

his rifle, and fire. He always killed his man, and then the haughty way in which he would throw up his arm as he turned on his heel and pretended to reload (for I conclude they were firing blank-cartridge) was more expressive of defiance and satisfaction than any war-dance. The other three acted together. They were defending themselves from enemies who were close around them, but their imagination had transformed the stockade into brushwood, the sand that strewed it into long grass. I then, for the first time, saw what we have all read of at some time, I suppose, in some novel about the North American Indians—I mean the snake-like movement of a savage as he draws near his victim. These three savages darted into the arena and looked cautiously round, then suddenly dropped on the ground, their every muscle tense, their eyes strained; suddenly one, raising himself a little, appeared to catch a glimpse of something, his eyes literally seemed to start from their sockets, and as he grasped his comrade's arm with one hand, and pointed with the other towards some imaginary object, he trembled with excitement; then each grasping his arms they all moved—how, I really cannot say—they did not rise from the ground, they wriggled quickly along it like snakes; in longish grass all that one would have seen would have been a slight waving; now they were close to the stockade; to bound up, fire, and fall prostrate once more was the work of a moment. These men were actors by nature. Sometimes their fire told, sometimes it did not; sometimes an enemy would fall near them, and they would tomahawk or assegai him with savage delight, but with no waste of time; at last one of them was wounded; he crawled painfully back, and was helped by his comrades; and that ended their

play. But numbers now were rushing forward ; the arena was a mass of yelling, whooping savages ; and Moustache began to think affairs looked serious.

Just then Makapan asked me to excuse him, he said he had a dog of a friend of his under his charge, that he had just heard it had broken loose, that no one could catch it but he, and that he must go and do so. As he was turning away, my attention was suddenly arrested by seeing a gentleman, apparently an Englishman, step from the crowd and speak to him. Makapan shook hands with him, and clapped him on the shoulder, then turned, and introduced him to me as Mr. N——. He was a trader coming down from far up country with oxen, cows, and sheep, which he had traded. He was an Austrian, not an Englishman, and an educated, gentlemanly man—a wonderful person to meet in this out-of-the-way part of the world.

As Makapan left me he clapped his acquaintance once more on the shoulder, and I blessed my stars that I was a woman, for I suppose it was owing to this fact that Makapan did not testify his friendly feelings to me in the same manner. I do not remember what became of Mr. N——, for my attention was occupied with the savages ; I imagine he went away. Not long after, one of the men, painted like a skeleton, made a set at me : first he glared at me till he caught my eye ; then he took me as his imaginary foe, and ended by bringing his assegai within half an inch of my nose. I think he was disappointed that I did not scream. Another savage thought he would try whether I should be proof against a rifle brought into close proximity with my head ; finding that I did not faint, he turned it towards a group of girls,

who screamed loudly enough to satisfy any one. I regret to state that Moustache's nerve failed him at this crisis—he made a violent effort to bolt, and had to be held, cowering and trembling, under my chair for the rest of the time I stayed in the stockade.

Shortly after this, the sun being very hot, the odours from the crowd oppressive, and considerable monotony prevailing in the performances, I rose to depart, when the woman who had asked me for the looking-glass, and who could speak Boer dialect, told me I ought to remain until Makapan led his guard, the flower of his warriors, into the stockade; *that*, she said, would be a very splendid sight. I waited accordingly. Presently there was a lull amongst the savages, and the crowd opening nearly opposite to where I sat, a band of fine-looking Kaffirs, all be-cat-tailed, armed to the teeth, and with their long shields slung on their arms, advanced, dancing their slow war-dance, singing the accompanying war-song, and rattling their assegais against their shields. There is a peculiarity about this dance and song. I had seen and heard them once before, performed by some Kaffir levies on their way to the Zulu war. The dancers move very slightly, and their song is a chant more than a song, but it gives one the creeps to see and hear it; it looks like the movement of men held in a leash, impatient for it to be slipped; and it sounds so threatening, like the muttering of a storm: one can imagine the yell that would burst forth if the leash were slipped and the blood-hounds let loose. They advanced thus into the middle of the arena, a hundred men perhaps; then opening their ranks Makapan and Stürman jumped forth from their centre. Oh! such a pair! Makapan was

carefully attired in a gentleman's morning wrapper—brown, edged with red—and the girdle with its tassels bobbed up and down behind him; under this he had a riding-suit and heavy boots with gaiters; on his head was a white French hat, very narrow in the brim and well turned up, with three ostrich-feathers stuck in it, all pointing straight forward; a kyrie (or short club) in his hand, completed his “get up,” and in this attire he did the clumsiest “breakdown” I have ever witnessed, dancing opposite to his admiring subjects, and followed by his savage guard, who I think must have despised their leader.

Stürman, in the meantime, dressed in a riding-costume, booted and gaitered, with a pith helmet on his head, a red handkerchief round his throat, and a kyrie in his hand, did a very frantic breakdown indeed—so frantic, that it made him very hot; so he pulled off his neckerchief and threw it aside, then flung away his helmet; and the last that I saw of Mr. Stürman in the arena, just as I left the stockade, was that his attire had diminished to his shirt and breeches—the former article of dress having been freed from its confinement in the latter. The breakdown was as frantic as ever.

Moustache's delight when we got outside the precincts of the kraal was very great, but he showed it in a chastened manner, not by leaps and frisks, but by rubbing himself against me, looking at me wistfully out of his little pig's eyes, and waving his absurdly long tail in an undulating manner. He was evidently offering up a canine thanksgiving for a special deliverance!

As I was going down the hill I met some women coming up, and they spoke to Clas. I asked him what

they had said, and he hesitated. This of course made me inquisitive, so I pressed the point. Then he told me that these women had said that the feast was not yet ended; that as a finale an ox was to be killed; that one of its fore legs and one of its hind legs were to be hacked off at the hip and shoulder, and that then it was to be goaded until it died. This was to be the finale of the scene of which I had been a spectator. This was to be the culminating-point of the entertainment I had participated in—the *bonne-bouche* reserved for the people I had spoken to in friendliness!

I could not attempt to describe my feelings. To do Clas justice he expressed utter horror of the hideous idea. He said he had learnt better things since he knew the Christian religion—that he knew it was a sin to torture an animal; and although I am certain missionaries have done a great deal of harm in some ways in Africa, if they only did this one piece of good, taught but this one lesson—they have certainly done one great work.

When I reached my encampment I found a good many Kaffirs assembled talking to my boys, many of whom understood Boer dialect. I told Hendrick what I had heard.

“Mind,” said I, “if Makapan sends me any beef as he said he would, send it back, and say that we English do not eat the meat of an animal that has been tortured to death, or let it be eaten by our servants; that we would rather starve than encourage such an atrocity as he allows to be committed in his kraal.”

Hendrick remonstrated in a low voice, to the effect that it was not prudent to offend Makapan; but I was too much disgusted with the savage and his savages to care;

and, as from Hendrick's remarks I became aware that the Kaffirs understood what I was saying, I said something stronger for their benefit. The result of this was that Makapan sent me some goat's meat, and a message to the effect that not only was it not his custom to kill oxen as above described, but that he had killed no ox at all on this occasion—only a goat. I knew this was a lie told to calm me down, and I said so to Stürman who brought the message. As to the meat, I let the boys eat it, and contented myself with some fat pork I had bought the day before—and horrible greasy stuff it was.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

I HAD traded too much corn to take on one waggon, but I heard that I could get a waggon and oxen at the Mission Station to bring it up to Pretoria for me. I bought several large closed baskets of a curious manufacture special to the Kaffirs, to store what I had to leave behind me in, and Makapan promised to take care of it for me. He and Mapeela, a greater chief than Makapan, who came to visit him, rode down to my waggon the next day. Makapan wanted me to lend him one of my horses, but I told him I never lent my horses. The chiefs and Hendrick had a shooting-match with their rifles and my rifle for a bottle of brandy; Hendrick, not I, to stand the brandy. I think Mapeela won; I do not quite remember whether it was he or Makapan. I left them to their own devices, as they thought fit to let my driver enter into competition with them. Mapeela pretended not to be able to understand Boer dialect, but he could both understand and speak it.

Hendrick informed me that he wished to buy Eclipse; I could see in his eye that he coveted the horse as he looked at him; but whether he offered a hundred pounds for him as Hendrick said, I do not know, for I refused any offer that he might make. I fancy his offer was a

high one, for he looked surprised at my refusal. At that moment I admitted distinctly to myself that trading was not my forte. Fancy a "Smouse" refusing to make eighty pounds clear profit! After this I found that it was a standing joke amongst Boers I passed, that I would not sell Eclipse for any money. I think they somehow respected me for it, probably because it gave them an idea that I was very rich—I don't think it could be for any other reason. Thinking of Eclipse, I was very near forgetting to describe Mapeela. He is a big, sensual, and violent-looking man. He was dressed in a riding-suit and a white French hat; wore his waistcoat a little open, and showed a white shirt; had a necktie and a pin in it, white cuffs, and a ring on his finger. He affected more airs and graces than Makapan, and I liked him less.

And now, before leaving Makapan, I must record two things: one, that it struck me that Hendrick was a little afraid of these wild Kaffirs; and secondly, that my brandy gave me a great deal of trouble. The difficulty I had to prevent myself being forced into doing what I had said I would not do, was a constant worry. It was impossible to sell by the bottle, for the good reason that my purchasers had no bottles, or at least very few. They had old tins that had once had paraffin in them, and old oil tins, and tin mugs, and little and big gourds hollowed out, and sometimes they had small medicine bottles, or old sauce bottles. Then they would worry me perpetually to sell them sixpence worth of brandy; but this I always refused to do; and I used to hunt them away from the waggon when they wanted to drink brandy there.

"We won't tell," they used to say. Of course I knew that. "Every trader sells us 'tots'—what is the law

here?" they would say. Of course I knew that too. One old gentleman, after vainly begging me to sell him a sixpenny "tot," paused, then said, "I want to make you a present," and offered me a sixpence. This is a common way of evading the law; you don't sell, you accept, and give a present! I astonished the old gentleman by dismissing him summarily. He was a curious specimen. He had been brought up amongst the Boers, had lived amongst them and dressed like them for years, and now he was accustomed to walk about in the most outrageously light costume, not from poverty but from choice.

The day I left Makapan's-poort, as I was crossing the stream after the waggon, which had gone a little ahead, I heard horses' hoofs coming rapidly after me. The riders were Makapan and an attendant bearing an empty paraffin tin. He wanted another pull at the brandy! He got it; shook hands with Hendrick and Clas, then put out his paw to me, as Mapeela had done the day before. That affair about the ox made me extremely dislike to touch the savage; but one can hardly refuse to give a man one's hand when one has voluntarily gone into his territory; so I held out mine, which he shook heartily; and turning our horses we cantered away in opposite directions.

The bush-veldt was now a desert, all the Boers had treked to their farms. It was getting late in the season, the weather was very hot—so hot that it was impossible to trek in the middle of the day. At noon one lay under a bush, or under the waggon if one could not get a leafy bush (and most of the bushes are thorn and don't give much shade), and panted. Under these circumstances,

to be reduced to eat rice and pig's fat, and drink tea without milk, for breakfast, luncheon and dinner, is the reverse of agreeable, but there was nothing else to eat.

One morning as I was riding in front of the waggon I saw Mr. N—— outspanned and having early coffee. I rode over, and as I did so a young zebra frisked up to Eclipse, and turned up his pretty little nose at him with a vicious grin, which affected Eclipse's nerves so much that he pretended he was going to rear. Mr. N—— asked me to dismount, and while he was giving me some coffee the zebra tried to upset the sugar-bowl, and being hunted away, watched his opportunity, kicked the little table over, and having broken some crockery, and sent the sugar-bowl flying, ate up the sugar, and then trotted up to his master in a perfectly artless way, and rubbed his taper white nose on that gentleman's coat. Mr. N—— had a young leopard there who excited Roughy's curiosity, and who nearly caught hold of Roughy's tail, to the great discomfiture of the latter.

A little farther on we met a Boer, going, I think, to the wood-bush. Hendrick managed to get some Boer biscuits from this man, who came over afterwards to my waggon, and to whom, at his request, I gave some pig's fat. He, and a friend who was with him, had not tasted anything but biscuits for several days, so the fat was a luxury to them, and the biscuits were a luxury to me.

A little farther on Mr. N—— picked me up. He wanted to buy some Kaffir corn and came to my waggon. His zebra came with him, and thought he would like to taste the corn as it was being measured out; so he put his head in the sack and twirled round and round, with his head representing a pivot, kicking the whole time

until he had gratified his fancy. He kicked even at his master, whose feelings were so hurt that he asked for the whip.

I rode into the Mission Station with Mr. N——. We met a young missionary, to whom I bowed, and asked him whether Mr. and Mrs. B—— were still at the station, or had moved permanently to their new farm of Sandfontein. He said they had moved. It happened that I had heard Mr. N—— speak in German to him before I addressed him, and so I spoke to him also in German. He was the new missionary; judge of my astonishment, when I heard from himself and others that he could speak neither English, Dutch, Boer dialect, nor any Kaffir tongue; and yet he had been some time in the colony and was a missionary!

While I was at this place, an incident happened which gave me some concern. One evening Hendrick asked me if he might go a-visiting, and I gave him leave. Then little Hendrick asked me if he might go and play with some friends, and I said he might on one condition. The hut or cottage he was going to was not far from the waggon, and I told him I should hang up a piece of candle at the back of the waggon in the lantern, and that when he saw that it was burnt out he must come home and go to bed. These two had not long departed when Pete asked me if he might go. I said he might not; that I objected to being left alone, in case of anything going wrong with the oxen. He submitted with a good grace, and to show him I was pleased with him, I said, "I know it is a little hard on you, Pete, as this is the last night you will be here, but it can't be helped. You have been behaving well lately, so here is a 'tot' for you, and go to bed."

I drew him a "tot," then lay down on my own bed, which I had made just behind the waggon, near the cask of brandy, and also near the horses. I heard Pete lie down towards the front of the waggon. I remained awake, for I made it a rule never to go to sleep if any of the boys were away. Little Hendrick came back so soon as the light was put out, and lay down alongside of Pete. Shortly after Eclipse got uneasy. I called Pete, but getting no answer I got up and went to ascertain what was the matter with the horse. He had been apparently startled by something. I thought that I would go and see whether Pete was in his place. It was very dark, but at last I made out that he was not. I woke little Hendrick after waiting for a while, but found he was too stupid with sleep to understand anything. I did not like to leave the waggon, so waited until Hendrick came back, which he did soon. I saw he had had rather too much Kaffir beer. He was not drunk, but excited. I told him that Pete was missing, and added, as I was going to lie down again,—

"It seems he is determined to get his five-and-twenty."

At this moment Pete himself emerged from the darkness, and said,—

"Oh! am I to be punished for no offence? I only went away for a minute to that Boer's waggon that is outspanned there."

The waggon was at a very little distance.

"You have been some time away, Pete," said I, "and if you had only been to that Boer's waggon, you would have heard me call you, for I called you repeatedly. I am quite certain you are telling a lie, and that you went

away to get drink ; but you have not been very long away, and you are not drunk, so I will not punish you this time, for I have no absolute proof against you. It is a lucky thing for yourself that you failed in getting drink, or when I treked out of the village to-morrow I should have had you tied up and given twenty-five lashes. I never told you what my punishment for you would be. Now you know it, and will, I hope, remember it. Now go to bed."

But instead of going to bed I could see Pete by the flickering light of the lantern dancing and shifting about in the most remarkable manner, and with an expression of very great dread on his face.

"Don't make a fool of yourself," quoth I, "but go to bed at once, unless you wish to make me angry with you."

"*He* is going to beat me with the double whip," he said, still dancing about.

I turned, and there I saw Hendrick with the long driver's whip in his hand also dancing about. I saw their tactics then. Hendrick was trying to get a sly cut at Pete, and Pete was taking cover. *I* was his cover. Hendrick, in his excited state, looked rather demoniacal; but I could hardly keep my gravity in spite of the unpleasantness of the situation ; for those two savage-looking wretches dancing about in the dark, and the idea of how the group would look if I could only see myself between them, tickled me amazingly.

"Put that whip down, Hendrick," said I. "You must not touch Pete without my orders."

"He is my forelooper," quoth Hendrick, "and I must correct him."

And the dancing went on.

"That is not the way that I allow my servants to speak to me," said I. "Give me that whip directly."

He hesitated a moment, then with a sullen look gave me the whip.

"Now both of you go to bed at once, and do not let me hear a sound from either of you," said I.

And I saw them both in their blankets before I lay down again; but hardly had I done so when I heard Hendrick's voice.

"You had better be quiet, Hendrick," said I, "or I shall punish you."

"Pete is only waiting for me to go to sleep to knock my brains out with a yoke-skey," said he.

"It's a lie," growled Pete.

"You've got one ready in your hand," cried Hendrick.

I stood up once more, and went over to the two worthies. I found that Pete was up again. He said that he was afraid of Hendrick, and he looked as if he were. If he had had a yoke-skey in his hand he had none then. I stooped to try if I could find any missiles in his bed, and my eye was caught by a hat, which was unlike any hat belonging to my boys, lying close to Pete's blankets.

"Whose hat is this?" I asked, on the point of taking hold of it, when a dark face peered from under it. "Who are you? Get out of this at once!" I exclaimed. But the face scowled, and the figure it belonged to rose gradually. "Quick with the double whip, Hendrick," I cried. "You shall get it hot!"

Hendrick was by the side of my bed where the whip

lay, and back in an instant; but the fellow was too quick. He had bolted into the darkness, and to my astonishment not only he, but another ruffian, who rose from my very feet. I must almost have trodden on him. Of course Pete was astonished, and Hendrick was astonished. There was no proof, but it did not look nice. I suspected Pete, and Hendrick averred that he did.

The next morning I had business at a farm lying at some little distance. Just as I was saddling, the Boer whose waggon had been outspanned near mine asked me to sell him two bottles of brandy. I drew the brandy for him, and mounted my horse. Now I always carried the key of the tap of the brandy-cask and the key of the waggon-box in a leather pocket on a broad belt which I wore day and night, and it was so much my habit to put my finger in this pocket every time I mounted, to see that all was safe, that it had become purely a mechanical movement. I cannot absolutely remember whether I did this or not on that occasion, but I have little doubt that I did. I rode to and from the farm pretty sharply, for I was in a hurry to get back to the waggon. When I got back I found the keys were not in my pocket. I looked everywhere for them fruitlessly, but at last I discovered that the stitching of the leather to the belt had given way in one part, and although it would have been difficult for the keys to slip through, still I had ridden at a very sharp canter, and it was possible. This was vexatious, but it could not be helped.

I started the next day for Pretoria, taking the direct Waterberg transport road. I found that I could not get a waggon to return for the corn left at Makapan's-poort, and I had only to make up my mind to return for

it from Pretoria, after selling what I had up. I started the waggon, and rode over to Sandfontein myself to bid good-bye to Mr. and Mrs. B——. After having no one to talk to except Boers for a long time, it is refreshing to get amongst such people as the B——s. I remained to dinner, and then delayed, talking and thinking very little of the time, until the rays of the setting sun shone into my eyes through the window, and awakened me to the fact that I had a long ride across country before me, and a country that I did not know into the bargain, and that I had not an hour of daylight, or even twilight to count on. I was off as soon as possible. I knew that I had to keep in towards the Waterberg hills, until I came to a road running close to their base through thick high bush. The wind had become very high, and there were heavy clouds gathering swiftly. I rode as fast as I could, but it is not easy to ride very fast over a feldt full of holes, covered with long grass, and thickly studded in many parts with little thorn bushes; besides, it was soon pitch dark. However, I got the road, and, soon after crossing a stream, I saw a light which I knew must be in the farm-house of Jan Steen, near which my waggon was to outspan. After a few minutes more I was greeted by Hendrick and Pete. The camp-fire was made in a hollow of the ground to try to keep the wind off, but it was blowing a hurricane now, and the fire had become so disorderly that cooking was not to be attempted, and Hendrick had cooked and kept my supper for me in the house of an old Kaffir "Swartboy," Clas's father, and a retainer of De Clerc's and De Plessis, whose houses were quite close to Jan Steen's. Young De Plessis came over to the waggon, and asked me to sleep in his house

but I felt too anxious about the waggon; besides that, in such a storm, the horses, or at least Eclipse, were likely to get frightened, and to listen to reason from me alone. So I slept close to the waggon under an enormous tree, and sheltered by its trunk. Behind it I could not sleep, the sand was driving so furiously before the wind. During the night the dogs seemed restless, but I could neither hear nor see anything. To say the truth the wind roared so much, and the darkness was so dense, that it would have been strange if I could.

The next day it was evident that rain was near—heavy rain too. The Boers were very unhappy about my having lost the key of the tap, because I could not get them any brandy. They tried to put an old tap which had a key into the barrel, but it did not work. Then they showed me a way of displacing the tap, drawing off a bucket of brandy, and replacing it without its appearing to have been removed; and this suggested certain novel ideas to me. They got their brandy, however, and were happy. There was a perpetual trotting backwards and forwards from their cottages to the waggon. A Boer or Boeress delights in buying by driblets, thus spinning out the amusement.

On one of these occasions I asked De Clerc if he could sell me a sheep. He said he would consult his wife. After a time he came back, and said that sheep were scarce, but as he regarded me as a friend, he would let me have one for a pound; and of course I had to give him the pound, which he pocketed, assuring me all the while that if his father had not taught him that he ought to help travellers he would not have let me have the sheep at all. He then asked me to give him a "tot,"

but as I found that the giving of "tots" was a very losing concern, I declined. He looked very angry.

"Well," said he, "it is of no consequence. I have plenty of money to buy with; but if you do not help others you cannot expect others to help you. Who can tell? a little act of kindness done to me might pay you in the long-run," &c., &c.

He evidently wished me to see the giving of "tots" in the light of a Christian duty.

"Now," he went on, "I let you have that sheep."

This was rather too much.

"I think, Mr. De Clerc," said I very politely, "you forget that I let you have that hat for nothing, for you did not even take me to the lion hunt, and all because you said you had no money, but wanted it very badly."

The old fellow collapsed at once.

"You are right," he said, looking very sheepish. "Let us talk no more about it. I will buy a bottle of brandy."

He did so.

"Now," said he, "let us drink to our friendship."

"I will pledge you in water, if that will do," said I. So we pledged each other.

I have not described De Clerc. He was a tall, athletic man, with a trace of his French origin still lingering about him. A handsome man, with grey beard and hair, a well-cut nose, fine, rather cruel-looking lips, and blazing, black eyes under shaggy eyebrows.

A little later on he was lolling against the waggon, and some remark was made by me as to the untruthfulness of the Kaffirs. I think I was guilty of uttering some platitude to the effect that honesty is the best policy.

De Clerc turned his black eyes on me, and said in an undertone,—

“Then how about this treachery between you and Willem?” meaning De Plessis.

“Oh!” said I, “I thought you were supposed not to know about those feathers. You mean that, I suppose?”

“Don’t talk so loud,” said he. “I will keep your secret.”

“Thanks,” said I, “there is no secret of mine to be kept. It is De Plessis’s secret, not mine; for now that I know that it was unlawful in me to buy them, I shall either declare them, or not keep them.”

“You had better not do that,” said De Clerc. “I will keep your secret.”

“What you had better do,” said I, “is to come over to Willem’s, and hear what I have to say to him about the feathers. I am going there now.”

De Clerc said he was just going home, and departed. I went to De Plessis’s cottage, not a stone’s throw from De Clerc’s, and awaited him there, but he did not come.

I must say a word about this cottage. It was a mud-hut, of small dimensions. The little bedroom was only curtained off from the other room—that is to say, there was but one room in the house; but going into that hut you felt as if you were in a drawing-room. There was very little furniture, and it was very simple; but everything was clean and fresh.

Having waited for a time I thought I had better begin about the feathers. I said,—

“Your father-in-law spoke to me about those feathers this—”

“My father-in-law!” gasped De Plessis. “What, does he know of them?”

“Didn’t you know he knew?” asked I.

Poor De Plessis’s face was sufficient answer. In this dilemma they (Willem and his wife) sent for Mrs. De Clerc. The old gentleman had kept the matter dark from her as well as from them. I began to suspect that he had some deep game in hand, but I said nothing. His three relations were in dismay.

“Now,” said I, “you see I did not know that I was doing an illegal act when I bought those feathers. I know now that I am liable to a fine of 500*l.* if it is found out that I did buy them. When I get up to Pretoria, and want to sell them, people will ask where I got them.”

“You can say you bought them in driblets from the Kaffirs,” suggested Mrs. De Clerc.

“Unfortunately that would not be true,” I remarked.

“Oh! it don’t matter about that,” said De Plessis, quite simply. “You have only to tell them so; they won’t find out.”

“Unfortunately,” said I, “I have an objection to telling lies.”

“It’s a mere matter of business,” said De Plessis.

“It may be your way of doing business,” said I; “it is not mine. That being understood, I will tell you what I am going to do, and then you can tell me what you are going to do. I am going to do one of three things. I will return the feathers to you if you will return the money to me. I know you worked hard for that bird, and that you have a struggle to keep up this nice little home as nicely as you keep it; therefore, I will take off whatever profit I made on the goods, and let you have

them at cost price. If you will do this the affair ceases to have any farther interest to me, as I shall be rid of the feathers. Or, if you choose, I will go with you to the Landrost of Nilstrom, and we will tell him the story as it stands. You say you can swear that the bird's mate was dead. Perhaps that makes a difference in law, and he may decide in our favour, and let matters stand as they do. If you don't like either of these plans then I shall go to the Landrost of Nilstrom, and tell him that I bought the feathers without knowing that I was doing an unlawful act, and ask what I am to do with them, and whatever he tells me to do I shall do. I shall not mention your name unless I am forced to do so; but I may be forced."

The three looked very blank. Then there commenced a grand pow-wow. It is no use denying that this paying back of the money was a very serious affair to poor De Plessis. He was still in debt—and in debt to his father-in-law; and it seems that the father-in-law used to make himself unpleasant about the debt. Living as these Boers did, and as most Boers do, all squeezed up together—seeing each other constantly—with the terrible habit of running in and out of each others' houses, developed to an alarming extent, an unpleasant father-in-law assumes the same proportions as an unpleasant mother-in-law in better regulated communities.

I was very sorry for De Plessis. He, on his part, was overwhelmed by his misfortune, and to do him credit, he seemed to be most deeply affected by his father-in-law's perfidy. "He wants to ruin me," he went on saying, "and I never have done him any harm." Under these circumstances the two women took the matter in

hand, and the deliberate advice given by two very excellent specimens of the female Boer—a people, we are told by themselves, and some others, remarkably Christian—was, that De Plessis should go with me to the Landrost and swear—take his solemn oath—that he had found the ostrich dead in the feldt. They urged this as the best and safest proceeding, using all the little arts they knew of to make it out a very venial deviation from the truth.

Willem and I sat listening to them. I assumed a “know-nothing” expression; De Plessis listened eagerly. When they had said all they had to say, he sat quite still; I could see his face working; there was a great struggle going on; then his eyes filled, and with a catch in his voice he said,—

“No! I cannot forswear myself for sixteen pounds! Mrs. Hedwick (his version of my name), I will pay you the money; send the feathers back secretly to-night.”

“I am so glad you say that,” was my reply; “I should not have liked to know that you were not an honest fellow, Willem. Now you understand why I would not tell a lie about those feathers; a lie to me is what a false oath is to you.”

De Plessis said, “Yes, I understand,” and we shook hands. “But,” he added, “never again do I go into that man’s house. He may come here, but I won’t go there.”

He did go, however, but I don’t think it was willingly.

I had not done with this little incident yet, for I had made up my mind to have it out with De Clerc; so, after leaving De Plessis, I walked over to De Clerc’s house. This was very different from the one I had left. It was much larger, and there was more furniture in it. I think

there were two rooms, but it had the frowzy look common to Boers' houses. I found De Clerc alone, which was just what I wanted. He was delighted to see me, and we sat down and began to talk. After a while I said,—

“Oh! about those feathers.”

“Don't let the matter trouble you,” he replied; “you can trust me, but still, if you really think it better and safer for you not to keep them, you can let me have them and I will give you fourteen pounds.” (N.B. Two pounds less than De Plessis had asked for them. This had been his game all through.)

“Thanks,” said I; “I have just been speaking to your son-in-law on the subject, and we have settled the matter satisfactorily. Although it is unnecessary to give particulars, I may say that both he and I shall lose by our arrangement, but that we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we have behaved honestly.”

The old fellow looked at me.

“But,” I continued, “this is not what I wanted to say with regard to the feathers; do you remember a conversation we had before I went to Makapan's-poort, when you asked me where one could find a more Christian nation than your nation?”

“Yes, I remember.”

“Well,” I continued, “as an influential member of that nation, I should like to know whether you consider it Christian-like to spy out your son-in-law's errors, and afterwards, instead of speaking of them to him, to try to make mischief by talking of them to a stranger like myself?”

De Clerc began to stammer out excuses without looking me in the face.

"It is no use trying to get out of it, Mr. De Clerc," said I; "what I want you to tell me is, whether this is the sort of thing that the Bible tells you is right? Look up to Heaven and tell me whether you think that in doing as you have done by your child's husband you believe you have done right in the sight of God?"

De Clerc hesitated, then said,—

"No."

"And now," said I, "do not you think that it is very disgraceful of you, who, you told me yourself, are a leader amongst a nation that prides itself on its Christianity, to require a lesson in Christianity from one of a nation which you hate, and consider beneath you in this respect?" He had tried to interrupt me, saying,— "Pray let that be," but I went on. For a moment he sat silent, then he said,—

"Yes, I thank you for the good lesson."

I put out my hand, and he took it. I said,—

"We can shake hands now. Do you remember that we pledged our friendship a little while ago? If I had not pledged you, perhaps I should not have spoken to you as I have just done; but having once called you my friend, I could not do otherwise."

I believe the man understood me, and I know he seemed to like me much better after this affair, but it did not prevent his calumniating De Plessis and trying to make me dislike him. He told me that De Plessis had neglected Dandy while he had him, had overworked him, and given him no mealeas or forage. He knew this was a tender point with me.

His wife was present when he said this, and she

immediately said, "He lies. Willem gave Dandy forage every day."

I said, "You must not tell me that, Mr. De Clerc. I only required to look at the horse to know that he had not been overworked, and that he had been fed well while Willem had him."

I may mention that I incidentally found out that Dandy had once belonged to De Clerc's brother, who had taken him to Dammerland, and there sold him to the man who put him up to auction. His name had been "Rennevinn" in those days. I think it was in the afternoon of this day that I rode over to the farm of a neighbouring magistrate, a very respectable Boer, descended from a German family. His wife, who was similarly descended, was a very good woman, and the children were all well brought up. They were not at all like Boers; quiet, gentle people, very superior in every way. Their farm was very pretty to look at, but was spoilt for practical purposes by the failure of water. Some years before, it, in common with the rest of Waterberg, was well watered. Now all the springs are drying up. This is, perhaps, due to some of those curious caprices observable in volcanic countries, for Waterberg is very volcanic. In many places signs of this are obvious, without taking the hot springs into account.

On returning late from this farm I missed Pete, and on asking where he was, I heard that he had left the oxen committed to his care, to stray where they would, and had disappeared. Now at this time of the year a plant grows in certain parts of the feldt which is poisonous to oxen, and I was very much displeased. He did not come back either that night or the next

morning. On cross-questioning little Hendrick, he said that he had heard Pete's voice in a large Kaffir kraal which was on Jan Steen's farm. I felt sure that he wanted to hide away until I had gone, being afraid of punishment, so I went to the magistrate I have mentioned above, and requested that Pete might be caught and punished. Two Kaffirs were despatched secretly to the kraal to catch him, in the meantime I looked at some oxen, and arranged to buy them. The magistrate was at De Clerc's house paying a visit, and two of the oxen were his. Presently there was a general stir noticeable among the Kaffirs hanging about the place, and I knew that Pete was coming—and the next minute I saw him running, with his hands tied behind him, in front of the two Kaffirs who had been sent for him. I felt I was in for it now. I had said that this man was to have twenty-five lashes the next time he offended, and he had offended very grossly; of course, he must have them, but it was the first time I had ever seen a man flogged. The instant that Pete reached the waggon, looking like a hunted baboon, Hendrick flew at him, tripped him up, and had him tied to the disselboom by his wrists in a twinkling of the eye. The demon in the man was loose, he looked as if he would have liked to tear Pete to pieces, and he scowled at me when I made him untie the prisoner, and told him to wait until the magistrate should come. In the meantime I explained to Pete that he was going to get his twenty-five lashes all the same. How that fellow did grovel to me, to be sure! How he called me his dear missus! his good, kind missus! How abjectly he twisted himself about before me! At last he started the happy thought that

he would pay a fine to me, which was absurd on the face of it; for he had to my knowledge no money, having drawn on his wages for clothing until all I owed him was about four shillings. In the meantime the magistrate and the other Boers, besides a crowd of Kaffirs, had arrived on the scene of action. Jan Steen, a funny-looking man with a crumpled up face, bristling black hair, and bead-like eyes, looked like a weasel that has caught sight of a rat; De Clerc had a bloodthirsty look about him, and gloated hungrily on Pete; even Willem De Plessis looked excited. The magistrate alone was calm. He began to examine Pete, and asked him whether he had any complaint against me. Pete said,—

“No; never have I had such a good mistress; I eat the same food that she does; and even the other evening she gave up some of her own dinner to me because she thought I had not had enough.”

The men sent to fetch him deposed that they had found him in the kraal, and that he had pulled out a knife and resisted fiercely until they tied his hands. Of his repeated offences there could be no doubt; it only remained to be decided what his punishment was to be.

“Twenty-five lashes,” said the magistrate.

There was an eager movement amongst the Dutch; Jan Steen seized him.

“Sir! sir!” cried Pete; “I will pay—I will pay.”

“Stop,” said the magistrate; “what did you say, that you will pay?”

“I will pay three pounds,” cried Pete.

“Don’t let him! off with him! flog him!” snarled the assembled Boers.

“He can’t pay,” said I, “for he has no money.”

"This man will lend me money," cried Pete, pointing to a Kaffir, who that very morning had assured me that he had no money and wanted me to let him have a pair of boots on credit.

"Stay," said the magistrate, "by law, Pete, if you can pay three pounds you can escape the flogging."

The Boers were furious, and between them and the Kaffirs, all of whom were talking at the top of their voices, it was very difficult to make my voice heard.

"Have I, as Pete's employer, any voice in this matter?" asked I.

"Of course you have," shouted the Boers; "flog him!"

"But have I by law?" I asked again.

The magistrate hesitated, then said,—

"Yes; you can insist on his being flogged if you choose."

"Then," said I, "I do insist."

"I daresay he will be better in future," said the poor magistrate, whilst the assembled Boers scowled at him.

"I don't think he is likely to be improved by finding that I don't carry out my threat, or by another man paying three pounds to get him off," said I; "you have said I can choose his punishment, and I choose twenty-five lashes; the quicker he gets it, the quicker this painful scene will be over."

They were round him in a minute those Boers and Hendrick, like hounds round a fox. They tripped him up, they pulled him about and yelped over him. Jan Steen was the foremost. It was a disgusting spectacle.

"Look here," cried I, in a rage, "if you don't leave that man alone I'll send every one of you away from my

waggon; he is to be punished—not tortured; stand back all of you.”

A very cool speech, as it struck me afterwards, considering that my waggon was outspanned on these men’s ground, but they stood back. He got his five-and-twenty. I waited to see him get up before I made up my mind as to whether I would keep him in my service or not; as he stood up, he turned savagely to me,—

“Thank you, missis,” he said, “give me something to drink; I am almost dead.”

He had not had a severe beating by any means, but his rage was almost killing him I could see.

“Give him some water quickly,” I said, but he dashed it from him.

“I want brandy, brandy,” he said hoarsely, and then in Zulu he said, what I understood (and rightly) to be, that he would complain of me in Pretoria, which under the circumstances was of course absurd.

I took the money I owed him out of my purse and gave it to him.

“I may stop, may I not, missus?” he said.

He was cooling rapidly.

“No,” I said, “you have had your punishment and been insolent—now go,” and he went.

I was sitting by the waggon in the evening, at the camp-fire, little Hendrick and a few Kaffirs from the kraal were squatted chatting. They were talking Boer dialect, and as I sat apart from them they probably, if they remembered that I was there at all, thought I could not understand them. A little time before I should not have understood their gabble. One man was telling how Pete had bought a goat, and some fowls, and how he

had seen him pull a handful of sovereigns out of his pocket. I let the fellow go on until he changed his subject; then I called to him and asked him to repeat what he had said about Pete. He instantly shuffled, but as I told him that I had understood what he had said at the fire, he repeated it all correctly to me. I then sent him back to the others, got out my account-book, and examined my money. It was all quite correct—the inference therefore was, that Pete had been robbing the waggon, and selling. I knew that he had no money, honestly come by, and this discovery only corroborated a suspicion I had conceived when his friend offered to pay three pounds for him. I said nothing, but the next morning, instead of starting, I told what I had heard to the magistrate, and he agreed that Pete should be caught again and examined. The Kaffirs said they were afraid to go to catch him, and the gentle magistrate was obliged to ask me to bribe to the extent of half-a-crown each if they brought him; to this I agreed.

This time there was a grand conclave in Jan Steen's cottage—a cottage as large as De Clerc's, but more untidy and dirtier. The whole Steen family, although related to the De Clercs, were very low-class Boers. The magistrate had papers and ink, and witnesses were called, and everything was supposed to be going to be conducted in a strictly business-like manner.

After the prisoner was brought in (in a very defiant state of mind) everybody began talking at once; then the magistrate called to order, and in the course of examination—the examination being conducted by all the assembled Boers according as an idea struck them—Pete called De Clerc "uncle," upon which De Clerc re-

marked he was not his uncle—Pete, while there was a pause in the proceedings, owing to one of the witnesses being absent, sat down on a chair, and was indignantly told to stand up or squat—Hendrick, who was present as a witness, and old Swartboy, who was present as a spectator, began to chaff each other; Jan Steen joined in, and no order at all could be restored until I told Hendrick that I should send him out of the room if he were not silent. He was the chief offender on this occasion, but yet, as I looked at him, I could not but admit in my mind that he was the most gentlemanly-mannered man in the room. After a sitting of several hours, it was made evident that Pete had stolen articles from my waggon, and had disposed of them to the Kaffirs, and had afterwards treated them and been treated in return with brandy bought from me, and not only this, but at the very time that we were searching for Pete gold had been brought to Jan Steen by a Kaffir of his own, to be changed into silver, the money being brought from and returned to Pete.

I must here remark that there is a law in the Transvaal which says that no intoxicating drink may be sold to a Kaffir, without permission from his master, either written or verbal, under a heavy penalty. The law is broken every minute of the day in Pretoria, under the very nose of the Landrost, but Landrosts in the country parts are more particular. Jan Steen, however, had given me leave to sell as much brandy to his Kaffirs as they liked to buy. The Boers were very angry—most virtuously indignant—they talked, until it was time to go to bed, over the necessity of making an example of the kraal Kaffirs; they said if such villainy as that were

to be allowed to go on, they might go so far as to rise against their masters and murder them. De Clerc with flashing eyes, and Jan Steen with glittering ones, uttered all sorts of vague threats of the terrible reckoning they were going to have with those kraal Kaffirs; and De Clerc said he would sleep with his rifle by his side close to the waggon to protect me from them, but he did not do it. In the meantime, Pete was committed for trial before the Landrost of Nilstrom. I may here mention that I found out on taking stock that I had lost about 50*l.* worth of different sorts of goods.

As the trial of Pete could not come on for a few days I was obliged to postpone my departure. This was inconvenient. Rain had not fallen, but it was evidently imminent. There was a long stretch of turf-country to be crossed—country which is frightful to pull through, except after a long continuance of dry weather. The waggon was very heavy, and so full that it would be impossible for me to get any shelter by creeping inside in case of rain. Added to this the weather was intensely hot, and I felt the fever beginning to creep over me. Under these circumstances I determined to buy from De Plessis a very good new waggon with a tent on it, to make two spans of the old span and of those oxen I had recently bought, and to divide the load.

On the day of the trial I rode over to Nilstrom early in the morning. Nilstrom, the capital of Waterberg, consisted then of four rather tumble-down buildings. One was the prison, another the Landrost's office, a third his dwelling-house, and the fourth the church. The imaginary town is situated in the ugliest part of Waterberg that I have seen, and in a particularly unhealthy locality.

The Landrost, an educated German gentleman, must, in my estimation, be a person of very decided character, not to have (at some unguarded moment) committed suicide. Pete would not confess, and, on account of his contumacy, was sentenced to twenty-five lashes as well as six months' imprisonment with hard labour. As he got out of the crazy old prison before many days, and disappeared, his punishment was not a particularly severe one; and as his trial had nothing remarkable about it, except that the ordinary unpleasantness of a little police-court was aggravated by the odour attached to black people, I may here conclude the history of Pete by mentioning that when I asked Jan Steen and De Clerc what they were going to do about the kraal Kaffirs, they said that they thought I would prosecute them, but that if they did, they were afraid the Kaffirs might murder them. The next day I started. Some of the oxen I had bought had strayed, and were missing. But the people said they would send them after me to my first outspan, and I could get on well without them till I got into the turf. The next morning, however, they had not arrived; so, before the sun was up, I started back to fetch them. I had breakfast with the De Plessis, and the oxen having been found, Willem De Plessis, De Clerc's young son, and I started for the waggon, driving them in front of us. It was now very hot, with a hot wind blowing; and in the evening, as I was sitting by the waggon, I remarked a fever sore coming on my hand, and I knew I was in for it.

We treked that night, and I felt very ill. Little Hendrick had to act forelooper, and so I rode Dandy and led Eclipse. I did some trade along the road, but pushed

on as quickly as I could, fearing that the rain would catch me before I got through the turf. It was very hot, and there was very little water to be got, some of the springs were quite dried up. The fever came on strong, and I was soon all covered with fever-sores, which made it very painful to ride, particularly as I had a led horse. But at last we were through the turf and through the Pinaar's river. As I crossed it the river was barely up to the horses' knees in the deepest part, and was a mere little rivulet running between very high banks; but the sky was heavy with clouds, the sun sometimes scorching, sometimes hidden, and there was a gusty wind. I off-saddled near to a Boer's house, and threw myself down on the grass quite exhausted. I had been wondering whether I should be able to keep up until I had passed this river, for an hour or more; it was done now. Presently the waggons came over, the oxen looking very much knocked up. They had had nothing to drink for nearly twenty-four hours. By the time that they and the horses had to be tied up for the night, the first drops of the storm were beginning to fall. I saw the horses well blanketed and with their hoods on, then got into the tent-waggon myself. That night the rain came down in floods, and the next morning when I emerged from the waggon I saw an enormous lake stretching far and wide, with the tops of trees showing like little islands here and there with the current swirling round them. The waters were out over miles and miles of country along the little rivulet of the day before.

For the next few days it rained off and on, and I was laid up with fever. I used to crawl out of the waggon occasionally, but it would have been impossible for me to

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ride. The Boers, whose home was close by, were not very nice specimens, but were civil enough. At last the weather and I were sufficiently improved for a move to be made, and two days after, late in the evening, I rode into Pretoria, though still burning and shivering with fever. The weather was still uncertain, and that very day I had had to ride through the rain, owing to there being no one but myself to mind the horses. I passed my Irish acquaintance's house as I rode in, and he gave me some wine, for which I am still grateful to him, and told me that the Basuto war had broken out, and that grain of all sorts was commanding a high price; so my speculation of trading grain turned out a success so far.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BEFORE I left Pretoria on this expedition Mrs. Felman had told me that I might have the use of the stable, and of a very tiny room partitioned off from it by a half-high wall, for my own occupation. This had two advantages—it saved me expense, and allowed of my being near the horses and the oxen and waggons. During my tenure of this room I repeatedly pressed her to receive payment for it, and for the stable, as well as for my food (for I was always invited to join the family at meal-times), but she persistently refused.

To the Felmans, therefore, I betook myself on this evening, and was greeted heartily. Going out to see to the oxen in the dark, I tumbled against Mr. Egerton. He still lived in my mansion by the swamp, but soon after this he left it, and went off with the volunteers to Basutoland. I had meant, after selling my loads, to return with the waggons for the grain I had left behind, but the fever had me in its grip now. I would never lie by completely, but the weakness and the intense pain from the dreadful sores quite prostrated me. I hired a groom (a half-caste Hottentot) called "Soldat," and sent the waggons back, with a few goods to trade with the Boers and Kaffirs,

under the charge of Hendrick, and a son of Swartboy's, called "Boy," whom I had engaged as driver to the new waggon at Jan Steen's farm. He had been brought up amongst the Boers there, and they gave him an excellent character. I was very averse to trusting these men alone, but under the circumstances I did not know anything better to do, considering the high character I had received of Hendrick, a character confirmed to me by various Boers.

Jimmy was in Pretoria now. He had left the Higginnes' store, and had got employment as clerk to a surveyor. So soon as I felt a little better, although still far from well, I determined to go and put my new farm a little in order. So I bought an old half-tent waggon cheap, and a span of salted oxen. I had a long time to wait before I could get the oxen, and then there was a difficulty about getting a driver—for most of the drivers were off with the volunteers to Basutoland.

There was beginning to be a feeling of insecurity in Pretoria. There was nothing to be seen, but people felt that the air was electric. I was pretty sure that the Boers would fight, after a certain conversation I had with De Clerc at his farm. On this occasion he had been talking with me about political affairs, asking me if I thought the Boers would be supported by any of the European powers or by America; and he suddenly said, "But in any case we shall fight;" then after a moment's pause continued, "I will tell you our plans. I don't count you as an enemy. This is what you will hear. Some man will refuse to pay his taxes; then your government will seize property to the amount of what is due; and then we shall rise; and we shall take that property out of the hands of

the authorities, and if they interfere with us we shall fight ; but until then we have done with talking."

"I should be sorry if you did what you say," I replied. "We have not many troops in the country now ; but for you to go to war with the English nation is like a little child going to fight a man."

He assented to this, but in the conversation that ensued he told me that the Boers were not afraid of our cannon.

"We don't fight as you do," he said. "What is the use of cannon against men who scurry round singly on horseback, and who shoot at you from behind stones and trees without your seeing them ? We shall not meet your troops in the open Urfeldt, don't you believe it ; we shall go into Natal to meet you."

On my return to Pretoria I was still so impressed by De Clerc's words and manner, that I considered whether it might not be the right thing to do, to tell what I had heard and who I had heard it from, to Sir Owen Lanyon. But I determined not to do so, as I had not stopped De Clerc when he said he did not count me as an enemy, and had not cautioned him that I would not undertake to observe secrecy in respect to what he was about to tell me. Just before I started for Jackallsfontein the news came from Potchefstrom that a Boer had refused to pay his taxes, that his waggon had been seized in consequence, and that the Boers had taken violent possession of it in defiance of the law. Then I felt quite sure of my affair. The De Clerc programme was going to be attempted.

My waggon was ready packed ; I had got my new driver and leader, and had kept them under my eye all the morning to take care that they did not get drunk. I saw the oxen brought up to span in, and then, having to tran-

sact a little business before starting, I told the driver that he was to meet me in a quarter of an hour at a particular store, and cantered off. My business was with the tenant of my house, a matter which I should have transacted in five minutes, but by the time I was at his door a tremendous and sudden storm had burst over the town, and it was half an hour before I could get away. As I rode into the market-square I saw the waggon rounding a corner into it, the oxen all mixed up together, the driver drunk and swearing at them, the leader drunk and running about in front of them, entangling them more hopelessly every minute. They were turning another corner by the time I was alongside of them; the waggon was on the point of being upset. "Pull out the fore oxen—straight out!" I am afraid I shouted in a very unladylike manner, to the horror of some Pretorians who were spectators. The leader answered with a drunken laugh. There was no time to be lost. I gave him a sharp cut with my riding-whip, and he sprang forward pulling the oxen out. But it was no good, the two fellows were too hopelessly drunk to be fit for anything. I got the waggon on to an open space and outspanned, left Soldat and his Kaffir wife, "Clara," whose services I had engaged, in charge, took the oxen to the Felmans' kraal, then looked up Jimmy, and asked him to oblige me by sleeping at the waggon for that night, which he did. The next day the driver and fore-looper were sober, but the man, although he was said to be able to drive, could not, and broke the disselboom before we were out of the village. I then dismissed him; and had to get the disselboom mended, and also to get a new driver. After considerable trouble I got one fairly recommended, but when I took him to the waggon

I found the forelooper had run away. However, I managed to get another forelooper, and early the next morning we started. Hardly had we got on the camp-common when the leader threw up the tow, and leaving the waggon, sat down on the grass. I rode up and asked him why he did so.

"I am going no farther," he said.

"Indeed," said I, "you forget that you engaged to go to the farm with me."

The end of it was that I put Eclipse at him, and having made him stand up, hunted him, although he tried doubling, up to the head of the team, and then rode alongside with my whip raised. So we got out of the village. I never saw anything so bad as that man's driving. It was a wonder that the waggon was not upset and the oxen hurt. We did seven miles in five hours, and then stuck hopelessly in what is called the "seven-mile spruit," close to what is called the Red House—a place which has a tragic interest attached to it now.

The spruit was an absurd place to stick in, but the oxen were bullied by the bad driving, and had been too long in the yoke. I outspanned them, and off-loaded. Shortly after the guns and military train that were being sent to Potchefstrom came over the hill and down to the spruit, and crossed, the men looking at my waggon in disgust, for it was a good deal in their way. To the credit of the men be it said that only one swore at it, and he was reproved by a comrade, who remarked that probably I was more annoyed by its sticking than they were. They pitched their camp close by, and as soon as the oxen were rested I inspanned and tried to drag the waggon out. But my wretched driver only got the oxen more hope-

lessly entangled than ever, and at last I had to ask the Boer on whose farm we were to pull it out, which he very kindly did. I saw the things loaded up, and then told the driver to saddle the horses and take his blanket, as I was going to ride back to Pretoria. The sun had set, but there was a beautiful moon, and I got into Pretoria in good time. The next morning I discharged the driver and engaged a new one; and in the meantime Jimmy turned up, and told me that his employer had discharged him, having no farther need of his services, and that he was unable to obtain any other employment, as everything was very slack in Pretoria. Under these circumstances I proposed to him to come with me, to which he gladly assented. So in the evening we started; Jimmy and I riding, and the new driver, a half-caste named Andreas, walking, and carrying his own and Jimmy's bundles. We were only on the outskirts of the village when we saw that a great storm was imminent, and turned back to the Felmans' house just in time to escape it, fortunately, for it was very severe. The next morning we started again, and when we arrived at the waggon, found Soldat, Clara, and the dogs anxiously expecting us; and here I must beg to introduce a third dog to my readers. He was a sort of sheep-dog, black and white, called "Nero," a most unappropriate name, for a milder dog never existed, although he was a very good hunting dog. I had bought him, and a splendid half-bred mastiff, Prince, for waggon dogs. Prince had gone with the waggons, but Nero gave the boys the slip, and ran back to me.

There had been heavy rain at the Red House as well as at Pretoria, and the spruit was very much swollen. The

worst was that the weather looked very threatening. I inspanned after lunch, and started. This time the oxen pulled much better, and it was evident that, although not a good driver, Andreas was much superior to his two predecessors.

We had only got a few miles, however, and were on a bleak hill-side, when the storm I had seen approaching for some time, burst upon us. It was something terrific. There was no making head against it. I had the oxen outspanned, blanketed the horses, and sheltered them as well as I could in the lee of the waggon. The flashes of lightning and the roar of thunder were almost continuous, the rain poured down in torrents, and the wind howled and raved until I thought the waggon would have been blown over. I was afraid that the horses would get alarmed, and stood by them until the fury of the storm abated, which was not for some hours. The rain was still falling heavily, and it was quite dark, when, at last, drenched through in spite of my mackintosh, I crept into the waggon along with Clara, whilst Jimmy made his bed (such as it was) under it, in the wet. When I woke next morning the rain was still falling, nor did it cease till midday, when it cleared up. The waggon had sunk very deep in the soft ground, which was slippery for the oxen's feet, and after various efforts to pull it out, I was obliged to make up my mind to off-load partially again. The evening was very fine, and I trusted to being able to load up in the morning after pulling the waggon out. The whole ground was so wet and swampy that I determined to let the horses and oxen remain loose during the night; the moon was bright, and from time to time I inspected them. The morning dawned beautifully,

but hardly had the first rays of the sun become visible, when I saw a heavy bank of clouds, which threatened hail, sweeping rapidly up from the horizon. I ordered all haste to be made to get whatever had been off-loaded up on the waggon, but before everything was ready the storm burst—such a storm, almost worse than the previous one, although the thunder and lightning was less severe.

Fortunately there was but little hail, for about this time there were hail-storms in other districts, which would have cut the tent of the waggon into shreds, and killed or maimed the animals and us. The rain poured down the whole day. Clara at last managed to make a sort of little tent with a tarpaulin and some sheets of iron roofing I had with me, and got some coffee made, which Jimmy and I, crouching in the waggon-tent together, were very thankful for; and she also managed to make some very bad griddle-cakes, but the only wonder was that she was able to make them at all. Night came on, and it was still raining and blowing—it was useless to attempt to tie up the animals, the waggon was standing in a swamp, so they had to take their chance. Jimmy and I slept in the waggon, the tent of which had begun to leak, and little Roughy and Moustache begged so to come in also, that I let the poor little brutes have their desire. When the morning dawned it was still raining, the horses were in sight, but the oxen were gone, and so was the leader. I sent Andreas on foot and Soldat on Dandy to look for them, and while they were away, seeing two government waggons going to Potchefstrom with strong spans of oxen, I asked the conductor to pull my waggon out, which he obligingly did.

It rained on and off the whole day, and in the evening

the two boys returned, having seen nothing of the oxen. Soldat reported that the spruit was at flood. I determined to go to look for the oxen the next day myself, as I very much suspected that they had treked off to the farm they had been feeding on shortly before I bought them. This is a favourite pastime of oxen. Unfortunately I did not know where this farm was, and hence I knew it would be necessary first to go to Pretoria to see the man I had bought the animals from, and inquire the way to it. The next morning was Sunday, and the weather was beautiful. Jimmy and I saddled up early, and taking Nero with us, started for Pretoria. We got in there about nine o'clock, and having found the gentleman I wanted, and got the direction to the farm, and a note to its proprietor, we rode to the Felmans' to give the horses a rest and try to get a little breakfast for ourselves. On our way I met a Kaffir who had just come in from Waterberg, and he gave me a letter written by "Boy," who had learned to write at the Mission station. It was a very funny production, but Mrs. Felman and I managed to decipher it, and it corroborated what I had previously heard from a Boer, viz., that Hendrick was doing a good trade, and that the oxen were well.

We were, as usual, hospitably entertained at the Felmans', who had pressed me to come to them whenever I should be in Pretoria, and had told me that I might always consider the little room next the stable as my own, although I had given up the mansion by the swamp after Mr. Egerton left Pretoria, Mrs. Felman having taken charge of all things which I had not loaded up on the waggon to go to the farm. These articles which she took charge of, were goods for trading, which I did not

care to take there until I had got the place into some order. It was very hot when Jimmy and I started once more. The road was rather pretty, and for a time was sufficiently good for us to be able to push along pretty quickly. At last we came to a very steep decline, and after following the road in its windings between the hills, we saw a thick line of brushwood marking the course of the river we had to cross, and at the same time heard the rush of the water, telling of its being in flood. The spruit we had crossed in the morning was part of this river that was before us; where we had forded it, we had not found it very deep, but it was evident that it was considerably deeper here. When we rode down to the ford, it looked very ugly. There was a farm-house on the opposite side, and presently a small boy made his appearance, and looked across at us. I hailed this boy, and inquired if the ford was passable; his answer was, "Come across." It was not altogether a satisfactory answer, because he might be a truculent young Boer, anxious to drown the enemies of the liberties of his nation; but as no other answer was to be got from him, I put Eclipse at the stream. Eclipse did not like the look of it at all, sniffed and snorted, and even, when he got into the full current, wanted to turn back; however, we got through with a good wetting, Jimmy followed, and poor Nero swam through after a struggle, for the current was very strong. Arrived on the bank, I said to the boy that I had a letter for Mr. P——, and felt much gratified by hearing that Mr. P——'s farm was some way down the stream on the side I had just left, so we had to ford back again!

A short canter took us to Mr. P——'s house, where we were very kindly received. Mr. P—— is an English Africander, I believe. Mrs. P—— gave us some

coffee, which was very acceptable after our wetting, but Mr. P—— could tell us nothing about the oxen, except that that morning, looking with his field-glass for some oxen he had lost, he had seen, on a hill-side far away, a number of oxen which he had not recognized as his or as any belonging to his neighbours. The hill was in the direction of my waggon, so I thought this sounded hopeful. Mr. P—— told us that a number of his sheep had been killed by the late storms, and that several of his oxen were missing. We mounted once more, and fording the river again at the same spot, took our way towards the hill Mr. P—— had pointed out to us, when suddenly Jimmy exclaimed that he was sure that he could see the oxen grazing in a valley at some distance. I could not make them out; but he was so confident that we altered our course, and presently coming to a farm, we asked the Boer who owned it, if he had seen any strange oxen, and he told us that he had seen fourteen strange oxen that morning with their heads towards the spot Jimmy had indicated. Thus encouraged we pushed on, and soon came in sight of our friends peaceably grazing.

It is an odd thing that oxen who play truant know quite well when they are found out. They are wonderfully sly about sneaking away; if they mean to run away in the daytime, they do not do so ostentatiously. They will graze quietly until they think they have lulled suspicion, and then walk off more quickly than any one not accustomed to their ways would think it possible for them to do. If they mean to run away at night, they set about it very softly, so as not to wake any one, but whenever they go, their expression upon being found out is the same. They do not, like the Elfin page, “fall to the ground,” oxen being of a less emotional and demonstra-

tive nature than elfins, but if there be any expression in an eye, they most unmistakably mutter to themselves, "found, found, found," and having so muttered, they visibly, to the least imaginative observer, turn round, "form," to use a military expression, and move off in front of their captor. In the case of my oxen, there was one daring spirit of the name of "Blauberg," who had always been mutinous. He now maintained his character by perpetually trying to run away, tossing his head, and flicking his tuftless tail—for, like many of his brethren, he had lost a portion of that appendage during the illness consequent upon inoculation with "lung-sickness." We had to take the oxen over the veldt to the waggon, which was not an easy operation, for we did not know the country, there was no road, and our only guides were the slopes of the hills. Added to this the night was coming on quickly, and the moon did not rise until late. Blauberg's antics were, therefore, very inconvenient, and caused feelings the reverse of charitable towards that erring ox to arise in Jimmy's breast and my own. At last, some time after it was dark, Jimmy caught sight of our camp-fire, much to my delight, and after we got the oxen tied up, and the horses blanketed and fed, we sat down to the dinner Clara had been keeping warm for us. She had, by my orders, bought a sheep from a neighbouring farmer during my absence.

We started the next morning; but to make a long story short, we had a miserable trek. The weather was very bad; the road was very bad in places; the drift or ford of the Yokeskey river, which we had to pass, was in such a state, that I had to hire a span of oxen from a neighbouring Boer to put on to my span, and then, with

three drivers, the oxen had a difficult job to pull the waggon out. I do not think that this Boer would have hired me his oxen had it not been for the persuasions of his goodnatured wife. His name was "Durks." He had a good reason for not wanting to hire them, for they, and all the young cattle, were being used for tramping out the corn: rain was threatening, and it is no joke for rain to come on while the corn is on the tramping-floor. Of course, the fact of rain being imminent made it very desirable for me to get across the river, and kind, fat Mrs. Durks saw this.

The rain did come on heavily shortly after I outspanned, but the weather cleared after an hour or so, and we treked again; to add trouble to trouble Jimmy was taken ill, and had to go in the waggon; so that I had to ride Dandy and to lead Eclipse, as well as drive the two loose oxen (for I had yokes for twelve oxen only with the waggon I was using). That evening we outspanned by the farm of an English Africander, of the name of Williams. He was from home, but his wife was very kind, giving us nice bread, milk, and eggs, which were all very acceptable, the more so as one required a little inner consolation to withstand the rain and wind which, coming on shortly after we outspanned, continued nearly all night. I here met a man who had just come from Waterberg, and who told me that the storms there had been something terrific. I afterwards saw in a paper the intelligence that "the public buildings at Nilstrom had been blown down by the hurricane!"

We at last reached Jackallsfontein in a storm, and found, alas! that the cottage had shared the fate of the "public buildings at Nilstrom." It had been blown down!

CHAPTER XXX.

THERE is not much to describe in Jackallsfontein in the way of scenery; no comparison between it and Grünfontein could be instituted. Jackallsfontein is undeniably ugly; it lies on a gentle slope of what, in England, we should call the "Downs" of the Wittwaters-randt. The few trees around it have all been planted, and not only around Jackallsfontein itself, but in all the country for miles round. But to counterbalance this, the material advantages of Jackallsfontein over Grünfontein are manifold.

At Jackallsfontein horses can be safely bred; they can be let run summer and winter without fear; sheep, too, thrive well, not being plagued with the ailments or by the ticks which render their lives a burden to themselves and to their proprietors, on the slopes of the Magaliesberg, and in a great part of the Transvaal. No herbs poisonous to cattle or sheep grow near Jackallsfontein, and that is a point greatly in favour of any farm in the Transvaal, where poisonous herbs are very common. Although I took great care of my sheep at Grünfontein, I had lost several through their being allowed to stray into pasture which was poisonous; and not far from my property there (although at too great a distance to endanger my oxen)

a farmer had in one day lost sixty head of cattle through the carelessness of his herd, who had let the animals in his charge stray on to unhealthy grazing. Added to the above-mentioned advantages, the quality of the soil at Jackallsfontein is excellent, the water good, and the site very favourable for opening a general Boer store. Kaffir labour there is none, but Boer labour can be easily obtained from adjoining small farms, whose owners are glad for younger members of their family to earn something to assist in the general housekeeping.

My house being uninhabitable, I was obliged to engage a room in the house of some Boers whose farm adjoins mine. The name of these people is De Plessis, but they are no relations of Willem De Plessis. Their house consisted of three rooms and kitchen, and one of these rooms, separated from the family sleeping-room by a half-wall, they made over to me. It was not a very eligible apartment, having no window, and the door being composed of dilapidated reeds—however, it was better than nothing. I pitched my tent as a room for Jimmy, the servants had the waggon, and the horses were accommodated at night in a deserted house at a little distance, which once had been a dwelling of some pretensions, having several rooms, and bearing traces on the walls of the sitting-room of having been tastefully painted. There was yet another cottage quite close to the one in which I lodged, tenanted by members of the same family as mine hosts, and numberless small farms were dotted about the environs. The owner of the deserted house I have mentioned was an English Africander, who, I was told, was bankrupt, and the property was held by his creditors.

I cannot give a very lucid account of my hosts and