

on behind one another any way they pleased, evidently with no eye for a straight line. Bogs are usual near the streams, and are nasty to cross, besides requiring experience to detect. Mealies have been grown on a patch of land scratched with a log of wood, and show that there are owners of the soil; but kraals are nowhere to be seen, the natives hereabout living in caves. After a long descent the stones increase, bushes grow up between the larger ones, the paving stones get flatter and more slippery, and make you think that it is time to dismount. All at once a gorge opens out on the right, the rocks which form its sides grey and precipitous, crumpled into a thousand fissures. Forest-trees hang down the face, tied together by "lianes" as thick as your leg; at the bottom are patches of level land of which the carpet is the greenest turf. Aloes and cacti, branching like candelabra, add a foreign element. Below all you hear the rush of water in the river. Many trees are of the order *Poinsettia*, their leaves bunches of scarlet, setting the foliage in a blaze of colour. Others are leafless, their branches clothed with scarlet flowers. Clumps of fresh spring green

refresh the eye, and make the scene a little homelike. You lead your horse down a set of natural steps, and on reaching the bottom are aware that the inhabitants are not far off. Cocks are crowing, children laughing, and women mingle their shrill voices with the deeper tones of the men. A dog sends up a solitary bark, but as yet you see nothing but forest.

Exactly in front is a stream, its high banks clothed with fig-trees, the branches hanging over to the far side; and from these, as you ride up, drop a dozen little black urchins, and scamper away full speed. They run a couple of hundred yards and then dive suddenly into the thick underwood which grows at the base of a strangely isolated rock in the centre of the valley. As they approach this place the voices drop, dead silence ensues, and you feel that you are being looked at by a hundred invisible eyes. Then a chorus of dogs begins, and a flight of cocks and hens takes wildly to cover. A Kafir is seen stealing towards the same place, and is immediately cut off and brought to bay. He looks wild; half savage, half afraid, till we make friends by the present

of a bit of tobacco, and the magic word "uncoco," fowls. He sets up a shout, and from the undergrowth start up the population, standing on the boulders or jumping on to others to obtain a better view. The boldest come out into the open, where they form line and watch us intently. Half-way up the rock, on a ledge almost hidden by brushwood, we can just distinguish their kraals. In front of them a wall breast-high has been built; the kraals themselves mark the entrances to caves with which the hill is honeycombed. After more tobacco, we become friends and ride up to inspect. The urchins set up a shrill chorus and bolt under the rocks, but the men stand their ground. They are wild-looking people, most of them naked, some with a sheepskin thrown over their shoulders; all wear the "moucha." A little in rear are some females; the married women wearing a short petticoat of skin or sacking, black with age and dirt; the girls without exception stark naked, their ample proportions not even set off by a string of beads. Their faces were pretty; and their figures, innocent of stays, graceful and rounded. A Kafir belle

moves with all the grace and elegance of her sex ; infuses a spice of coquetry into her looks and actions ; and is all over the spoilt young lady, despite her nakedness, which is too absolute to be anything but innocent.

We give some more tobacco, and the boys start headlong after the fowls, who, wary by experience, run like race-horses, dodging under the rocks, or flying across the gully. But the boys are just as active, and jump about among the boulders most marvellously, till the unfortunates are pumped, and give themselves up with screams and cackling. The dogs join in the row, and are silenced by a volley of stones, aimed as only a Kafir knows how. The women advance and beg for tobacco ; the men bring the captured fowls, holding out both palms for the money. We give some parting nods, and ride away down the valley, carrying tomorrow's dinner at our saddle-bows.

The presence of our column had its effect, and signs of peace became everywhere apparent.

Groups of natives were frequent, carrying bundles of sticks with which to rebuild their kraals ; and some, bolder than the rest, ven-

tured daily into camp with a few pots of dirty milk, or some skinny cocks and hens.

A young officer who had just come back from a patrol, was telling me of the success he had met with in dealing with the people, and said that he had purchased six fowls from one cave. "Of course," he added, "I paid for them, just to show that the business was genuine."

"How much did you give for them?" I asked.

"Oh, a shilling for the whole lot."

On the strength of his bargain he invited me to dine with him on one of the twopenny fowls. Now dinners in camp were only given when a special inducement could be held out. I have known one accepted on no better bait than a tin of lobster; but that was in Zululand before Ulundi. So great a dainty as a fowl, therefore, came like that well-advertised pen—"as a boon and a blessing to men,"—and was thankfully accepted. No time was wasted over formalities in these camp festivities; and the night of the dinner was the night of the day on which the invitation was issued. Punctual to time the guests arrived, and were met by the host with an apology that dinner would

be half an hour late,—the wood was damp, and the fowl would not roast. So we sat on the boxes which were the seats, round the bigger one which was the table, and tried to be pleasant, notwithstanding the gnawing inside which the lateness of the dinner-hour brought about. Half an hour passed, then an hour, and the host waxed impatient. So the plates appeared. Ten minutes later we got a tin cup apiece, into which the soup was poured out of a saucepan, and dinner began. Coffee came next,—we were teetotallers in South Africa, and drank tea or coffee at every meal,—coffee with Swiss milk, and sugar black with dirt. Still, coffee in camp is warm and grateful, so each one mixed his and began to drink. We had no sooner tasted it than a general spluttering ensued; the host bolted outside, while we sat and tried to get rid of the taste with lumps of bread.

“What’s the matter?” asked a sick boy in the corner, where he was lying up with fever.

“The matter is castor-oil, or something like it,” we muttered.

“Oh,” said the sick boy, “it’s my servant,

confound the fellow! Why, he's mixed the the coffee in the cup I've just taken the medicine in."

There was nothing left but to get on with the dinner, so the plates were swabbed and a tin of salmon produced; a dish of "trek-ox," curried, followed, which we partook of sparingly, waiting for the fowl.

"Now, Barney, bring the fowl!" shouted the host.

"The fowl, sir?" said Barney in the doorway, evidently ready to bolt.

"Yes, stupid! the fowl that you've got for dinner."

"Oh, sir, the fowl's not cooked the night. 'Twas a curry dinner you told me to do; and when it's a curry dinner, there's not enough pots to roast a fowl."

"No fowl!" gasped his master; "d'you mean to say there is nothing more to come?"

"Divil the ha'porth, your honour!" cried Barney, retreating just in time to miss his master's boot, and in the distance we heard his voice—

"Shure, sir, it's a misunderstanding between

us; for the fowl's not aisy to cook, and you asking for a curry dinner."

After a time we calmed down, and made up for the fowl with a tin of raspberry-jam, washed down with "square-face," and then wished good-night, and went off hungry to bed.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRANSVAAL—A CHAT WITH THE BOERS—DYING CATTLE—
 TAINTED STREAMS—USELESS SPOILS—LOCAL LITERATURE
 —A DEAD MAN'S SALE—SEKUKUNI—OUR DRIVERS STRIKE
 WORK—THE COLUMN DISBANDED—A CAMPAIGN OF DIS-
 APPOINTMENTS—WE SAY GOOD-BYE.

THE rolling plains of the Transvaal tempted us to ride across them. The road crosses the Intombie, and leads through a valley for the first ten miles, rising to the higher land by a series of well-marked terraces. Acres of fallen rock lay by the side of green turf; the cliffs were bright with foliage; streams cut through the soil; flowers were everywhere. In a dell, green and beautiful, we came upon a white man's skeleton: how it got there no one could tell. To the left was the farm of the "field-cornet" of the district, who was able to sell us a little butter and milk,—very delicious after months of abstinence. His daughter, a strapping girl of

sixteen, was the first white woman we had seen. She had a strange way of coming straight up to you with her hand outstretched, looking you full in the face, without speaking, which was a little trying. Still she was a woman, though a Dutch one; so we took her hand, shaking it warmly, and watched her retire at once to the furthest corner of the room, where she lay in wait till the next arrival gave her the opportunity of commencing the operation over again.

The rounded hills, covered with grass, were dotted with the waggons of Boers, living in them and tending their herds of cattle or sheep. Their families were with them,—the women swathing their faces in napkins to preserve their complexions, and wearing sun-bonnets, just as our own girls do in haymaking-time. The men, when not surly, were familiar. I was sitting on the blankets in my tent one morning, putting on my clothes, when in stalked two hulking fellows in corduroys and slouch-hats. “Goot morning, captain!” they exclaimed, holding out their hands, which had to be duly shaken. After that they made themselves comfortable on the ground in front of me, filling

their pipes and asking questions : “ Where was Cetewayo ? Was he still on his farm ? Was he going to fight again, or not ? Where did all the soldiers come from ? We thought they were all killed at Isandlwana. Were any more coming up ? Was the Transvaal to come back to the Dutch ? We heard so. Dat is a fine gun ; how much did it cost ? I can shoot but with the rifle. I will show you ; and I can hit anything.”

On this the pair got up and began firing at an ant-hill, which they managed to miss as often as they let off. They evidently thought much of the title of captain, every question they asked finishing off with it. Then came more handshaking ; and they went away.

The Transvaal soon becomes wearisome, there is so much sameness in its features : you live in the centre of a saucer of green turf,—everywhere is the rim above you, shutting out all beyond ; there are no views,—to use the word landscape would be to misapply a well-known term : a bush, a shrub, or a rock would be pleasant variations. You do see a herd of “spring-buck” about—and little piles of bones shine very white, and mark the place where hundreds

of the same have been shot ; but beyond this there is nothing but grass.

A return to camp was not without objections. Our cattle, always numerous, had a habit of falling sick and dying. The cause of this generally was lung-sickness, a complaint peculiar to South Africa. An ox attacked by it refuses, from sheer inability, to draw, and is left to die by the wayside. This does not mean, as in England, a corner under a hedge, in a lane where help can be given if needed. The way in South Africa is a track cut across a plain which extends for miles to the horizon ; and the ox left to die by this wayside wanders hopelessly till he becomes a dot in the distance. If you are in camp thereabouts you will probably see the same dot in the same place for days. The grass is as good there as anywhere else, and the poor sick thing cannot eat it, bad or good, so it stands mournfully till it bethinks it of water. It essays to move, and as likely as not falls from sheer exhaustion and dies where it stood. If it has strength left, it paces off to the nearest stream and enters eagerly. The water is cool, the bank shelves easily, and it is soon breast-

high ; but in its sickness it has forgotten the mud at the bottom ; its poor weak legs sink in, its back disappears, and it is lucky indeed if it can keep its nostrils sufficiently above for air. It must die at last, and poison the stream with its carcass. So our camps become surrounded by pestilential spots, drained by putrid water, and thoroughly unwholesome the longer we remained in one. Not a stream near that was not filthy with decaying bodies : the Pongola on its sand-banks had them by dozens, and the stench was fearful. Now and again would be brought in a few horses or mules, recovered from the Zulus, all covered with mange and eaten up with sores ; and it was a question how to get rid of them again. One redeeming point was the abundance of mushrooms which sprang up after the rains and made the land quite white in many places. They proved most excellent eating, and the soldiers stewed them with everything. Unluckily when we tried them ourselves, the solitary frying-pan in our canteens had got so thoroughly saturated with grease, from constant use, that the delicate flavour of the fungus was quite lost in the presence of stale fat.

We had been teetotallers for so long now that the wish for anything stronger than tea or coffee had gone, except in the evenings, when we sat on our beds and tried to talk. In Zululand the evenings had been too short and ourselves too tired for conviviality; lights had been put out punctually a little after eight, and we had to go to bed. Now the rule was relaxed and the evenings were very dull without books, chairs, and a glass of grog. Our only literature was an occasional local newspaper, and the contents of these, if not irritating, were commonplace. I remember reading a letter from a correspondent in the Transvaal belonging to a society called, so he said, "Ye Pretoria Twirlers" (a very appropriate title), complaining that the "Twirlers" were either living under a military despotism, or that a long Latin sentence, which he gave as a quotation, had been written with reference to the Governor, who had objected to the performance of certain personalities indulged in by the society. Had his Excellency been only gifted with the most ordinary common-sense he would have taken no notice. It appears that he did object to "an entertainment in which the Gov-

ernment was insulted or held up to ridicule," and, in consequence, had to learn that "if such proceedings had taken place under the sway of his Despotic and Autocratic Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, one could have understood it; but that it should happen to subjects of the most free and liberally governed country on the globe is scarcely credible."

A Natal paper attending, through another correspondent, the weekly auction held in the Market Square, witnesses "a sight which causes us to reflect deeply upon the great mystery of death. There, on a stall, ranged, amid bottles of sweet nitre, Eno's fruit-salt, and kindred commodities, are the kits of men killed in the late war. What especially attracts our notice is a collection of the late Captain — ; and gazing at the relics of this gallant officer, one is irresistibly reminded of how bravely he fell. He died a glorious death, and we feel grieved that his various household goods are lying in an open market. Here are his hunting top-boots, rather mouldy now, in which he has followed the hounds with all the ardour of youthful enthusiasm. There lie a pair of patent-

leather shoes, in which he has danced, doubtless many a time, in the splendid mansions of the aristocracy; while round about are scattered neck-ties, white kid gloves, collars, uniforms, boot-trees, and other miscellaneous articles,—all of which speedily find purchasers amongst the crowd surrounding the auctioneer, who every few minutes impresses upon his audience the fact that these articles had really been the property of the gallant captain.”

With such reading as our only resource, eked out with stringy beef and cold tea, it was no wonder that we heard with pleasure the column was to be broken up. Baker Russell was at Utrecht doing all he knew to enlist fresh drivers for a contemplated advance against Sekukuni in the far north, the old lot utterly refusing to go another step.

“You engaged us,” they said, “to drive your waggons for a month, and when we had done that, you told us we must go on driving your waggons for another month; we did that too, and you would not let us go—and that is six months past; and you gave us no pay, and tell us that we can’t go home, but must drive your

waggon to that bad man Sekukuni. We are not like you; we can't write our words on paper: and so our wives, not seeing us come back, will think that we are dead, and will marry again; so that when you let us go, and we return to our homes, we shall find other men living in our kraals."

The Dragoons went off into the Transvaal to look after the Boers, who had talked themselves troublesome. Harness's battery, which had been present at Isandlwana, and had been with us ever since, left for the same place; while Darcy, with the Frontier Light Horse and the rest of the Irregulars, made for Utrecht to be disbanded.

It was somewhat sad to part—for we had been together so long, and a campaign is the best of all schools for teaching men each other's worth. There is so much real work, and so many times when your own courage is animated by seeing that of the man next to you, that you are apt to feel for one another a deeper friendship than usual. Every one has the same aim,—the wish to beat the enemy; the hope that no one that he knows may be killed. In the Zulu war the

disappointments had been very great, and they had been shared alike by every one in the field.

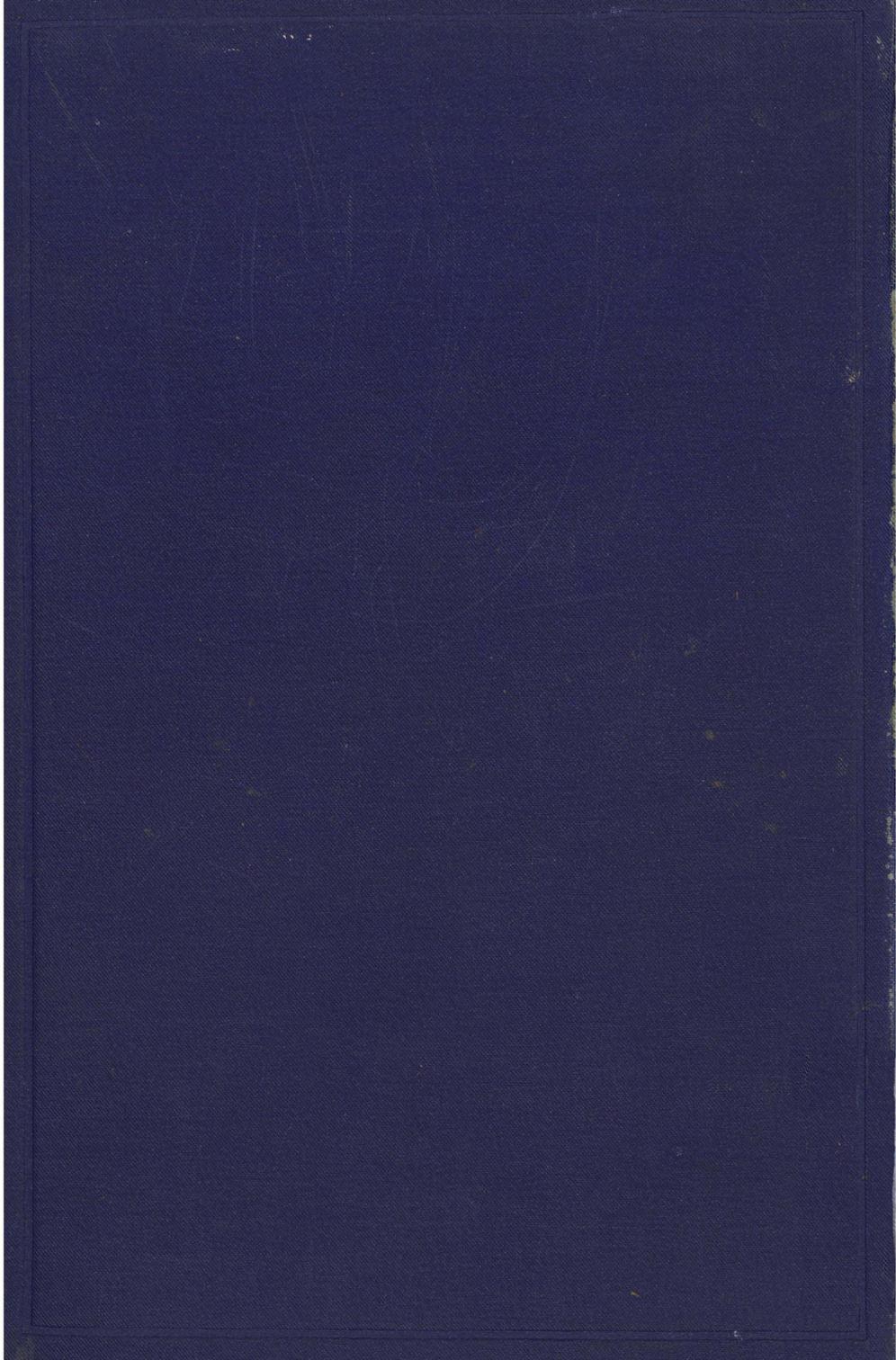
We had left England in a hurry ; our property had been sold for a mere song ; our relatives had barely time to say good-bye. On the passage our one topic was the time which would elapse between our landing and our first brush with the Zulus. We calculated that it would take us ten days to reach the Tugela, and that fighting would commence at once ; a month from then would settle the whole business ; and we knew that the transports which had brought us out had been engaged for three months to take us home again.

It was a bright prospect to be so sadly dimmed ; and had any one ventured to hint that it would be two months after landing before we put our foot into Zululand, and three before we got a fight out of its people, he would have been laughed at. Yet that came to be the truth, —and more than that, no sooner had we got through our decisive fight at Ulundi, than we were told that the campaign would only then commence in earnest.

But after such disappointments, it speaks

highly for the training which a campaign gives to men, that when we separated it was with feelings of genuine regret, and with the pleasantest memories of all those we had met in South Africa.

THE END.



CAMPAIGNING
IN
SOUTH AFRICA

CAPTAIN
W. E. MONTAGUE