—flying at his rival and shaking him by his long drooping ears, until they bled profusely, whenever he thought his right of precedence was in any way interfered with.

Mrs. Mangwan never forgave me, but used to scowl in a most vicious way whenever she saw me. She was a terrible virago; and it was impossible to imagine in what her fascinations had consisted. Dressed in skins not more shrivelled and brown than her own skin, she used to inspire Augusta with horror, when she insisted upon kissing the girl's hand, on the occasions of her visits to Surprise. I have seen my pretty pupil run round and round the table, the old witchlike-looking creature pursuing her until she caught and mumbled over the fair soft hand that formed a curious contrast to the brown, skinny paw of Mrs. Mangwan.

The old savage always called Mr. Higgins "Bob," the name by which she had learned to call him when he used to hunt in Mosilikatz's territory. Her great delight was to be taken through the rooms at Surprise. She was never tired of admiring their splendour, and would clap her hands from time to time, and cry out, "Oh, Bob, Bob!" meaning thereby to convey an idea of her appreciation of what a wonderful man Mr. Higgins was, to have been able to amass such treasures.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SHORTLY after Hall's arrival, Jimmy informed me that he was going to seek his fortune elsewhere, and departed, with his saddle-bag slung over his shoulder, by a bridle-path which led over the mountain to Rustenberg. The day after, three Kaffirs came seeking for work, and I engaged them. I told them I would give them two shillings a day and their food, but that I expected them to work hard. Mr. Higgins had told me that I should always be able to get Kaffir labour for one-and-sixpence a day, and that I could feed my Kaffirs on nothing but mealea meal; but times, I suppose, were changing quickly. I found that it was almost impossible to get a Kaffir labourer for less than two shillings, and that the vast majority of them demanded meat at least three times a week, many insisting on having it every day. This was the experience of the Sturtons, as well as my own. Mr. Higgins never employed any Kaffir labour other than his kraal afforded him.

I set these Kaffirs to work under Hall's orders at the dam; but I was not very well satisfied by the way he made them work or worked himself; they all required supervision. Hall was rather a fine-looking young fellow, and addicted to giving himself airs. He was much

coarser of speech than Barrie, although he looked less rough, and was also much more ignorant. I soon came to the conclusion that he would not suit, for I felt sure he was a bad fellow, in spite of the character I had heard of him ; but thinking that, for all that, he might be a valuable man on the farm, I gave him plenty of rope, so as to let him hang himself before the month was out, if hanging was to be his fate. Under this treatment he developed rapidly. In the meantime he and the Kaffirs worked at the dam. One evening, some time before sunset, I went up to see how they were getting on. Hall was at work, the two Kaffirs lying on their backs smoking. I asked them why they were not at work ; they answered that the sun was gone. That was so far true, inasmuch as the dam, which was on the side of the mountain, was in shade, but the valley and opposite range were still in bright sunshine. I pointed to the valley and bade them get to work again at once. They hesitated a little, then, shouldering their spades, got into the dam and commenced operations. I stood by, until the last rays faded away from the valley ; then I told them they might go. I stood guard over them towards sun-down every day after that until Saturday. This was pay day, and having received their pay after their work was finished, they bolted without giving me any notice. But the dam was finished ; that very evening the finishing touch had been given to the embankment that shut up its narrow outlet ; the lower pipe and the drainage pipe were fixed, and I let the water in. This was a very great mistake, but I was in a terrible hurry to see how my dam would act.

The Kaffirs in the meantime were gone ; my shepherd-boy had taken French leave, because I had had him

whipped, after repeated warnings, for letting the sheep get astray, whilst he played with some of Mr. Higgins's little herds, who, now that he was away, never looked after the animals in their charge at all. Williams had that morning told me he was too ill with fever to work, and I could see he spoke the truth. The time for ploughing was come; the work must be done, or Grünfontein would be a dead failure. That evening I told Mr. Williams that I must have a decisive answer as to the contract for building. He, after some hesitation, named a price far exceeding that at which Mr. Higgins had estimated the cost, and much higher than I could afford. I told him so, and then he said he would not like to make bricks for another man to build with. He was too ill to walk to Pretoria at once, however; and so, of course, he and I had to make up our respective minds to his remaining until he regained his strength. I sat up a long while considering the position. Hall had told me that there was a man of the name of Egerton, at Pretoria, who had expressed a wish to obtain work on a farm; he said he believed he knew something of farming, and that though he was drinking hard in Pretoria he might be steady on a farm. He had also told me that he knew a coolie—a capital gardener, and accustomed to farm-work—who would, he was sure, be glad to come. My meditations ended in my resolving to saddle up early next morning, and ride to Pretoria to look for workmen, for it was clear that workmen I must have, and at once too. There was, however, the difficulty of my hunting up workmen unassisted, and there was also the difficulty of taking Hall with me, and this for two reasons—one that I had no second horse, and the other that if he came with me, Williams must remain

alone at Grünfontein. I must here mention what I omitted before, that my oxen were herded and kraaled still with Mr. Higgins's. I thought it best, however, to trust the farm to itself, and take Hall with me; and the matter of the horse I managed by determining to take the loan of Wellington as far as Moy-plas, and, leaving him there, to ask the Sturtons for the loan of one of their salted horses to Pretoria. It was the unhealthy season for horses, and Pretoria is a very unhealthy place. Mr. Higgins, while regretting that Hall had not come before his departure, had mentioned, as one cause for his regret, that he could have exercised Wellington, so I felt no qualms about letting him ride the horse: and no case of horse-sickness had occurred in the valley, so that I was not much afraid of leaving Wellington in the stable at Moy-plas. I told Hall my plan early, and then went up to look at the dam. Alas! the embankment had sprung several leaks. I opened the pipe, and let the water run out, and while doing so I was standing on the embankment, when I felt it shake, and stepped back just in time to escape from falling, with the part I had been standing on, into the dam. I felt dreadfully disappointed, but there was no time for regret.

I returned to the cabin, where I met Fievaree, who had brought me some milk. I told him I wanted to see his father, that he was to come back with him as soon as possible. They arrived shortly after in company, and I persuaded the father to allow his boy to undertake to look after my sheep while I was away. He was to get a shilling a day provided he lost none of them—so far for the father; but Fievaree had a will of his own, and a separate bargain had to be made with him. He was howling,

and saying he wouldn't mind the sheep; what was the money to him? His father would keep it. At last he was induced to name his price, a toy flute and a pound of sweets, always provided no sheep were lost. I then counted them out of the kraal to him, and, Wellington having arrived, I told Hall to saddle up.

Hall was delighted at the idea of riding the handsome black horse. He rubbed up Jimmy's stirrups, and the snaffle and curb of his bridle, before putting them on his steed; he was determined he should look decently bitted for once, he said, alluding to the rusty state of Mr. Higgins's bits and stirrups. All his preparations being made, we started. We were not fairly on the flat, and I had only just began to canter, when Hall called out,—

“These stirrups are too small for me, missus.”

“Oh,” said I, cantering on.

Presently I heard an angry ejaculation behind me.

“What's the matter, Hall?” asked I, looking round.

“It's these —— stirrups,” replied Hall. “They're babies' stirrups, not men's; and the brute jumps so I can't stick on with such stirrups.”

“Well, take them off, and ride without them,” quoth I.

Hall had always spoken of himself as a good horseman. He got off, not looking much pleased.

“Where can I put the things?” he asked.

“Across your saddle in front;” but Hall declared he couldn't do that. “Well,” said I, “tie them on to my saddle; anything to push along;” and off I started so soon as they were fastened as I directed. In a few minutes Hall was alongside of me.

“I don't know what's the matter with the brute,” he exclaimed; “I never saw a horse go on as he does.”

Wellington was evidently very uncomfortable; his rider was mismanaging him; and besides he clearly disliked the snaffle together with the curb—he was not accustomed to it.

“Take off the snaffle,” said I; and we stopped, and took off the snaffle. Then we started again. Wellington was fresh, and felt that his rider was not master over him, and it was all Hall could do to hold him in, whilst bumping up and down on Jimmy’s small English saddle. The bumping was evidently becoming trying; he shifted his position continually, and at last attempted sitting on his one hand whilst he checked Wellington too sharply with the other; at last—

“D—— the brute and this confounded saddle!” he exclaimed; and I very nearly burst out laughing.

“Gently,” I said. “What’s the matter?”

“Why, who ever saw such a saddle?” exclaimed Hall. “No *man* could ride on a thing like that; it’s a child’s saddle;” he had been admiring it greatly while he was girthing it on.

“Well,” said I consolingly, “perhaps I shall be able to get you a big Boer saddle at that house yonder;” a house belonging to Boers, who, though adverse to English rule, were very civil to me whenever I passed that way.

Poor Hall! How he did wriggle about and abuse his horse and his saddle, and everything but his own bad riding, until we reached the Boer farm; and then, oh, woe! all the saddles were in use.

“You have often ridden bare-backed, have you not?” asked I. “Bare-backed, with a blanket strapped over the horse, would perhaps be better?” Yes, Hall thought it would be better. We set off again.

I was cantering sharply, but Wellington shot far ahead of me.

“Steady,” I cried.

“I can’t stop the horse ; I never saw such a brute,” cried Hall in reply, tugging at the reins in a very un-horsemanlike fashion.

He was beginning to get angry with the horse, and the horse with him. I knew Wellington to be a very pleasant-paced horse, and to have a very tender mouth, having ridden him myself, so I administered a little admonition to Hall as to keeping his temper. Presently, when I stopped and walked, I saw Hall deliberately get off Wellington and begin to walk by his side. I requested to know what he was about, and elicited from him that he intended to perform the rest of the journey to Moy-plas on foot. Now between Moy-plas and the place where we were was a farm, where there was an exceedingly savage dog. Few dogs are savage with me, but this dog made no exception in my favour ; and I had an unpleasant remembrance of a certain solitary moonlight ride home from Mrs. Materson’s, whither I had gone on business, when this dog had pursued me for more than a mile, sometimes leaping at Eclipse’s throat, and sometimes only kept from biting his legs by the horse’s kicks, while I had to keep the brute from fastening on my habit by using my long hunting crop freely. If Eclipse had not known me and been fond of me, and withal been an intelligent horse, I knew he would have thrown me that night, and the dog would have worried me. I should not have been the first person who suffered from him, for he was the terror of all passers-by that way. I had counted on Hall as being able to cause a diversion in case this pleasant

animal should attack me, and I was by no means disposed to forego his company before he had escorted me beyond Mr. Cucumoor's farm. I therefore summarily ordered him to mount, and once more started off at a smart canter.

When Cucumoor's farm was passed (without the dog being seen, by-the-way) I let him dismount, and leaving him to lead Wellington, pushed on for Moy-plas myself. How wretched he did look! I knew he would make no fresh attempt at riding Wellington, so that it was quite safe to leave him.

When I rode up to Moy-plas I found Arthur and William Sturton there. I believe the first thing I said was, "Has there been any horse-sickness here yet?" I heard that there had not been, but that horses were dying fast in Pretoria. I told my story, and asked the loan of one of the two salted horses belonging to Percy. He said I might have my choice. In the meantime Arthur and William saddled up their salted steeds, and prepared to start home. They had been gone about an hour, when Harriett Sturton suddenly ran in from outside, exclaiming, "Oh! what *can* be the matter? Here is Arthur coming back again, leading his horse." Arthur soon told us. The salted horse had nearly fallen under him; it had the horse-sickness. I felt greatly alarmed, thinking of Wellington, who had just come in with Hall. Arthur had to borrow one of Percy's salted horses to ride home on. In the evening Harriett and I went for a walk. Percy had ridden over to where his father was having a mill built. We had not gone far when I said, "Look at that horse; it looks ill." It was a brown horse walking to meet us on the road, and looking very mournful. "Why, it looks like

Tommy," said Harriett, "but Percy is not riding him." In a moment, a turn in the road showed us Percy carrying his saddle. The horse was the salted Tommy, and had fallen ill under him. Both horses died the next day, after I left for Pretoria. Hall had now no choice but to follow me on foot, to his great disgust.

I put up at old Mr. Higgins's in Pretoria. He had a little cottage on the outskirts—a miserable-looking place outside, but snug inside; and he had a little stable, into which he kindly let me put Eclipse. Hall arrived late at night, very cross. The next day he found Sam and a brother of his, Mosam—he was doubtful about finding Egerton—and these two I engaged. I could not get them to come for less than four pounds a month. In the afternoon I was riding towards the market-square, and Hall was walking beside me, when, just as we passed a public-house, he turned and spoke to a man, then called to me, and presented the individual as Egerton. He was a man of apparently about five-and-thirty, with two black eyes, and a face whose general pallor betokened late heavy drinking and consequent illness. I did not want any more servants, having engaged the two coolies, and the man's appearance as he stood before me in a battered wide-awake, torn and dirty coat and trousers, and apologies for boots, was not prepossessing. I had, however, heard that Egerton had said, when Hall was leaving Pretoria, "I would to God I could get out of the place," and so I thought I would see about it.

"You would like to get employment on my farm?" said I. He answered in the affirmative without raising his eyes. "Can you do farm work: do you understand it?"

He answered he had worked on a farm for nine

months; but, in reply to my questions as to whether he could drive oxen or plough, he said he could but try. It did not strike me that he would be a very valuable acquisition, but I saw that there was some sort of painful struggle going on in the man; and, although he answered almost monosyllabically, his voice sounded refined.

“What wages do you ask?”

He hesitated a little, then said six pounds a month.

“No, I could not give you that,” said I. “I give it to Hall, because I got him with a character of being a steady man, and one who thoroughly understood farming; I should not give it to him otherwise.”

“And I have no character, or a bad one—this,” said Egerton, raising his hand to designate his black eyes. “Would you think five pounds too much for me to ask?”

What trifles one is sometimes swayed by. A moment before I had almost determined to let the man go, but there was something in his voice and manner as he said this, that reminded me of the voice of a friend, of the manner which, had misfortune and his own fault placed him in Egerton's position, would have been his; it was a very faint resemblance, but it told me that there was something better in Egerton than what appeared, and I said I would give him five pounds, and that he might walk down to Grünfontein the next day in company with Hall and the two coolies. I told him to call later in the day at Mr. Higgins's to sign his contract with me. He did so, and then went away. I was busy in the meantime getting offers for the contract for building my farm-house and out offices. To my surprise I found that I was known by name to a great many people in Pretoria whom I did

not know at all, was indeed a small celebrity as a rich and enterprising farmer. I, of course, knew that there were unexpressed additions to these two adjectives, viz., "inexperienced," "green," and "fair game." I could get no offer for the execution of my plan which did not enormously exceed Mr. Higgins's estimate. I also heard much talk as to the large price I had paid to Mr. Higgins for my farm; when I said that I had not paid for it at all, and that he would let me throw it up if I chose, people laughed, and said I "had better try him." Of course I was offered other farms, which were all described as far more desirable than the one I had.

The next day the rain poured down in torrents, and the third day also. On the first rainy day, Egerton, who, together with his companions, was unable on account of the rain to set out for Grunfontein, came to Mr. Higgins's house. I think he must have been there standing outside for some time before I happened to go to the door. "Could you ask Mr. Higgins if I might sleep in the stable," he said, "it is so very wet?" The question told a terrible story. He slept in the stable, and the Higginses gave him some food. I had been obliged to put Hall up at the Edinburgh at ten shillings a day, I could not get him boarded for less. The next day the men started; I had given them provisions for the road. Sam celebrated his exit from Pretoria by getting gloriously drunk. I remained behind for two days, partially on account of Mrs. James Higgins having come up to Pretoria for a fourth little baby's advent. Her husband had had to hire an unfurnished house, and bring up furniture for it in his waggon. She liked me to be with her, so I stayed. The fever was yet hanging about me, and I was still troubled

with the fever sores, and did not much enjoy the idea of my ride home; however, on Saturday at about half-past three, I saddled up, having managed to get through my various engagements at last.

It was rather late to start on a twenty-four miles' ride in the early part of March; however, I was too anxious to get Eclipse away from unhealthy Pretoria, to wait longer than necessary, and although I felt very tired, having been walking all the morning, I cantered sharply until I reached the farm which is situated midway between Pretoria and Moy-plas. I had calculated that if I could do the distance in three hours and a half I should get in just before dark, for there was no moon. I had kept time so far, but I could not hold out. The pain of those dreadful sores was becoming unbearable when I cantered, and I felt almost too weak to sit in the saddle. Eclipse, on the contrary, was very gay and festive, and as the rays of the declining sun glanced on the sticks or stones he passed, he would pretend to be frightened, and shy in play. It is tedious as well as tiring to walk twelve miles on horseback. The last faint streaks of day lighted me across the Crocodile; then it became pitch dark. I could hardly see Eclipse's pretty little head as he tossed it up and down impatiently; as to guiding him it was out of the question. But my little horse was quite able to take care of both of us. Winding about, now down a steep and stony ravine, now up the other side, turning cleverly round bushes and trees, he brought me safe to near the back-door of Moy-plas, where he was assailed by a troop of dogs, whose barks and yelps soon ceased at the sound of my voice, but who heralded my arrival to the supper-party inside. Old Mr. Sturton, as he stood by me while I

ungirthed Eclipse, said, "I suppose you know about the black horse?" "What?" I exclaimed. "It's dead." I felt that I turned deadly pale; the horse was worth a hundred pounds, and I could ill afford to lose that sum. Mr. Sturton saw my face by the light of the lantern. He began to laugh. "It's my son William's black horse," he said, "not Bob's."

After giving Eclipse his supper in an outhouse, I went in to my own.

Very cosy the long, low room, with the well-spread supper-table looked, after my dark and weary ride, very cheery were the familiar kind faces of those seated round it, and very pleasant was their hearty welcome. Little did we all think that evening, when, forgetting my fatigue under these varied influences, I sat telling the news from Pretoria, that before that day twelvemonths, all that would remain of that comfort—hard won comfort, too—would be the bare walls, which may perhaps even yet fall victims to the revenge of the Boers!

There was one unfamiliar face, however, amongst my listeners. It was that of a little man who sat back from the rest—for supper was just over when I entered—and who struck me as being a stranger to the Sturtons as well as to myself. He was apparently between fifty and sixty, chubby, self-possessed, apparently on very good terms with himself, and engaged in a close scrutiny of everybody present, with a way of putting his head a little on one side in order to assist his investigations. This little man was so strikingly like a little cock-sparrow, that when he made any observation it almost sounded like a chirp.

The next morning at breakfast there was talk about

my intended buildings, about what had been asked by the contractors I had spoken to in Pretoria, about the servants I had engaged, and who had passed by Moy-plas the previous day. There was a general impression that Egerton would be found worth nothing, the coolies worth little, but Hall worth a great deal. Mr. Sturton had let him have Wellington to ride home on, much to my horror, for I knew that he was not fit to be trusted with a horse. Egerton had gone on alone, the coolies remaining half a day behind him to prepare and discuss a currie, for which purpose they had bought a fowl from the Sturtons. Mr. Sparrow listened to all this with his head on one side. After breakfast I loitered about. I always feel lazy on Sunday mornings, and besides, I was tired. Harriett had got a little pig as a pet, a jolly fat little beast that trotted about everywhere after her, and was very good-tempered, except when any one but Harriett happened to inconvenience it, then it made furious onslaughts on the offender's legs. There was the garden to look at, but after a while I became interested in some remarks Mr. Sparrow made to me about farm-buildings: they betokened that he knew something about such things, and we began to talk seriously. Presently he asked me whether I would show him my plan; I did so, and then he pointed out various faults in it, and I saw that he was right. He gave me several valuable hints, all in the way a benevolent sparrow might have done, and at last said, that if I would allow him, he would draw me a plan which would, he thought, please me better—quite disinterestedly—just because it was such a pleasure to see any one so enterprising—so energetic; he was engaged in carrying out another contract, for he was an architect; indeed, he was

in such request, because of his superior knowledge, that he had no spare time, that his head—his head, and he shook it a little as he thought of his sad case—was over-taxed; still, for a lady, and such a praiseworthy energetic lady, he would put on the strain. All this, and much more that was eulogistic of himself and me, did this benevolent specimen of the sparrow tribe twitter forth, whilst I thought to myself what a sly old bird it was.

However, disinterested or not, Mr. Sparrow evidently was a great deal more advanced than any one else I was likely to meet with, in knowledge of the sort of building I was anxious to erect. In the midst of the abundance of his self-laudatory and adulatory twitters I could see that he was also an original, and he amused me greatly; so I accepted his offer, and we parted very good friends.

CHAPTER XIX.

I SADDLED up after dinner, but alas ! my first short canter showed me that I should have to make Eclipse walk the eighteen miles home. It was a dreary look-out, but there was no help for it. Soon I saw a slight figure walking towards me, the figure of a young fellow dressed in coat, trousers, and wide-awake—a white youngster too. Who could he be ? None of the young men at Lettie Matersen's farm, I knew ; neither was he any of the Sturtons of Moy-plas ; he was not one of the Nells : who could he be ? It is unusual to see a Boer walking at any distance from his house, and the pedestrian was evidently of the well-to-do classes. The figure and I were diminishing the distance between us all this time, and then I saw with surprise that the youngster was Jimmy. He had terminated his wanderings by getting employment as tutor to two small Boers. The paternal Boer was going out trading, taking his youngsters in his waggon ; Jimmy was going too. The waggon was outspanned for a short time at Mrs. Matersen's. Jimmy had been to Grünfontein ; had heard of how his riding accoutrements had been dropped along the road ; had picked up bridle and saddle at Grünfontein, whither Hall had taken them, and was now going to Moy-plas to pick up his stirrups. I wished him God-

speed in his new life, and we parted. I had yet to pass Cucumoor's dog. I saw the brute sitting on the top of the rise across which the road went, and no sooner did he spy me than he began to bark and wag his tail—in a fiendish manner it appeared to me. I had heard that the Cucumoor's were adverse to the English, and that they would encourage the dog to assault any one belonging to our race; but I suddenly made up my mind to beard Cucumoor in his den (a mud-hut), and turning Eclipse off the road I cantered towards the house, whereupon Mr. Dog did the same. Then I saw three small Cucumoor's running towards me. The cause of their *empressement* was that a baby related to some member of the Cucumoor family had the thrush. They expostulated with the dog, and introduced me to a wonderfully large family, of several men, still more women, a good many hobbledehoy girls, a troop of small children, and a sprinkling of infants, all related in some inextricable manner, and all capable of being compressed when necessary, like "Alice in Wonderland," judging from the diminutive size of the house compared with the number of its occupants.

During the day they only enter it by relays, so the eyes of the uninitiated are not favoured with a view of them in a compressed condition. Cucumoor's household was no more surprising in this respect than many others, but the family was the largest, as compared to their house, I had yet seen. They were very friendly. They gave me coffee, and I gave them a prescription. They asked what they were to pay; and when I said, "Nothing," they beamed. They laughed at my absurd efforts to speak their dialect, and I laughed too; and we

parted excellent friends, after I had learnt the name of the dog—or rather dogs, for there were two of them. The savage was a jolly dog when you had a personal introduction to him, and his name was “Docks.” This was supposed to be an English name, and was derived from the English word “dog.” I heard it was a favourite name for a dog amongst the Boers.

It was nearly dark when I reached Grünfontein. Williams was better (he went away soon after). Several sheep were missing, but I afterwards recovered them; and there were two English brickmakers awaiting my arrival, anxious to get the job to go on with the bricks—a desire in which I gratified them. I began work in earnest now. The next day I went for my oxen. I had a plough already. Mosamma was a very fair driver, and a splendid cook; he was also conceited, lazy, and good-for-nothing, but his curries were delicious! Sam was not a bad fellow, but he was for some unknown reason the bounden slave of his younger brother. Egerton worked hard and spoke little, and Hall continued to develop quickly; he also in a very short time showed clearly that he could not hold a plough properly, or drive a span—he was in short an agricultural Mr. Winkle. He was greatly disgusted at my clear perception of his ignorance, and put on extra bumptiousness. Then I administered a rebuke, the result of which was that the next morning he said he wished to leave me, and as I had meant to send him away, we agreed perfectly. I had been lately in the habit of having my meals in my tiny bedroom, while Hall and Egerton had theirs in the sitting-room, the coolies of course eating outside. I had often listened to Hall’s loud talk, and observed Egerton’s reticence and different mode of speech. I had no doubt

now that he was a gentleman by education and early association, although fallen from that estate. So on Hall's going away I took my meals with him.

I had one difficulty with respect to him. The coolies called him "Jack," as Hall had done. It was evidently out of the question for this to be allowed, if Egerton was to be treated as a gentleman by me, and after a few days of more intimate acquaintance with him, I saw that it would be unjust to treat him otherwise. I knew, however that the two bumptious coolies, though respectful enough to me, would rebel at this, and probably leave me at the end of the month. However, I took heart of grace, and with a regretful eye at the finishing of the dam, the ploughing, the cutting of poles for fencing in the land, &c., I told them that henceforth he was to be called *Mr. Egerton*. They looked glum, but obeyed. In the mean time, about a day after Hall's departure, as the sun was setting, and as I was getting the table ready for tea, a German, of the thorough good working German type, presented himself at my little cabin door. I knew my man at once, and engaged him on his own terms, six pounds a month, and he was worth even more. Quiet, quaint, like one of the figures in some German etching illustrative of German country life, doing everything he did thoroughly and unostentatiously, with a love for a quiet chat over a pipe when work was done, careful of any animal whether belonging to him or committed to his charge, shrewd, business-like, strictly respectful, but with a thoroughly good opinion of himself,—my new acquisition, in his respectable dress, his enormous flat hat, under which his kindly and merry blue eyes twinkled, with his rugged face and greyish moustache, and his talk about father-

land, conjured up pleasant visions of my childish days before me. He had been many years in Africa, but had fought in the Franco-Prussian war, and had also fought the Kaffirs as a volunteer. So had Mr. Egerton—in fact, as a rule every man you meet here has been a volunteer—and they had had some slight acquaintance with each other.

The men who were making the bricks—an old man, Joe, and a young man, Jim—had also been in the volunteers at Secocoonee's, and so all were more or less acquainted. They all called Mr. Egerton by his surname, and I left that alone. The work, all but the dam, now got on well; but I had to give up the idea of making the embankment of the dam until I could build it up properly, and for that I had no lime; a second attempt at an earthwork embankment failed also. Pigsties had to be built, for so soon as the crops began to come up, the pigs could no longer be left to wander about. A large water-furrow was taken out, leading through the large dam to the small dam, and thence down to the new lands below; the garden had to be got into order; the poles cut for the wire fencing which I intended to get fixed round the upper lands; and the ploughing and sowing had to be done. In the midst of all this, one evening Jimmy made his appearance. He had tired of teaching, but was going to help in the Higginses' store at Fahl-bank; until they were ready for him he had come to me. He had to sleep with Mr. Egerton in the sitting-room. The German slept in the stable by preference, and of course he helped in various ways—Grünfontein was no place for idlers. Reva no longer came, except to do the washing, and the coolies cooked, so that we had much better dinners, a change

which Jimmy appreciated. On the whole we were very jolly.

Mr. Sparrow appeared one morning with his plan—and a very good one it was, vastly superior to mine; and at last we arranged that he was to have the contract for the house, I was to find material, he labour. He said he would send me his partner shortly, who would give me a specification of what would be required, and of the probable cost; that he had arranged so as to be able to do my work; that he must ask me to send my waggon to bring a few things from where they were, behind the mountain, to my place. He kept up the fiction of his suffering head, and his disposition to sacrifice himself, to a certain extent, for my advantage—spoke of how he would not do so for a man—oh, dear no! (and the head was shaken gently), kept it up delightfully—and as it seemed an agreeable pastime to him I never interfered, but seemed to accept it all as gospel. The brickmakers in the meantime got a Kaffir to help them, and progressed well. I paid them at the usual rate, a pound per thousand, and they found themselves. Joe was nothing remarkable; but Jim was a fine young fellow, and when I was at times in want of help, showed himself to be a good practical farmer. He kept his own place, was never pushing, but had a frank hearty manner that was very taking.

A few days after Mr. Sparrow's departure I had ridden to and from the valley, and coming back late, long after dark, owing to having to go out of my road considerably in order to avoid a grass fire, I remarked that Eclipse was ill. He carried me well, but I knew even before I got off him that he was going to have an attack of a peculiar and dangerous kind such as he had had a short time before.

I got him into the stable and applied all necessary remedies as quickly as I could; but the poor horse was in terrible agony, and at last I thought I should certainly lose him. We all—the coolies excepted—sat up in the little ante-room to the stable, and at length, after a heavy dose of opium, he got better, and we were just thinking of leaving him and going to supper—it was about eleven o'clock—when we heard a scrambling sound amongst the rocks and bushes below where we stood, and then a voice asking if this were Grünfontein. On our answering in the affirmative, a man and horse made their appearance, and the man presented himself as Mr. Sparrow's partner. He had ridden on in front of the waggon I had sent under the charge of Mosamma and Dahl Nell to fetch him and his things, and had lost his way. We all adjourned into the little sitting-room after I had seen his horse given food, and after supper the German retired to the stable, and Mr. O'Grady made up a bed for himself in the house, in company with Mr. Egerton and Jimmy.

Mr. O'Grady was an Africander, and a very singular person. He had a perplexing habit of answering at random at times, like a person who is deaf or who is listening to a foreign language; yet he was not deaf, and he habitually spoke English. He was fond of using long words, and had a disposition to laugh in an unreasonable and unaccountable manner. He might have been taken to be very simple, or very deep. He affected rather to patronize Mr. Sparrow, who in his turn spoke of him in like manner. He was certainly very obliging and good-natured. He informed me that Mosamma and Dahl had got drunk together, and had behaved very badly, on the road. The waggon came in the next day, while Mr. Egerton and