

or chiefs told off for every officer in each battle, whose orders were to make straight for the officers, and sacrifice their lives rather than let us escape. So at the outset we felt that the odds were ten to one against each of us.

One excellent rule was published, though it was grumbled at for the time. The campaign was to be a teetotal one. Liquor was to be as strictly excluded as poison. Thus carriage was saved—something more than the mere expense of waggons—and the men were at all times ready to fight with their wits about them. The officers, to their credit be it said, fell in with the rule almost to a man, not quite turning into total abstainers, but cutting and trimming manfully, being careful that what bottles were produced were only opened in private, and not in view of the men.

A code of general rules was issued to all of us, many of them of the highest importance, as indeed the first in the book told at a glance:—

“When troops take the field, regulations which are applicable to station-work and peacetime must not be considered as binding, should

the enforcement of them tend to increase instead of diminish difficulties.”

Another rule which we read with unconcern, through ignorance, was hereafter the greatest hardship we endured. It said: “The troops will invariably turn out under arms at least two hours before sunrise, and silently occupy their respective alarm-posts. They will similarly again fall in every evening at the first post at tattoo.” Tattoo, we were told a little further on, “will be at 8 P.M., after which lights must be extinguished, and the whole camp, without exception, remain perfectly quiet until the next morning.” Alas! how well we soon got to know those dark, quiet nights, with that awfully early rouse, cold, sleepy, and miserable! Another excellent paragraph ordered that companies were to be kept intact, and not broken up; sentries were to be posted, too, in groups of four, so that they might derive moral support from their comrades; and at the end of a march the officers were enjoined to examine the men’s feet in search of blisters, when the sufferer was at once to be sent to a doctor. Lastly, blacking was to be disregarded for grease or “dubbing.”

and cotton shirts for flannel. We learnt in the sick regulations still further, that a couple of threads of worsted should be drawn through a blister. So even the most insignificant details were taken into account. Meanwhile came in the news of the battles of Ginginhlovu and Kambula—the first successes we had had, and hailed accordingly; and we having been appointed to the 2d Division, under Major-General Newdigate, received the order for the front.

Now began the repacking and selection of our own kits, which had to be reduced to the regulation forty pounds—little enough to last for a probable six, and, as it turned out, nearly twelve, months' campaign, in a climate varying between frost at night and semi-tropical heat by day. Now the outfitters came in for a share of well-earned abuse, by reason of the useless and really expensive articles declared indispensable at home, to be abroad rudely got rid of. An india-rubber bed with a pair of bellows to inflate it, a hammock, slung delicately between neat poles, with a canvas awning over the whole; suits of "South African" *mufti*, white shirts, table-cloths, looking-glasses, and a hundred

other suchlike, were all put on one side with a lingering look of regret, and still the forty pounds were exceeded. So out went the extra flannel shirts, patent tubs, brushes and combs, slippers, and so on, until the black valise, looking very empty, just turned the scale, and was allowed to pass.

On the way out the chances of the war had been a never-failing source of discussion, and it was generally agreed that ten days after landing we should find ourselves on the Tugela, face to face with the Zulus. After that, all must be uncertain—depending, as it would do, on the enemy's own movements; but within the month we all fondly hoped the decisive battle would be fought. Yet here we were, after nearly a week wasted in Durban, sent off to a station in the north of Natal, some twenty days distant, which, when arrived at, left us little nearer the Zulus than we were to-day. Thus our month was already a delusion.

CHAPTER V.

THE START FOR THE FRONT—PICTURESQUE SCENERY—DINNER IN CAMP—THE ZULUS EXPECTED—A SUCCESSFUL COLONIST—ON THE GREYTOWN ROAD.

FROM Durban the rail took us some twenty miles to Botha's Hill, the men riding in cattle-trucks, the officers in second-class carriages, as the "Natal Government Railways" are still in embryo, and not prepared for much extra traffic.

On the line itself curves and steep gradients are the rule, and the rise for the first few miles is very marked. The low country lying round the coast is covered with "bush," as woods are called in Natal; open park-like spaces, dotted with tree-clumps, break the monotony; gorges, impassable through a tangle of semi-tropical vegetation, run down from the sides of the frequent mountains, and are named "kloofs," after the old Dutch word. Elephants not so many

years past disported in these. Bamboos, ever graceful, feather the crests of the ridge on either side. Plantains flap their broad leaves in the sheltered nooks. The flat-topped mimosa-bush, white with long thorns, is almost everywhere. Patches of Indian corn, the colonial "mealies," are plentiful. Houses alone are wanting: a clump of blue gum-trees is a sign that one is near; hardly a farm in Natal is without this elegant and rapid-growing stranger. Beyond the coast, trees are rare, almost unknown, and some shade is necessary, so the farmer is driven to plant a circle round his house, thus obtaining firewood and shelter together.

Higher up, the bush gives way to grasslands, the ordinary feature of landscape in the colony. The grass grows tall and rank, green in spring, yellow in summer, when it is burned, for the double purpose of fertilising the ground and destroying the ticks. Were this last precaution not taken, the ticks would increase so enormously as to render cattle impossible. For the same reason hay cannot be made. It is said with some truth that on the end of every grass stalk is a tick, waiting to spring on the

first living thing passing by. As it is, the poor oxen are often a mass of hideous, leaden-coloured lumps, dependent from their flanks; and it is a wise precaution, before going to bed, to examine one's own shins, as it is highly probable that some of the species have effected a lodgment during the day. Pulling is of little use—the head breaks off and forms a sore; a drop of carbolic oil, and the insect drops out.

The archdeacon, a fine specimen of an English clergyman, accompanied us in the train, and was full of chatty information.

This was the plantain-tree, that a pine-apple; from the tall tree came cotton, the short one produced ginger; and a hundred other bits of information somewhat stale to a regiment from India. At Pinetown, about half way, destined to become a big overgrown depot for our troops, our friend insisted on sending for sherry and sandwiches from the hotel hard by, to which, after some demur, we did ample justice. In the end, the kind-hearted old parson accompanied us on the road for some miles, walking beside the column cheerily enough, and parting from us with an affectionate blessing on the heads of

“his brave boys,—may God bless and keep you!”

Leaving the train at the top of the range, a glorious view opened out,—the land a vast sheet of green, crumpled up like a piece of stiff paper retaining the creases; the slopes dotted with cattle and the mushroom-like kraals of the Kafirs; the kloofs richly wooded; in the centre a flat-topped mountain, its upper sides scarping with a wall of naked rock, its edge sharp and knife-like, the forerunner of many such, which are the characteristic form of high land in Upper Natal and Zululand. Beyond this mountain, again, is a chaos of flat-topped ranges, beneath which flows the Lower Tugela. In the far distance lies the sea, grey and hazy, the shipping at Durban looking like dots upon it.

What few natives we met were innocent of clothing, save the “mouche” of fur in front and behind, and not unlike a lady’s “bustle.” They were fine-looking men, grinning good-naturedly, and holding up one hand above the shoulder as they salute us with the usual formula, “Inkos” —chief.

At the actual summit was a group, perched evidently in expectation of our coming; and as we appeared, the whole set up a wild imitation of a cheer, crying out, "Oolay, Johnnie! Go cut dam Zulu throat!" suiting the words with an exact pantomimic representation of the deed.

Of course the soldiers were delighted, and gave them a cheer in return, the Johnnies in their friendliness shouting after them—"You come back, Johnnie! yes, you come back, I say, —oolay!"

The road wound round the great swells of grass-land like a serpent, and the red line of men, stretched out to a considerable length between advance and rear guards, looked picturesque enough. The pretty white helmets of Aldershot had disappeared; the spikes, so martial-looking there, had gone, with every vestige of pipeclay washed out of the belts: but the men stepped along cheerily, whistling or singing popular airs, till the dust got into their throats, and there was a rush at the first halting-place to fill their water-bottles. The streams, tempting at a distance, proved to be dried up; so those who made for them had their climb for

nothing. The more knowing ones gave a trifle of tobacco to a Kafir, and he soon brought back a supply of the hot muddy liquid which in the colony does duty for water.

It was a weary tramp that first night, our feet fresh to the road, our muscles relaxed by the confinement of shipboard, and the men unused to pitching their tents, especially in the dark. At length our own was up, and turned out a tight fit for three to live, eat, and sleep in continually. Then came difficulties about our dinner. Some lean beef had been served out to us, water was pretty handy, wood was also provided, and we had a most neat Aldershot canteen; and that, with a pound of heavy bread and our soldier-servants, represented our first camp-dinner. Well, the beef was cut into bits and boiled quickly, so as to be ready soon, and sure enough, appeared in hard lumps floating in greasy water, utterly unpalatable, but necessary to existence. So we ate, and went to bed, lying in a blanket on the ground, which was harder than we expected, it is true; but then it was a campaign, and you can't get used to hardships soon enough.

Maritzburg—or, as most colonists delight in calling it, Maratsburg, or P.M. Burg—lies at one end of a broad, elevated valley, on the banks of a tolerably good river, its pools prettily shaded with willows, and fringed with a setting of wild-flowers. The houses, mostly wooden cottages of one storey, with gabled roof, peep out of a grove of blue gum-trees, making it green and pleasant to the eye. Outside the town the country is bare enough: not a tree is to be seen except those round houses; streams flowing on muddy bottoms cross the road, and give rise to fearfully long delays in the traffic. Behind the town is a range of hills without a single gap, and up this travellers further into the country must climb. There is no escape.

It was across this lower plain that we marched, weary and dry-throated. The sun beat down with almost tropical fierceness, and the dust rose in white impalpable clouds. To do honour to the chief town in the colony, we were taken round through the main street, instead of marching direct on our camping-ground. Crowds of well-dressed townspeople turned out to see us, and in their honour our

half-dozen drummer-boys moistened their lips sufficiently to play a bugle-march at the head of the column. But no answering cheer met our poor efforts at military pomp, no friendly hand put out even a bucket of water to wet the soldiers' lips. Dry and dusty, they marched to the camp-ground above Fort Napier, and threw themselves on the ground quite tired out.

Maritzburg was alive with uniforms. Volunteers of every description sauntered up and down the pavements, giving a dim idea that their services in the Zulu war would begin and end in that peaceful town. Not that it was considered worthy of that epithet by the inhabitants. On the contrary, General Funk had pointed it out as the point to which danger and attack were chiefly directed. Nearly every house showed signs of preparation for the enemy—windows planked up, garden-railings boarded, openings closed with galvanised iron; everywhere were loop-holes and blank defensible walls.

The principal street was disfigured by an ugly structure of iron and timber, enclosing some hundred yards or more, including a church

and many shops; while close to it stood the handsome Parliament House and post-office, sadly mutilated with loop-holes and sand-bag parapets. Until lately, this laager, and the town generally, was filled with fugitives from the country; prices went up in consequence, and had not recovered. Eggs fetched 4s. a dozen, oranges were 3d. each, cucumbers were 9d., butter almost unprocurable.

Every one, however, can manage some sort of horse-flesh, and having done so, keep their possession, whenever possible, at full gallop. Young ladies ride about unescorted, and do their shopping in the saddle.

Some six miles outside I happened to put up for a day with a farmer whose history, as told by himself, may be relied on as a fair type of what can be done in the colony by an industrious man.

“Twenty-seven years ago,” said my friend, “a lot of us made up our minds to leave Yorkshire and come out here. The colony was just started, and a good deal was said about it in the papers. We were to do without one of those agents who only fleece emigrants, and so we

took a ship in Hull for the colony; there were some 250 of us on board. I had my wife, mother, and two brothers, besides a hundred golden sovereigns in my belt. They kept us nearly two months in Hull, but we got away at last, and landed in safety. Then we came up here and settled at York (Natal) all together. But we found that there were too many of us, so we separated. That was seven-and-twenty years ago. Now I've ten children. One son has a farm all his own, of 800 acres, and keeps himself. Another is employed by Government as a conductor in the war. The third is at school. The seven girls and my old woman you have seen here.

“This farm is 1500 acres, all my own, and I refused two years ago three pounds an acre for it. I've got two other ones besides, nearly as much again. I've got a steam-engine to crush the mealies, and two waggons worth £400 apiece. There was never a year I did not clear £100; but then I never speculated in land, and I keep clear of the drink.”

Probably the secret of success lay in this last short paragraph.

On leaving Maritzburg, our way lay over the range already spoken of, and to the right of the main road. Ours was to be the shorter road by Greytown, much nearer the Zulu border, and thus thought too unsafe for traffic until assured by our presence. Even Lord Chelmsford and his staff avoided it, and used the main road in preference, after Isandlwana, General Funk being then in full swing.

“Your guns will go off, won’t they, now they have sent you along that dreadful road?” said a fond old lady to us the night before we left Maritzburg—showing that the last-named General had not yet vacated his command.

CHAPTER VI.

A BEAUTIFUL WATERFALL—WHITE ANTS—THE LAAGER AT GREYTOWN—A PORTMANTEAU OF BEES—MOOI RIVER—THE TUGELA—OUR FIRST “SCARE”—LEARNING TO LAAGER—CAPE WAGGONS.

NATAL has been described as a country of rivers without water, flowers without scent, birds without song, and where every dog is called “Foot-sack” (Dutch, be off), and runs away when you call him; and the description may be taken generally as accurate. But as the exception proves the rule, so do the falls of the Umgeni river, some miles north of Maritzburg, stand out in relief as a beautiful contrast to the general character of the water-courses.

A broad, still river, flowing through a valley turfed with the greenest grass, often up to a man’s shoulders, sometimes shooting up in wav-

ing patches 12 feet high ; presently comes a step some 50 feet in height, and the silent river is broken into a series of cascades, the spray from which paints a rainbow against the morning sun. The stream opens out like a funnel ; the cascades divided by pillars of basalt, tipped with bushes, from whose branches the weaver-birds have hung their nests.

There are eleven separate falls, in the shape of a horse-shoe, about 300 yards in length. Beyond this are jets of water tumbling into foam for nearly twice that distance.

The roar of the water in that vast plain is heard long before the falls are seen, and is as difficult to understand as it is unexpected. Across the boiling pool into which the river tumbles is a thicket of rank grass, with fallen boulders, wet with spray, and overgrown with clematis and other climbing-plants ; tall grasses nod and feather in the wind ; grasshoppers, with butterfly wings, are springing everywhere. On the summit of a basalt column mid-stream a pair of hoodie-crows had built a nest, six feet high, and were perching on it, croaking loudly.

There is a canteen, as wayside inns are called

in the colony, near the falls, where breakfast can be had, and beer at half-a-crown a bottle. The price of beer is as good as a set of mile-stones in Natal. From Durban upwards it was 2s. a bottle; at Maritzburg the price rose to 2s. 6d.; beyond Greytown you paid 3s.; beyond the Tugela it rose to 3s. 6d.; at Dundee, where the central column was formed, you paid 6d. more, and were lucky if you could get it at the price; while at Utrecht, those who drank beer paid 7s. 6d. a bottle.

English money obtains throughout the colony, with a notable abundance of half-crowns. Florins are called “Scotchmân,” the accent being on the *a*, the tradition being that they were introduced in considerable numbers by a North Briton, and passed off on the Kafirs as the well-known half-crowns. The simplest Kafir now understands the difference. Threepennies and fourpennies pass as the same coin; to coppers there is a decided objection.

When a man up-country makes money, he gets a friend going down to carry the sovereigns to Maritzburg or Durban; there are no banks elsewhere, and no other way of remitting, con-

sequently cheques are taken with a facility which would be interesting to many whose paper nearer home is apt to be looked at with suspicion.

Near Greytown we came across a herd of hartebeests. They are under protection by Government, forming a charming addition to the otherwise inanimate plain. The Umvoti cuts across the country here—here narrow, there widening into broad reaches, where the oxen stand knee-deep. Immediately beyond it rises the mountain-range, supporting the plateau of the northern portion of Natal. The plains about us are covered with the conical mud-heaps of white ants. These are as hard as brick, and contain countless chambers and galleries. Under many of them a hole has been excavated by the ant-bear—an animal seldom seen—which digs very rapidly, and, getting underneath the nest, feeds at its leisure. Not long before the war the hounds of the 24th ran into one near Cape Town, and after worrying it for some time, being whipped off, the animal was taken up with hardly a scratch on its tough hide.

Cut off as we were now from the outer world, we felt the want of news most acutely.

Kambula had just been fought and Etshowe relieved when we left Durban, and the most important results might be expected. We were daily moving towards the scene of action; Zululand was now but a short distance in front; we knew that the regiment was destined to take part in the operations against Ulundi,—yet we were here now as utterly uninformed of the course of events as were the Zulus themselves. For all we knew to the contrary, the war might have been concluded; or more probably still, the Zulu nation might even now be marching into Natal. However, there was no help for it but to do as we had been told, and continue our march.

Greytown itself contains a few houses surrounded by blue gums. The inhabitants are mostly Dutch, and were, when we arrived, largely increased by the people of the district, who had made a camp between their waggons in a most primitive way. Outside, tiny Dutch dolls, with flat faces, were tumbling seriously;

inside, the Vrow was cooking bacon for the rough-bearded man in boots and red-cord breeches, who was the husband, and a fair type of the Boer.

An old lady keeps a boarding-house in the town, and thither all the English on their travels who wish for dinner have to go. It is a tumble-down place; oleanders and pomegranates flower in the garden; tall gum-trees shade it from the sun; and a couple of Kafir boys sweep out the veranda, dancing in slow time to their own accompaniment. Some stir was caused by a swarm of bees which had taken possession of a portmanteau belonging to one of us. They completely filled it; and the dilemma of the owner, as he viewed the intrusion from a distance, was most amusing. Greytown, as a matter of course, had its laager. This was an enclosure surrounded by a wall some 10 feet high. Inside was a house containing munitions of war; round the wall ran a banquette for the men to stand upon; the ground was strewn with more warlike materials. Admittance was by a door strongly barred. Outside ran a ditch. Beyond this

was the camp of some infantry, also strongly fortified. A large house in the vicinity had been pulled down by the troops, as commanding the post, at a cost to Government estimated by the owners at £10,000. This stupendous work had already been introduced to the public in England through the columns of an illustrated paper.

After Greytown, we climbed the hills we had seen when on the other side of the Umvoti. Flat-topped, and terraced with steps of naked rock, the range rises towards the north. The rise is abrupt, and the change in climate most decided. The summit was enveloped in clouds, and our clothes were saturated; everything was damp and chilly. An hour later the men were basking in the warmest sunshine at Burrop's.

Burrop is a man, and he gives his name to the spot his cottage occupies. Near him is Botha, also down on the map. Both are small farmers, the latter being the proprietor of the former. Burrop, in addition, sells liquor and keeps a canteen. Burrop was an Eton man. He came out to the colony years ago in a high position under Government, from

which he has gradually descended, till he owns a small cabin on a mountain, a patch of mealies, and a cupboard full of "square-face" and bottled beer. If you breakfast at Burrop's, your tea will be poured out by his daughter, a most charming young lady, looking very much out of place, and acknowledged as the belle of Umvoti—so the district is called. From Burrop's a grand view across the valley of the Mooi river is obtained. On the right, Mount Allard raises its flat top to 5000 feet above the sea, just hiding the mountains of Zululand and the line of the Tugela; below, the entire valley for many miles is a jumble of broken ground covered with mimosa-bushes.

This belt of country is known as "The Thorns," and is much dreaded. In width it extends across the Tugela and Mooi rivers for some thirty miles, stretching across the whole colony as far, and beyond Colenso and Escourt, fifty miles west. Water is scarce; grass there is none; the heat is intense; and the loose, friable soil rolls away from under every step. The bushes are armed with thorns, from an inch to four inches long, which bristle horribly from every twig; weird

cactus, euphorbias, and aloes, spined and horrent, supported by a stem of dead leaves, spiked even in death, are scattered about. As they range about six feet high, and are much the size of a native's body, they were constantly mistaken for lines of advancing Zulus, causing a constant call for field-glasses and telescopes. Flowers had disappeared; rocks, baked clay, and gullies torn and rent by thunderstorms, were on every side. The gullies, under the name of *donga*, we had cause to remember as we advanced. Skeletons of oxen, which had fallen as they went, were scattered along the road. The valley was shut in by flat-topped mountains, seamed with shelves of naked rock. The water-courses were dry sand, and the men plodded along rather wearily, their empty water-bottles rattling by their sides. Through the centre runs the Mooi river—at the place where we crossed it, a good, swift-flowing stream. Then came a steep climb, and the road topped a pass over a long hill-range, and below us lay the Tugela, glistening in the sunlight.

The name was historic; and from the anxious looks cast upon it, one would think that the whole

Zulu army was expected to be seen upon its banks. Instead, we gazed upon a wilderness of greenery: hills and valley were alike clothed in the same beautiful mantle. The roadside was a carpet spangled with flowers of bright hues,—the blue stems of the castor-oil bush, with its vine-shaped leaves and prickly fruit; mauve-coloured salvias, in graceful masses; purple ipomæas, climbing over everything; white jasmine—scentless, alas!—mingled its tendrils with convolvuli of every size and colour; zinnias blazed in scarlet and orange,—all contributing to the effect.

The men quickened their step, marching merrily down the steep incline to the notes of a concertina, which gave out popular tunes, with variations not to be found in the music-books.

“Play on the box, Mister Halligan!” shouted a voice from the rear to the man who was carrying it; and the small joke took them down a mile or more. How the oxen brought the waggons down that incline was a puzzle to us, then unused to the feats of climbing common to those animals. It was just a succession of muddy hollows, separated by intervals, over which the waggons slid gaily down table-rocks at every

angle with the horizon. This was varied by piles of loose stones, water-courses, with banks to get down and up like the roof of a house, and ruts a foot or more deep. The Government engineer who planned and cut that road was freely commented on during the march.

A party of native scouts was in front of the column, armed with many assegais and shields—formidable to look at, but at heart ready to bolt at the first rustle in the bushes. Presumably to give us due warning of the approach of the Zulus, these scouts kept some five yards ahead of the sergeant-major at the head of the line, and appeared much too busy dividing the scraps of food they had picked up to keep a look-out, except upon one another. They were one of the many impostures then believed in.

Just as we reached the river, a shot was heard close to us among the bushes, which might have been the Zulus, but was only directed against an ox, that came staggering across, falling dead to a second shot—the primitive mode of butchering in the colony, but nevertheless meaning dinner.

The Tugela is a fine river, broad, and in parts

deep, and was no doubt an excellent protection against the Zulus, who, cat-like, do not care too much about wetting their feet.

Before this, as it was, we had our first "scare." A few natives came into camp with the news that they had seen the Zulus crossing the river some ten miles distant. All was at once hurry and bustle: men were recalled by the bugles, ammunition was got ready—each man, by the way, carried seventy rounds at his waist—and the order to "form laager" was issued. No one thought of asking for details of the Zulu advance,—how many they were? armed or unarmed? Zulus or Kafirs? The scare was a novelty to us, and much too delightful to be made light of,—it might end in a fight; it must give us a little shooting: at last we were going to meet the enemy!

But it was our first laager; and we were very raw. The waggons were heavy to drag about; and nothing would content us till every one was placed in the most approved fashion. Each waggon fitted in exactly to the one next to it, so that not a hole was left through which a Zulu could crawl; the oxen were tied down

securely, unable to bolt during the firing, and were nearly strangled in their efforts to escape: while, to crown it all, the men, formed in two beautiful lines, which stretched far across the road into the bushes beyond, moved in at the sound of the bugle in unbroken ranks, getting into their allotted places with as much order and regularity as do the child-soldiers in the plays at home. The only thing to mar the excellence of our scheme was the time it took to complete—nearly two hours—while the Zulus could have been on us in less than half that period. It was, besides, labour thrown away, as we might have known all along, had not General Funk taught us some lessons—the Kafirs who had invented the news saying, a little later, that the Zulus crossing were all friends, numbering just a dozen.

The usual laager is formed by drawing each waggon as it arrives into a ring or square previously marked out at the corners, either allowing them to lap over one another, when an "echelon" is formed, or running the "desselboom," or pole, of each under the waggon in front. Thus a wall of them surrounds an open

space. A waggon is left out at one place for an opening, to be filled in when required by a spare one, water-carts, and so on. The waggon-wheels may be lashed together, and the spaces between them filled in with thorns. With us, this space was banked up with earth ; or, latterly, a shelter-trench was dug round the whole circumference at some fifteen feet distance, so as to form the first line of defence, the line of waggons being the second. The loads can, further, be piled along the outer side of the waggons, so as to form a parapet from which the men, lying down, can fire with security. In large laagers the oxen are tethered inside, the men's tents being outside. A man is told off to each as the poleman—his duty being, on an alarm, to pull out the tent-pole, when the tent falls, and forms an obstacle to an advance, while he runs inside with the pole, in readiness to produce it when the tent is again to be put up.

The Cape waggon is a huge machine double the size of that in use in England. The body is low, the hind wheels as large again as the fore ones, and it is altogether roughly made to with-

stand rough usage on roads unworthy of the name. Behind, it is furnished with a tilt, under which the travellers sleep, and is entirely innocent of springs.

Sixteen oxen are the usual team, but eighteen and twenty are often seen. These are yoked in spans of two, the yoke's heavy beams connected by a wire-rope or chain.

A waggon in South Africa is another term for capital invested. Every person of the smallest importance has one or more, their cost varying, with a team, from £300 to £400. During the war the price of oxen in the colony had nearly doubled, and transport or locomotion thus became almost unattainable.

A team of oxen is a separate body seldom changed, and each ox knows his own place in the team. The drivers and "foreloopers" or leaders, are clever fellows in managing their teams; but let a white man go near, and a kick, a snort, or a poke from horns awkwardly long and sharp will reward him. The yoke-chain, or "trek tow," is laid on the ground during the "outspan;" and when it is required to "inspan," the team is driven towards it, when

each ox takes up his place on either side of the chain, facing inwards.

The heads of each span are then coupled together with "reims," or strips of raw, dry hide; and when all are tied together, they are pushed under the yokes, and fastened in with a peg called a "yokeskey," and the waggon is ready. The driver stands balancing himself on the top, and flourishing an enormously long whip; the forelooper pulls at the reim of the foremost span; a desperate volley of shrieks, yells, and hideous guttural cries, accompanied by cracks of the whip as loud as musket-shots, succeeds, and the huge affair is in motion. If required to stop, the men set up a chorus of whistling, and the oxen obey.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NATIVE CONTINGENT—A WAR-DANCE—HELPMAKAAR—
 “JUMPING”—A VIEW OF ISANDLWANA—A NATIVE STORY
 —A STORE IN NATAL—SEAMS OF COAL—“SQUARE-FACE.”

FORT BENGOUGH was a square enclosure on an isolated hill overlooking the green valley of Umsinga. It was constructed early in the war by the officer whose name it bears. The valley itself, which falls down to the Buffalo on the east, and so is within easy reach of the Zulus, had been the scene of several scares, in one of which some of our native troops from the fort were shot down by our own men in mistake for the enemy.

The regiment of Natal Native Contingent, to which they belonged, marched out as we arrived, to do us honour with their war-dance.

Imagine seven hundred naked savages in com-

panies of one hundred each; their only clothing the tiny kilt of fur; perhaps a plume of ostrich-feathers on their head, or a strip of leopard-skin round the forehead. Many dress their hair in strange fashions—divided like waves of the sea, twisted into points, or peaked into a central ridge, like a cock's comb. All carry an oval shield of black and white cowhide, four assegais, and a knob-kirri; some few have muskets. Amongst them stalk giants, their bodies glistening with oil, full seven feet high, true sons of Anak, magnificently built and proportioned. Many more are upwards of six feet in stature, and are models of symmetry and savage grace.

Each company advances brandishing shields and assegais aloft to some native tune, slow time admirably kept, its chant being continually varied by deep gutturals, hisses, grunts, and shouts, all uttered in the most perfect time. Their eyes roll, and they give out the war-song with startling energy and ferocity as they pass. Every here and there a warrior dashes out of the ranks, and goes through in pantomime the pursuit, defeat, and ultimate slaughter of an

imaginary foe—accompanying the performance by leaps, tumbles, crawlings, and the most hideous grimaces; his fellows in the ranks greeting him with a wild chorus of shrieks, and cries of encouragement and admiration; now whistling or giving out the deep guttural “ouf-oom-squish;” now bursting out, yelping like a pack of dogs; occasionally, when excited by some warrior more grotesque than usual, rushing out to imitate him, three and four at a time.

One chief, of huge proportions, had managed to hoist himself on to a horse—the animal looking mean under the weight he carried, which was indeed every inch the noble savage.

At daybreak, when we marched, our allies headed us off and lined the road, as much to their own delight as to that of our soldiers, who, having picked up some bits of the native air, greeted them with the quaint “ouf-oom-squish;” eliciting in return grins innumerable, and the universal “Ha, ha, Johnnie!”

The natives at length left behind, we climbed the steep ascent leading to the flat-topped hill on which Helpmakaar is situated. The

hill is steep enough to have given a name to the village, Helpmakaar being the Dutch words "help-ma-kaar,"—"help my cart up," as it runs in English. Once at the top, the road is carried along the summit of the hill, and is perfectly level for some twenty-five miles, thus giving an idea of the size of the hills in South Africa.

The towns and villages in that country are for the most part mere names in capitals on the map. Umsinga, just passed, consists of a small store the size of an Irish cabin, and a missionary's house distant quite two miles. Helpmakaar exists only since the present war, one small farm having previously marked the spot laid down for the village on the map. During the early part of the war it became a place of great importance ; but typhoid fever gradually gaining ground among the troops there, it had to be abandoned. When we marched through, it was merely used as a hospital for those cases too ill to bear removal, and as a depot for Rorke's Drift. There were also in camp the remnants of the 1st battalion 24th Regiment—fine, stalwart men, bearded and bronzed by

the sun, till they looked in their blue guernseys more like sailors than soldiers.

Close to was the laager, strongly made of earth—its excessive strength being excusable when we remember its nearness to Rorke's Drift, and the terrible circumstances under which it was constructed.

Helpmakaar is only twelve miles by road from Rorke's Drift; as the crow flies, it is barely half that distance.

A short ride across the mountain will take you to a cliff looking over that now historical place. The mountain-top is a series of gently rolling swells, which, like waves, follow one another interminably. The hollows, imperceptible from a distance, deepen gradually till they become valleys, then ravines with scarped sides, many miles in length, until they end in the central valley of the Buffalo.

Nestling among the fallen boulders at the foot of these crags are the beehive-shaped kraals of a Kafir village, cunningly hidden, and apparently deserted. But the women are inside with the children: having spied a stranger in the distance, they have bolted within the huts, drawing

the wicker door across the entrance, and lying as silent as rabbits in their holes till the intruder has left. The mountain is alive with life. Snakes are by no means rare ; grey lizards rustle towards their holes, looking quite too large for the work of so small a creature ; larks and other small birds are springing around ; the graceful Kafir crane stalks grandly away ; a covey of partridges get up from the long grass and whirl loudly over the ground ; a secretary bird is busy searching for vermin, frogs, snakes, and such-like, for which good service he is protected, with the vultures overhead, by the Government. One of the bustard tribe, called locally a "paaw," is common on these mountain-tops, and is a fine game-bird, well worth powder and shot. A larger species, not so common, attains an enormous size, often weighing over fifty pounds. Like other game here, they are easily approached on horseback, the sportsman circling round and round the bird, being careful not to look at it, and gradually lessening the diameter of the circle till he is within shot. This is called "ringing," and is generally successful, even with the most wary game. An officer at Helpmakaar

saw a paaw struck down by an eagle, and riding up, was in time to rescue the scarcely dead bird, and take it back to mess.

Innumerable ant-hills stud the grass. How so many millions of the creatures can exist is a wonder. Our men put the nest to a practical use by cutting off the top, and hollowing it out on one side, when it made an excellent fireplace, the substance of the nest itself burning slowly, and continuing to smoulder for a long time after the fuel was exhausted. So on arrival at a fresh camping-ground there was a general rush after ant-hills, and many amusing scenes were enacted by the lucky ones who secured a good one, and insured its not being "jumped" by sitting on the top in triumph.

"Jumping" is the polite term for stealing in South Africa, and is tolerably universal. Nothing, from your horse to a mealie-stalk taken from a Kafir field, is safe, and the institution is not creditable to the colony.

A short time previously a pony had been stolen from the Commander-in-chief's camp, which happened to be his own property. Officers were despatched far and near to search every

camp and bring back the missing pony. It was a case of undoubted sacrilege, and punishments the most stringent were prophesied as the lot of the delinquent. Suspicion fell on the men of one particular camp, and to it the chief transport-officer went himself. Every one was asked if he knew anything of the pony; but all denied. The officer in search avowed that it was in that camp; his information was undoubted, and he could not leave until it was given up. So he commenced to unload his waggon and pitch his tent. It seemed all but hopeless, when one of his men, poking about in the bush, stumbled upon the long-lost pony, comfortably tethered out of sight behind the tent of one of those who had been most persistent in his denials. The pony was recovered, the transport-officer took down his tent and returned with the missing animal, and nothing more was said of the matter. It was a case of "jumping," that was all.

Five miles' ride across the mountain from Helpmakaar brings one to a perpendicular cliff looking down on the Buffalo, just over Rorke's Drift. The post is hidden by the ground, but the signal mountain above it, from which the

Zulus fired upon the garrison, is visible, and near it the column of smoke from the post.

Beyond the deep valley at the bottom of which runs the Buffalo, is Zululand, dry and forbidding; plains running up into hill-ranges; these again surmounted by flat-topped mountains. There is no sign of life, no moving thing, no cattle, no smoke to show the villages. Near the river are a few trees; opposite, a slope, covered with grass, leading to what is now known as "Fugitives' Drift." At the bottom of this Melville and Coghill fell, and there lie buried under a stone monument cut and put up to their memories by their comrades. Once, the hillside on which we stand was a throng of fugitives running for bare life, the cruel foe following. Now, there is no living being within sight; cattle are lazily feeding on the neighbouring hills; above all shines the glorious sun. In the uninviting country across the valley, some few miles away, rises a small hill, standing alone, and just joined to the mountain-range on the left by a low neck. A cloud is over it just now, and it stands out from the rest black and ominous. The glasses showed little dots

scattered over the low land which led to it ; otherwise there was nothing but dark rock and dry plain. And this was Isandlwana ! Some way to the left, on the hills, was the spot where the Zulu army formed up, in sight of the camp, previous to the attack. The little dots were the deserted waggons—as yet, when we looked at them, unclaimed. Ten miles or more to the right lay a range of high mountains, amongst which Lord Chelmsford's force was during the fatal day.

In our direction, by the side of a little rounded hill, had been the line of flight. The thought of the bodies of our countrymen, and of their camp, still lying as they lay that afternoon, though nearly three months were gone, was no pleasant reflection. General Funk was still a power in the colony.

Tales of the fight were everywhere to be heard.

“How lucky we are !” said an officer when the Zulus first appeared ; “we shall do the whole thing ourselves, and the others, when they come back and find it over, will be awfully sold !”

Another, a survivor, said : “ I was just coming back to camp when I saw the hill black with Kafirs. The cannon began firing, but the Zulus kept pouring down on our front and on our flank. The Zulus in front of the cannon, when they saw the gunners stand clear, either fell down or divided in the middle so as to leave a lane, and when the shot had passed, shouted out, ‘Umoya.’ There was no hurry or confusion with them, but all was done as if they had been drilled to it. At last they made a simultaneous charge against us when about two hundred yards off. I had to run away, having no doubt the Zulus would catch me. I saw them killing the soldiers all round me. I was fortunate to have a horse given me, and managed to get on him and ride away. I saw a soldier running past a bush, when a Zulu sprang out and threw a broad-bladed assegai at him, which struck him between the shoulders. The soldier fell on his face, and the Zulu ran up to him, and calling out ‘Usutu,’ stabbed him to the heart with the same assegai. When I came to the precipice it was twelve feet high, but I shut my eyes and jumped my horse over it. When I

got to the river there were plenty of Zulus before me, but I put spurs to the horse and got into the stream. Four or five white men got hold of my horse's tail to swim across, so that he could not move, when the Zulus ran up and assegai'd some, while the rest let go and were carried away by the stream, only to be killed further down. On the bank I saw one of our Kafirs fight a Zulu. After some guarding on both sides, the Zulu stabbed our Kafir in the shoulder ; thereupon the Kafir jumped up into the air and struck his assegai to the Zulu's heart, after which both of them rolled into the river. Every time the Zulus stabbed a white man they cried out ' Usutu,'—that is their war-cry. The natives heard them calling out, ' Leave the Kafirs, as the white men made them fight ! ' It was about seven miles we ran to the Buffalo, and the Zulus chased us for three miles across that river."

Such was the substance of most men's stories of that sad day, and it was a relief to turn away from the sight of a place bringing such recollections to our minds, and to set our faces towards the bright plateau lying between ourselves and

the troops, with hearts buoyed up with such sanguine hopes of retribution and success.

West of Helpmakaar, the mountain descends to a vast sandy plain, dotted with darker patches of cultivation. The land is seamed with water-courses, with steep sides and soft sandy bottoms, over which, after rain, the water rushes in a torrent. These are called, locally, "spruits," and form a serious obstacle to traveling. Where the term "Sand" is prefixed, the stream is of sufficient importance to be named as such on the map—many dozen such "Sand Spruits" appearing are a sign of the paucity of landmarks or inhabited places in the colony.

Across this valley the Drakensberg range raises its crests to some 10,000 feet, often in the winter season covered with snow. In this range rise the Mooi and Tugela—rivers which cross the whole of Natal, until they unite and form the boundary of Lower Zululand. Beyond the mountains lies the Orange Free State, the last possession left to the Dutch in South Africa.

Strangely peaked hills, with scarped tops, pop up here and there in the landscape. Some are quite pointed, others again flat, as if their points

had been sliced off level with those of their larger neighbours, so much the peculiar feature of this peculiar country.

These isolated hills are called "Kops," often adding thereto the name of some individual; so there is "Krantz Kop," "Pagadis Kop," "Makatees Kop," and many others, useful as points to steer by when crossing the grass flats which surround them.

Helpmakaar, and further north, is the land of horses and sheep, flocks of which are feeding everywhere; the farms here and there, each with a circular stone kraal for the stock to sleep in. Wool henceforth, and away into the Transvaal, is the staple of the land, and each sheep should give a fleece in weight about four pounds.

The horses, or rather ponies, are hardy, rough beasts, moving cleverly across the grass, which is generally a network of holes. Sheep and horses were in abundance on the hill-tops when we passed, but white men there were none. The farms were shut up and deserted by their owners, and Kafirs left alone in charge of the stock. Isandlwana was less than twenty miles away, and the Zulus are a race fleet of foot, and

might be amongst them within an hour. So the farmers were away, and we marched through an uninhabited country. It was along this road, over a bleak mountain-top, that Lord Chelmsford rode in hot haste after Isandlwana, anxious to reach the still unconscious colony and put it in a state of defence against the hourly-expected Zulus ; and a sad ride it must have been, with that battle-field vivid before his eyes. Always a man with a kind heart, beloved by his soldiers, and loving them in return, the loss of so many known to him by sight, and often by name, was enough to break the most iron spirit, and make the owner wish to be away. Yet the General nobly performed his duty, sacrificing himself to the necessities of the situation, and his good name still lives in the colony.

The road was used equally by others riding hard, in obedience to the orders of another General, only too eager to obey him to the letter. In haste to convey intelligence to the rear, they galloped away, forgetful of everything except the present, and succeeding admirably in carrying out their orders. In the latter part of the war, "carrying intelligence to the rear"

went out of fashion, and was looked upon as a service to be avoided.

Dundee lies at the end of the mountain, in a valley, and is another of the towns existing only on the map. A farmhouse, snugly placed on the slope of a hill ; two stores, as many miles apart ; and a tiny brick house, which is a church, —make up the entire place. It is, however, the centre of a flourishing district, and having been chosen as the rendezvous of the central column, was crowded during the war. Troops of all arms of the service were there in camp by hundreds, soldiers were everywhere, volunteers abounded, every pocket had money in it, and the stores did a roaring trade. It also possesses some seams of most excellent coal, which was a great luxury after the want of fuel we had experienced through the scarcity of wood in the colony.

It is remarkable how various countries get accustomed to certain things by particular makers, supplied to them by the shops. Habit has given each its own tastes, its likes and dislikes, its favourite brands and manufacturers. You may go into every shop in a colony and

find each one supplied with precisely the same things as the last. In India, before the Mutiny, the brandy must be Exshaw's; Coward supplied the tinned provisions; Allsopp the bottled beer; while no shop or pedlar was complete without Macassar oil, tapes, and seidlitz-powders. In Mauritius, Martel supplies the brandy, Younger the beer, Moir the tinned meats; while the shops all sell cigars at ten for sixpence, highly-coloured liqueurs, and Gruyere cheese.

Now, in Natal, Hennessy supplies brandy, Bass the beer, Morton the tinned things of every conceivable kind; while Hollands gin, or "square-face," in red boxes and square bottles, is in every house and hovel. The stores are provided invariably with jams, olive-oil, small basins, gaudy chintz, brown corduroy, beads, saddles warranted to give sore backs, bamboos for whip-handles, baskets made by the Kafirs to carry native beer, vial-bottles of patent medicines with such strange names as "Cajeput Olie" and "Borst Droppels." Besides these are a wonderful assortment of sweets—"snowdrops," "ripe pears," "Ching Changs," "Argyle stars," "locomotive drops," and so on for twenty labels. Of these the

Boers are immensely fond ; and you see a big yellow-bearded fellow in a slouch-hat and velvet "cords" buying half a pound of the sticky things, just as a child in England does her ha'porth of acid-drops.

Liquor is of course an indispensable adjunct, and is sold across the counter everywhere at a shilling a glass. "Square-face" is the invariable stuff, and you take as much as you like for a glass, though it is thought bad taste to fill up above the "pretty." Guzzling is thus encouraged to a dreadful extent. Every store is full of half-sodden men, who lounge about it the whole day, and persist in entering into conversation on the smallest pretext. "Square-face" is the bane of the colony, never absent ; and till a change comes over the fondness of the colonists—almost to a man in the rural districts given to it—so long will the colony retain its present half-starved condition.

Postal arrangements had been sadly deranged by the war, and the additional mass of letters and in a little place like Dundee were little short of chaos. The post-office, adapted to the half-a-dozen letters a-week passing through in

peace-time, found itself suddenly filled with the correspondence of some half-dozen regiments. The mail might go out to-morrow if a Kafir could be found to carry it; and there was another expected to-day; it ought to have been in yesterday,—and so on, as a young man, got up in riding-boots and spurs, informs you, condescending to look in at the office from the counter next door, where he is selling much “square-face” to the usual crowd of idlers-about. Stamps are an impossibility. For a few shillings I bought up the whole stock, and a more filthy and crumpled lot of bits of paper I never handled. Subsequently, during the advance, military post-offices were formed, and we got our letters with some show of regularity—all going free in the colony, owing to the thoughtful generosity of the Government.