

heavens appear to possess a very great number more stars than those observable North of the Equator.

That night I and my companions sat late over our pipes, and enjoyed narrating to each other many an incident by flood and field; for we all came from the land of cakes, and there is an inherent love in the people that come from the country north of the Tweed for every description of field sports.

The vernacular of one was still as broad as at the time he resided by Dee-side.

I fear that in his boyish days he gave much trouble to landlords and gamekeepers, for he confessed to having slaughtered many a *salmon* and *muir-cock*, which he never bagged for fear the keeper should have *nabbitted* him.

The stillness which prevailed was something marvellous. The horses were out on the veldt feeding, under the care of a forelouper, and thus were out of hearing; so nothing broke the quiet except the occasional cry of an owl, or the more melancholy note of a distant rock-rabbit (*hirax*). No doubt numerous porcupines, ant-bears, and even jumping-hares were around us; but the fire, and our conversation, kept them at a distance. The air was intensely cold, at least I felt it to be so, although provided with a great coat and two blankets; and my boy suffered to such an extent as to groan and grunt nearly half the night. I do not think any of us got a very bountiful supply

of sleep, for we were all up and doing before the day broke.

As nothing in the shape of cooking or coffee-pot can well be carried upon horseback, when we started in the morning we must have looked like three knights of the woeful countenance!

My unfortunate domestic stood shivering when the horses were saddled, and was so incapable of exertion, that I had to perform that duty myself. The rising sun, however, soon brought fresh life into the silent cavalcade, and presently we were jogging along as comfortably as if we had slept on beds of eider-down, and had had a good morning meal.

At half-past seven we arrived at a homestead, the proprietor of which appeared better off than the majority of the Boers I had yet encountered.

Our supply of food, though not what the most fastidious might desire, was abundant, good, and wholesome. Still there were a few objections, one of which I will state.

The heat of the fire in the cooking-place had evidently made the room feel unusually warm. An old lady waited at table with a clout in her hand, which, I believe is designated by these people a "faddock." Well, the woman did her duty with considerable energy, and no little skill. When your plate was empty, and you were about to partake of another dish, she would violently lay hands upon that utensil, and swab it with this cloth. Each of our platters was treated in the

same fashion, and without the assistance of water. The repast was getting towards its termination, when, to my horror, I saw the aged female wiping the perspiration off her face and neck with the identical rag. This was rather appalling to any one who had a poor digestion; but, by Jove, the climax was attained when I saw her grab a dirty urchin of four or five years, who was obviously suffering from a chronic cold, and treat him to something like the same operation.

Flesh and blood can stand a great deal, but I thought this was a little straining the point of delicacy, and I fled from the establishment, gained my horse, and was a mile or two upon the road, before my companions overtook me.

"Baas! I want to speak to you," said my after-rider.

"What is it?" I inquired.

"I can't go much further."

"Then you had better dismount and stop where you are."

"You surely wouldn't leave me on the veldt?"

"That I would. If you cannot ride I cannot stop. I am on the service of Government, and will not be detained by, or for, anybody."

"Well, I'll hang on, sir," he answered; "but it does hurt so. Do, Baas, ride slow!" After which colloquy he dropped in the rear.

Just fancy this fellow, who professed to be able to live on horseback, complaining about feeling ill and sore, before one quarter of the

journey was done! The circumstance certainly made me feel "riled," and, just with a little wee bit more provocation, I think I could have jumped on to him.

If he had been a good and attentive servant I might have felt some pity for him; but he was a cruel, cowardly, lazy beast, who neglected his charges on every opportunity, and was never to be found when wanted.

Moreover, he would lie like a pick-pocket, and, in a most barefaced manner, argue that what you had actually seen him do had never transpired.

Later on in the day we had a grand view of a hunt.

Two young Boers passed us on the road, tolerably well mounted, and behind them was a native, leading a brace of half-bred greyhounds. They were travelling faster than we, so we let them go on ahead.

In half an hour afterwards we overtook them getting ready to have a shot at some spring-bok. Each had his head under the flap of his saddle, hauling with all his might to make the girths sufficiently tight, while the Kaffir was busily engaged in keeping down the dogs—a no easy task to perform, as it appeared to me. At length all was ready.

Then they rode carefully for some distance, up the wind, towards the game, which soon commenced showing alarm, moving off in one long

string. The sportsmen in a moment were out of their saddles and on their feet.

So long was the aim they took that it appeared as though they never would fire.

However, two reports occurred almost simultaneously, and one of the antelopes came down on his chest, the remainder of the herd leaving their stricken companion.

With an amount of activity of which I had not previously expected them capable of, each Boer regained his saddle; the hounds by this time were slipped, and the chase became most exciting. The quarry had only a leg broken.

Many would say that would be sufficient. Learn, then, gentle reader, that a spring-bok or bless-bok with a broken fore-leg will give a well-mounted man and a pair of ordinary dogs as much difficulty in capturing him as can well be imagined.

The men and their curs did their best. More reckless riding could not be witnessed. First one and then another was foremost, for the veldt abounded in sun-cracks and ant-bear holes. At one period of the hunt the contestants galloped neck and neck for two hundred yards, when the horse one was riding—a piebald—turned a complete somersault, as perfect as you ever could have seen at Croydon or the Grand Liverpool Steeplechases.

But both horse and rider were, as the Yankees express it, "real grit," the pair of them regaining a footing in an instant afterwards, and the chase

being renewed by the unfortunate equestrian with undiminished vigour.

The bok crossed and recrossed the road in front of us. It was evidently giving out, and thus began to run cunning.

We stood up in our stirrups, and taking off our hats, vociferously shouted "Go it!" and they obeyed our instructions to the letter. But soon after the other came to grief over a dry crack; and so severe was his spill that possibly a minute or more was lost before he was reseated. Afterwards, however, he was out of the race, and I fear both man and horse were badly hurt.

Fortunately their services were not required; for a few moments later one of the curs seized the bok by the hind foot and held to his grip manfully, the unfortunate game wheeling and wheeling again in the endeavour to use its horns; but these efforts soon failed, the second hound having taken hold of its flank.

It was painful to hear its plaintive cries when it viewed the hunter's approach; but the torture it suffered was of brief duration. Another shot from the rifle decided the matter, and the poor antelope lay dead upon the veldt.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### TRECK BOERS.

IN the afternoon we off-saddled in rather a pretty valley, girded on both sides by rocks of considerable magnitude, whilst the low-lying ground, which margined a stream of diminutive size, was covered with a mimosa here named "Kameel-Dorn." The "Watchtabit" briar was also extremely plentiful—a terror to equestrian or traveller on foot.

I can vouch that no more objectionable shrub than this grows; and many a time have I and my horse been tied up so tightly in it that to advance or retire without the use of a knife was an impossibility.

Before saddling, the creaking of ungreased wheels denoted the advance of strangers towards us; and glancing to the north, I observed three sorry-looking waggons, with their tilts totally denuded of canvas.

Wearily and slowly the patient bullocks toiled on through the heavy sand; and the gun-like reports of their drivers' whips indicated with what alacrity they were proceeding on their southern

journey. As we were at the outspanning place, the waggons debouched from their course and halted beside us.

Soon the tired bullocks were unhitched from their yokes, and slaking their thirst, or seeking to distend their collapsed sides.

The men of the party, three in number, came and shook hands with us; and one of my companions offered them a "*supje*" of "*square-face*," which each immediately accepted, and, I fear, with hungry eyes followed the bottle as it was replaced in its owner's holster.

There is a deal of virtue in a glass of grog!

Its abuse, and not its use, is to be condemned.

The strangers found the benefit of it, and changed from miserable mortals to thoroughly jovial and satisfied ones, for they lost their dejected appearance, and soon became most talkative.

Their tale was truly one of sorrow.

Three years previous to this date they had sold their farms in the Transvaal, and had gone into far Kaffirland.

With them was all their worldly wealth—possibly two or three hundred head of cattle.

Here they had enclosed, after much labour, a sufficiency of soil for tillage, built houses and cattle kraals, planted and sowed.

But after the *Insanwala* disaster was known, their black neighbours became "*cheeky*," impounded and stole their cattle, and ultimately



ordered them to quit. Such an order was not to be laughed at, and there remained only one course open to them, viz., "go."

To the northward Africa was closed to them; to the southward their farms were in the hands of strangers, and their paternal government had ceased to exist. Of the two alternatives the latter only could be chosen.

More squalid women and children than the creatures belonging to this party I never set eyes upon in my life.

Africa can tell many tales of this sort.

A gentleman who had lately returned from the lake district informed me that he came across, in the neighbourhood of the lake river, seventeen waggons at a stand-still in the most fever-stricken district, for want of oxen; and that only two men, with four or five women, out of a party of seventy, had survived.

For horrors such as these the Imperial Government is not answerable. The unsettled inhabitants of northern Transvaal, from religious fanaticism, or from being the dupes of designing knaves, would insist upon going, in spite of all remonstrance.

In their language they say, "That they are the chosen people of God, and the Promised Land lies before them."

A few years ago, I found a party with seventy waggons encamped on the Limpopo, all intent on making search for this scriptural, imaginary

country. It was absurd to argue with them against their intention. The result was that nine out of ten of the people died from fever or want of water. The mineral and agricultural wealth of the district through which we have been passing I cannot say much for. It has one grand drawback—"want of water."

Where springs do occur, you will find farms, but the stranger or emigrant of course cannot dispossess the present owner.

The country also suffers much from want of rain, which prevents the building, or indeed utility, of large reservoirs or dams; so I feel no hesitation in offering an opinion that its population will ever be one of a very sparse description.

It is a question that has often been asked me, whether the Abyssinian water-drawing pump would answer; not having seen it used, I am unable to give an answer.

It is strange, although moisture apparently is so scarce here, that the appearance of the veldt has undergone an extraordinary change, an alteration most pleasing to the eye, for the monotonous grass—nothing but grass—which covers such large districts of land to the southward, has given place to shrubs and even trees.

Bidding the trek Boers good-bye, we rode through much more variegated scenery.

A low-lying meadow covered with dry reeds struck my attention, so I remarked casually to

my companion, “What a liony-looking place that is!”

“Your’e right, captain,” he answered; “it is not so many years ago that you or I would not have cared about riding past here of a dark, stormy night. Pete Jacobs and some others had a hot time with an old mannikin there; he nearly settled some of them. But I don’t believe there is a lion within a hundred miles of the place now, unless what they say in Zeerust is true, that there is still one of the regular veritable old sort yet hanging about the hills over the town.”

“But tell me the story about Pete Jacobs. I know him, if he is the man who used to live at Tate, where he helped to bury dear old Grandy.”

“The same. I am not good at a yarn, but here goes, as near as I remember. Down in the bottom there lived a big family of lions, and night after night they did some damage. One day it was a horse, next an ox, and often a young nigger off the back tray of the waggon. You are well aware that is the most dangerous place you can sit?”

“Yes, I thought so.”

“Well; these beasts had bothered the Boers so much, that they determined to clear them out. However, I don’t think they liked the job, so kept putting it off from day to day. At length the old one he killed a man on the road to Jacobsdal, and the same night the whole family of them visited Pete’s kraal, killed an ox, and ate it close by the house.”

“ These last acts made it a question whether the Boers or lions had to quit.

“ The latter was resolved upon ; so the neighbours assembled with their guns and dogs. Who was to lead the way ? who was to go first into the reeds ? became the question. But there were no volunteers ; not a man of them liked the job, and little blame to them. I’m hanged if I would have gone in ; would you, captain ?”

“ Not after my experiences ; I might have done so once, but never no more,” I replied.

My friend continued. “ After that they tried to set the reeds on fire ; but when attempting this, one of the brutes rushed out, and regardless of dogs and shots, knocked over a young man, picked him up in his mouth, and carried him off into the cover. There was a terrible scene then among the hunters, for the father and two brothers were among the party. They vowed that they would enter the cover in search of the lost one, while their friends swore that they should not.

“ In fact, if report speaks true, they were nearly turning to and shooting each other. However, any one must acknowledge that it was a most awkward situation.

“ At length one, with a better head upon him than the others, pointed out that there was a steep gradient all down the reeds, with a high hill at the upper end.

“They all knew that. What did that matter? Had they not lived there for years?”

“But the speaker was not to be brow-beaten. Swartz was his name, I think. So he insisted on being listened to, and his argument was as follows:—

“‘That if a bullock-waggon were taken to high ground, and the cattle unyoked, its own gravity would bring it through the centre of the reeds. In the waggon there might be several men provided with their guns, and plenty of firebrands duly lighted to drop in the cover in their course.’”

“An excellent plan!” I could not help exclaiming, for the ground was admirably suited for successfully attempting such a novel device.

“Yes, that’s so; and I believe they did it too; and had the satisfaction of driving the lions out into the veldt, where, with the help of their horses, the Boers soon polished them off.”

There has been much sickness among cattle here this season. Consequently the vultures and large white-breasted ravens were in immense numbers, and so tame and over-fed that they only hopped a few paces to avoid being trodden on. This must account for so few being seen in Zululand early in the war.

Towards sunset we met a party of Boers, who had evidently been drinking hard. All were mounted, and were making a terrible row, very inappropriate indeed to the solitude and harmony of the scene.

When we reached them, one of my acquaintances asked what was up?

The answer he received was, "We are to have back the Transvaal; Sir Bartle Frere has said it."

"No!" exclaimed my friend.

"He said," the Boer replied, "that he would recommend it to the earnest consideration of the Queen, and she is sure to do what he advises. Bully for Sir Bartle, groans for old Shepstone!" So spoke one of the noisy ones.

"Don't you believe it; it is only a polite form of speech in English," I informed my companion *sotto voce*.

This much reassured my comrade, as he had invested money in the country, and goes in for improvements and education.

## CHAPTER XX.

### A BOER PARTY.

AFTER we had off-saddled for the evening, and resigned ourselves to the disagreeable necessity of sleeping on the veldt, a visitor arrived. He was a big, good-tempered fellow, with any amount of gossip at his command, and possessed of some fund of humour. The stranger was well mounted, fairly dressed, and last, though not least, clean. Our food and liquids he freely partook of, after which he thanked us all round, and called each in succession a jolly good fellow. At length he mounted, and rode off. About five minutes he might have been gone, when he returned. Now he was just a little nervous in his manner. Why?—the reason?

He was on his way to a party of young people at a farmhouse only a mile off. There would be lots of nice girls there. Would we come?

Before receiving an answer, and possibly fearing a refusal, he added in the most tender tones that among them he expected to meet his *fiancée*.

After that none denied that they had a hanker-

ing for such entertainments; but we ultimately accepted the invitation too rapidly, for our late guest quickly added,—

“None of you must talk to her too much, for she has promised me that she will be mine; and I am afraid you may make her break her word, for you see Boer girls are partial to your countrymen. In Jacobsdal and Zeerust you find all of them have got wives after they come here; and they get the best. There is George W—— and George C——, and a heap of others all married to Boer women with lots of money and *mooi* girls too.”

We all agreed that such conduct would be ungenerous, dishonourable, and wrong, after his kindness and desire to show us pleasure.

A tramp of about a mile brought us to one of the ordinary farmhouses of the locality. The windows and doors of it glowed with light, while the melodious strains of an accordion, sadly out of tune, added harmony to the scene.

Pleasure and merriment seemed to reign paramount within, judging from the frequent peals of laughter that broke at rapid intervals on the stillness of the night.

As I dressed as much like a Boer or transport-rider as possible—the better to traverse this and the preceding portion of the country without attracting particular notice—I had been in the apartment, for there was only one, almost an hour, and had been introduced to nearly every



person present, before my nationality became discovered.

I do not think the females liked me one whit the less when they learned I was an Englander ; but the masculines glowered at me most ferociously.

If I had been travelling as formerly—on my own account—I should certainly not have minded this—nay, rather enjoyed it ; but circumstances alter cases, so I stole away at an early hour.

Two youths, anxious to distinguish themselves, and earn the reputation of heroes, followed me. When half my journey was accomplished they ranged alongside, and began to indicate that they were not animated towards me with feelings of brotherly love.

I bore a good deal, but there is a margin we all know ; so when one came aggressively close, and attempted to bar my path, and exhibited an intention that they were about to commence actual hostilities, I shook my loaded crop over my head, and declaimed in my best oratorical powers, and with all the strength of voice nature had given me,—

“ On, Stanley, on ! Charge, Chester, charge ! ” and the foe skedaddled, or in other words “ quit ” the locality.

Being only an infantry force, or, to express it plainer, having no cavalry to follow up the pursuit, I desisted from taking further steps against the enemy. Truly it was a bloodless victory, but it exhibited immense generalship.

As I wrapped, not my colours, but a couple of

very travel-stained war-department blankets round me, and lay down to rest beside my ponies, I could not help moralizing on the possibility of Æsop's fable in reference to the jackass in the lion's skin being true.

Early in the morning, before the break of day, I was up and doing. So was my boy; he really is "*bad*," I believe, and unfit to go much farther.

I am confidently informed that I shall not be able to get another after-rider to go with me into far Kaffirland, as the country is at present so disturbed, even to such an extent that nearly all the interior traders have been obliged to leave; the majority of whom are at the present moment assembled in Zeerust. "We shall see what we shall see;" and if I cannot get an attendant, then I will sell two of the horses, and with the other two go in alone.

I know the position of the sun at all hours of the day, and of the stars at night, so well as to prevent my straying much, even if I have to travel unknown paths, or make a road for myself over the veldt. I have done so in America and Australia; why should I not do so again? and if the birds of the air and beasts of the field do not show me water, then I shall have to give up looking for it.

This is the season of the year at which the majority of the birds of this portion of Africa have migrated to the north. The loss of these animated jewels is sadly to be deplored; for even

in their wild state they are most fascinating companions to the weary of body and depressed of spirit. Yet there are two left—a brilliant green woodpecker, of a very timid disposition, and almost as large as a pigeon; the other a perky, confiding, and exceedingly plump lark, which will flush almost at your feet, and fly fifty or more yards in front before settling. For sometimes an hour this charming little songster will continue this performance. In colour this favourite is nearly black; in size very much the same as our meadow-lark, but the tail is more abbreviated than in the home species.

Many African travellers say that the birds of this country have no melody in their song. This is quite an error. It is as Dr. Livingstone says—"Europeans think so; for their ear takes some time to get attuned to their notes."

I will not deny the beauty of the plaintive call of the robin, as he sits upon a high twig of some hedge half embedded in snow, and that it is dear to me, very dear indeed; so is the lark's carol, as he soars aloft from the verdant pasture to our spring skies of cerulean blue, flecked with many a fleecy cloud of whitest snow. And why this deep, intense, all-absorbing admiration? Simply because they recall our memories to the days of childhood, to that period of life when the future is one unbounded realm of hope, the past a dream of joy.

Take an American, for instance, and what will

induce him to believe that aught animated in nature rivals in ecstatic touching music the sweet warblings of the blue-bird, oriel, or even mocking-bird ?

If a true child of Africa were brought to England—one, remember, reader, who had not been prejudiced by the opinions of European parents—he would prefer the voices of the lovely feathered beauties of the Karoo, the veldt, or the wooded banks of the Limpopo, to all others.

My favourite horse Tommy, when brought up to be saddled this morning, I discovered to have a white film over his left eye. A large bruise above the eyelid at once explains the cause. Some cowardly scoundrel has struck him there with a stick or stone. This circumstance has caused me much pain ; more, perhaps, when I think that the cruel deed has been done by a human being.

But my cup of sorrow is not yet full. Observing that the Basuto pony could not, or would not, feed, I examined his mouth, and to my indignation discovered that at least two inches had been cut off his tongue.

Who is the malefactor ? is the question now ; if it is possible to discover, I will spare neither trouble nor means to do so ; and should I be successful, I will make him remember till the day of his death the punishment he received at my hands for his inhuman conduct.

Tommy's bright, intelligent, loving eyes were treasures that I loved to gaze into. He was made

to be loved, caressed, and sympathized with; for a better, more willing or enduring, horse never looked through halter. The other animal was not so great a favourite; yet that did not mitigate the heinousness of the act of mutilation from which he suffers. That I am indignant, angry—yes, and revengeful—against the culprit I will not deny; for I am but mortal. He who would treat a dumb animal—and those animals faithful, confiding servants—with brutality, I would crush under my feet as I would an adder.

Another cause I have for hostility against the wretch: the horses are the property of the Imperial Government; without them I cannot perform my allotted duty, and here their place cannot be supplied. Too bad! too bad!

The tree-covered hills that lay to the south and west of Jacobsdal had just come in sight when an excellent boy, the servant of one of my companions, and to whom I had shown some little kindness, came up to me.

"Bass," said he, "I know who hurt your horses. If you don't believe, you ask Tom and Dick; we all see it done."

"Well, Jansey, speak out like a man."

"That I will, Bass; for I not like to see good horse abused. It was your after-rider. He say suppose Tommy go wrong, you will not be able to go beyond Zcerust, and then you take him back to Natal."

"And the pony?" exclaimed I excitedly.

“ Well, my master, he hitched it with a green reim round the lower jaw to the backboard of that trader’s waggon that was along with us yesterday, because he said he was d——d if he was going to ride ; so when the waggon treck, the small horse pull back, pull back, and so cut his tongue off.”

I rushed to punish the ungrateful scoundrel ; but he looked so ill that I desisted.

He was really worn out ; seven hundred miles constant riding was more than his physique could bear ; thus dare any man hurry his fate or career by a blow ; for the approach of death appeared to me already on his lips, and there was no saying when he should have to answer for his offence to a higher and far, far greater Master than myself.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### JACOBSDAL AND ZEERUST.

AFTER anything but a disagreeable ride, the summit of a tree-clothed ridge is reached, and, turning sharp east, at our feet lies the beautiful valley in which repose the two pretty villages of Jacobsdal and Zeerust.

This is, undoubtedly, one of the most lovely spots in South Africa. Water abounds in it throughout the year, and consequently vegetation is always green and charming.

It is surrounded by hills of considerable altitude on the south, east, and north; while to the westward its limits appear, to the human eye, to be interminable. Nearly all sub-tropical fruits grow here in abundance, and wheat, mealies, and Indian corn are cultivated with success.

It is the Ultima Thule of civilization; yet both these villages are more populous and prosperous than many further from the frontier.

As we gradually wind our way down a somewhat tortuous road, and farm-houses, that have lain unsewn, meet our gaze, springing up, as it

were, from a bosom of sheltering trees, I can well imagine, when the earliest settlers arrived, that they exclaimed, "Here we rest!" as it is reported the first white men ejaculated, on entering Alabama.

At length a handsome homestead is reached, and if its appearance does not denote wealth, it certainly does abundance. Large sleek herds of fat oxen repose amid the long grass in front of the door, sheep and goats lie in the sun under the walls of the adjoining cattle kraals, and pigs, fowls, &c., not even forgetting duck and geese, form a picture which cannot fail to remind the observer strongly of a prosperous English farm-yard.

Half a mile further, and the village is entered. Houses stand on either side, amongst which looms up, overtopping all, a large, square building, the meeting-house of the Calvinist population.

This structure is imposing alone in size, for it consists of four undecorated walls, which support a flat and unprepossessing roof, the edifice reminding me of one of those hideous "Bethels," Methodist chapels, which are scattered profusely over the county of Cornwall.

How often do I ask myself "Why do certain religious sects do all in their power to render their houses of worship repulsive and ungainly?" Surely if the worship of the Creator is so necessary, as we all know it to be, and that He is such a kind, good, and forgiving Father, we should do all we can to make the house devoted to His



service as attractive as possible! A good result might also be obtained by following this course; for many who are lukewarm, or even who have strayed from their faith, would be drawn back to the path that leads to future happiness. . . . Half way down the street an old friend rushes out to welcome me; and nothing but dismounting from my saddle, and accepting hospitality for man and beast, would satisfy him.

The world has prospered with my host. His dwelling-house is roomy and comfortable, and his store well stocked with all the requirements of this market.

The number of Boers and waggons surrounding the latter indicate plainly that my friend is doing a thriving trade.

The female population muster strong, for they are wonderfully fond of a visit to the *Necotie Winkel*. But the salesman must watch them well, since these ladies have light fingers. He must, however, use a little diplomacy, for to detect them in a theft would be only to lose their custom. All, therefore, he has to do is to chalk it down to them, in their accounts, at the same time charging double in case of error.

These feminines, who really have little or no complexions, take great care of the little they do possess; therefore they eschew soap and water, and encase their faces in a greased cloth resembling the *yasmak* of Oriental nations.

Their clothing, as it is cut and put together,

would astonish M. Worth. Dowdiness is no name for it. A bolster with a slack cord round the middle conveys but a faint idea of the beauties of their proportions. Then the bonnets—the poke-hats of charity-school girls are elegant in comparison !

It is extraordinary, with all this, the extravagant desire for ornament, when they can obtain it, which leads them to stick their dresses all over with patches of ribbon of every shade, colour, and dimension ; whilst bad jewellery, of the basest and most trumpery description, hangs from, or encircles, every available part of the person.

While on the subject of the ladies, it will not be out of place to describe how matters of courtship are conducted among this people.

A ride of forty or fifty miles is considered as no journey among them, from the fact that farms are large, and dwellings therefore far apart, and that they are partial to visiting one another. When a young man and a young lady become, eligible it is known far and wide, and a go-between is employed to find out the respective wealth of each. Should these preliminary inquiries prove satisfactory, the gentleman mounts his *courting-horse*, an animal he has purchased for the purpose, and which, when severely bitted and well spurred, is prancing and jumping all over the place ; because it is considered by this son of Africa a great recommendation in his favour to be deemed a plucky and fearless rider.

So have I seen many an aristocratic Frenchman in the Bois de Boulogne seeking to make way with “the fair,” with possibly a like anticipation, and like eventual success.

At length he arrives at the domicile of his intended, dismounts at the door, after having curvetted three or four times, when, if his visit is acceptable, he is invited to enter.

When within the house he shakes hands with every member of the family, then seats himself in a corner, from whence, probably, for the remainder of the day, he says nothing. The old Frau may address a few words now and then to him, the younger members never.

At the evening meal he looks pious, and listens reverently to the long grace which precedes it. Afterwards, when the repast is finished, he seizes the first opportunity to approach the vicinity of the object of his attentions.

This is done by the execution of a number of strategic manœuvres. He tacks from one side of the room to the other, looks in every direction excepting the one in which he desires to go, finds objects of attraction on the different walls, or upon the floor; thus, in course of time, he gets sufficiently close to whisper, “We’ll set oop this necht,” into her ear, in passing by. The words out of his mouth, he flies off like an arrow, as if struck by conscience at the iniquity of the deed he has done.

Bedtime comes. The father, mother, and all

retire, the visitor remaining in his seat. Ten minutes, possibly a quarter of an hour, passes. Silence reigns supreme over the house.

A sudden fluttering is heard. A door opens, or a curtain is drawn, and in walks mademoiselle, with a match-box in one hand, and a piece of candle in the other.

If the swain be pleasing in her sight, the candle will be tolerably long; if the reverse, it will be short in proportion.

The reason for this is, that when the candle has burnt to the end the interview *must* terminate. I have known an artful young fellow to take an extra piece of candle in his pocket. "*Le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle.*" The candle lighted is set upon the table. The two lovers, seated together, whisper in each other's ears the soft nonsenses they have to say.

Time flies rapidly, the light comes to an end, and the meeting is abruptly broken up. The damsel hurriedly seeks her couch, and the unfortunate man (like Tam O'Shanter) *mann ride!!* Many might think this an exaggeration, but it is nothing of the kind. . . . .

My horses, having been well cared for, I re-saddle, and start for Zeerust, the last village I shall see before leaving the Transvaal soil, and entering far Kaffirland.

This ride is a very charming one. You cross one or two streams, pass several substantial houses, bedded in orange-trees, and not unfre-

quently meet persons travelling between the two villages. The distance is about nine miles, and the road nearly straight, so an hour and a half brings me within sight of my destination.

The hills that lie to the northward of Zeerust simply look gorgeous with the rays of the setting sun thrown upon them; while the town, with its numerous white buildings, makes a pleasant foreground to the picture. Four years has changed it much, for it has doubled its size in that period, showing that British protection and enterprise is, even in this distant region, producing beneficial results.

The preponderating number of citizens here are British subjects by birth, but the whole population does not exceed 200 souls.

The thoroughfares are unusually busy. What I was told about the traders having retired from the interior, and come to Zeerust for a sanctuary, I discovered to be true.

As I ride up the street I recognize face after face of men I have known north of the Limpopo. With each I have a hearty shake of the hand, to indicate that we bear each other no ill-will, and I adjourn to a large house, with a signboard warning the traveller that it is an hotel.

I am fortunate enough to find room for myself, and accommodation for my now tired horses. However, my boy requires attention. I am aware that none of the white inhabitants will receive him, and that the black people will show no hos-

pitality to the stranger. Thus I pay a visit to the *Landdrost*, or magistrate, to learn from him, if I can, what I had better do under the circumstances, and whether he can supply me with an attendant to take his place.

In reference to the first he can give me no advice, for such a case has never been brought under his notice before, and there is no hospital or charitable institution existing in the community. To my second request he holds out scant hopes of being able to afford me assistance, as the whole native population is in a most unsettled state.

“If it had not been for that unfortunate Isanwala affair,” he exclaimed, “you might have had a dozen; but, believe me, sir, now we ourselves can scarcely obtain a house-servant.”

My prospect at this period is, indeed, brilliant—without after-rider, two maimed and wounded horses on my hands, and hundreds of miles of inhospitable country to be traversed, before I shall have performed the duty which has been entrusted to me.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### OLD MEMORIES.

To the west of the village of Zeerust there lies an extensive meadow, covered by luxuriant grass and well supplied with water. Almost in its centre stands a solitary tree, which has a history, for it is the public outspanning place.

Here every hunter going into the far interior, or returning, has his waggon unyoked. The trader also selects it as his halting-place. On two occasions I have done likewise.

The first instance was scarcely interesting, for, although destined for the elephant country, I had no companion whites with me, only a number of native attendants ; but the last time I outspanned there I was joined by one of the dearest friends of my youth, who had followed me from the coast, and intended pursuing me however far I might have penetrated into the bowels of the country. Alas ! when we met he was intent upon entering into the heart of Africa. I, sick and dispirited, was returning from it broken down. I could not go back with him, so he resolved to go into the

land alone. Sick, however, as I was, experience told me that there were such defects connected with his outfit, that failure was certain, and death not improbable.

For instance, his cattle had made a very rapid "trek" from Durban at a season of the year when little grass was to be found, consequently they were hollow and gaunt, footsore and weary.

My oxen were in a far better plight; I gave him mine, and took his; and under this tree I started for England and home—he for the pathless wastes that lay between the Limpopoo and the Equator.

Never did the sun shine upon a more powerfully built or more hale man, never did the hand grasp that of a more sincere or congenial companion. But before another year had succeeded that parting, his body was decaying in an unkept and almost unknown, grave.

I could not but deem it one of my first duties to visit this tree. It appeared to me almost as though I were visiting the grave of one I had loved.

His name was Lieutenant Grandy, R.N., and if the bark of that tree had not already been carved with the names of a hundred less worthy men, I should like to have engraved a record upon it that would have reminded the world of the existence of such a true and generous gentleman.

It was in making this visit that I discovered the richness of the surrounding pasture, and in



consequence I hired a herd and gave orders that my horses, after their morning feed of oats, should graze there until it was time to repeat the grain feed and bed them up for the night; for it was evident to me that, do what I could, I should not be able to leave Zeerust for three or four days. This course, in the event, I found to be most beneficial to my ponies; the soft ground not only cooling and resting their heated feet, but also the nutritious pasturage acting most satisfactorily upon their health.

My next step was to submit my old attendant to a doctor, who immediately informed me that his life was in serious danger, and that to insist upon his going further up country would infallibly impose upon me the necessity of burying him upon the veldt; so I went again to the landdrost, and made pecuniary arrangements for care to be taken for my servant's comfort until I should return, or he might become convalescent.

This business being disposed of, I endeavoured to impress upon him the necessity of his using every effort to get me a new after-rider; but although the landdrost was willing, nay, even zealous in the cause of Government, I was requiring a service which proved an impossibility for him to accomplish.

He provided me, however, with a rough map, containing the names of all the chiefs, kraals, and tribes, which it would be desirable for me to visit.

This I afterwards had corrected by several of the traders, whose experience was indubitable, who all showed the utmost assiduity in assisting one who was in the Government service; but without exception each individual assured me that I was undertaking a task which I should never succeed in, and from which it was improbable I should ever return.

One man, whom I had known in years gone by as the most daring of hunters, and perfectly well acquainted with the language and habits of each of the outlying nations, promised to be my companion, on the condition that I paid him a remuneration commensurate with the risk he had to run.

Not wishing to be over-lavish with the public funds entrusted to me, for some time I hesitated, but at last concluded that it was false policy to be penny-wise and pound-foolish.

So the bargain was struck, and I felt confident that the greatest obstacle I had to encounter was now overcome by this arrangement.

*Dieu dispose*—although *l'homme propose*. By next morning the trader had changed his mind, whether from the advice of his friends, or fear of danger on his own part, I cannot say, and refused point-blank to keep to his undertaking.

When I received his note, I could almost have cried! I certainly cursed my fate, for I was only too well aware that the parsimony of Government officials would never give me credit for, or believe in, the obstacles which beset my path.

It had now become apparent to me that it would be necessary to remain here a day or two longer. The delay was as irksome as it was needful, and I could only console myself with the knowledge that the rest would make my horses and their rider the more fit for the tremendous work which lay before them.

Kind friends, who were anxious to assist me, gave me information of various persons in different directions, who, if they were obtainable, would well answer my purpose.

In those two days I almost rode myself to death. How many miles I rode in the time, goodness only knows, and how the hired horses suffered the owners alone could tell, in my search for an honest and suitable attendant. But every one refused; in fact I honestly believe that had I offered them my total emoluments and pay, I could not have induced a single man to accompany me. I was well aware that, had I returned to Natal under such circumstances, not one there was sufficiently conversant with the unsettled state of this distant country to believe that I had exerted myself to the extent I had, to remedy my forlorn plight.

This made me doubly resolved to succeed, and in this instance the old adage was verified—“The darkest hour was just before the dawn.”

By chance I met in the street Mr. Jansen, Lutheran missionary and post-master at the Kaffir station of Moiloes, eighteen miles west from

Zeerust. He was an old acquaintance, and one from whom I had previously accepted hospitality.

To him I told the nature of my duties, my disappointments, hopes, and fears.

Even he could hold out to me no prospect of success, yet promised me all the aid it lay in his power to afford, and further invited me to come to this station; "for," added he, "it is eighteen miles nearer your scene of operations than this place, so you will lose no time by so doing."

That evening, about sunset, he intended to start, and kindly offered me a seat in his trap; also advising me to leave my horses behind, with orders that they should be driven over the following morning.

As I had a couple of hours to spare, I returned to the hotel to collect my arms, blankets, and horse-gear, where I met a lady that I had known in former years. I inquired after her little son, whose attractive ways, and more attractive appearance, had caused me to strike up an acquaintance with him.

To my grief I learnt that he had gone to his last home; the circumstances of his death being painful, but by no means uncommon in Africa.

He and his companions had been playing at ball in a large store-room. After this amusement had been carried on for some time, their plaything fell behind a large box.

With the impetuosity of youth, and in the excitement of pleasure, he pushed his hands down

the aperture to regain it, when he was bitten by a cobra in the wrist, and was dead within the hour.

While touching upon the venomous nature of the bites of some snakes, I will relate a story which combines both the solemn and ludicrous.

My informant was a Mr. Palmer, who lives about fifty miles west of Utenhague, in the eastern province of the old colony.

One of the hens, a favourite fowl, was missing, and was generally supposed to have been laying away from the premises, or, possibly sitting upon eggs. Although frequent search was made, nothing could be discovered as to her whereabouts. By a mere chance, two of the Kaffir lads in his employment, boys of fourteen or fifteen years of age, entered one of the old outhouses adjoining the farm to procure some potatoes for the use of the family; and while engaged in selecting what they considered the most suitable specimens for cooking, heard a rustling in the thatch, where it overlapped the outside of the wall.

“ ‘Od rot it, Jem ! ” said one ; “ why that’s the old hen ! ”

“ Darn me if it ain’t ! ” replied the other.

“ Go and get a stool,” added the first speaker, “ and we will soon roust her out of that ! ”

So a chair or stool was brought that they might reach the desired elevation, which being mounted, one of the boys forced his arm into the crevice, no doubt giggling at having made the discovery of the hiding-place of this recusant hen.

But in a moment after he withdrew his hand exclaiming, "Hang the old thing! how she pecks!" His companion now accused him of cowardice, and chaffed him with being afraid of a fowl.

"Then you had better go up and try it!" said the other. And the challenge was immediately accepted.

"By Gom! she do peck bad," said the latter, at once withdrawing his hand.

In a few hours both lads were dead! The noise they heard, which had so much resembled the hen, having been made by a snake of one of the most venomous species.

But sunset has arrived. Into the trap I get with my friend Mr. Jansen.

He has a good pair of horses before him, and drives both fast and well.

An hour afterwards we are at a farm close by the road-side, where we halt and indulge in the luxury of a sumptuous tea. The host and hostess are both young, and the latter is pretty and very agreeable, the two doing the utmost to make us enjoy our visit.

After smoking a weed, we are again in the carriage—a double-seated buggy—and are spinning rapidly upon our way, over roads of a most villainous description.

But Mr. Jansen knows them well, and so do his horses. Thus, by half-past nine at night, we pull

up in front of the mission station, and are received with kind greetings and offers of hospitality from that gentleman's good wife.

Both of my hosts are Danish, and I am sure that kinder hearted or better people it would be difficult to find in the whole of the world.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A MISSIONARY STATION.

LINAKANI (a musical name, is it not, gentle reader?) is where I am now. Well does it deserve the appellation, for not only is my kind host's residence charming, but the view of the surrounding meadows and of the encircling hills is as attractive a picture as the eye of the greatest landscape connoisseur would wish to rest upon.

Let me try and describe the house. It is built after the pattern of the bungalows of India, therefore only one storey high, with a wide verandah running the entire length of the building. On either side of the hall door are four windows; therefore, as may be imagined, its dimensions are not limited. The walls are white as snow, and the roof is composed of the good old-fashioned and comfortable thatch that ever looks so pleasing to an English eye.

The back of Mr. Jansen's residence is fairly imbedded in loquat, orange, lemon, peach, nectarine, and mulberry-trees; while in front stand upwards of two dozen grand blue-gum-trees in



the form of an avenue, each of which is fully one hundred feet high.

As wings—each of the same dimensions and running at right angles from the dwelling-house—there are two buildings, the one used as store-house, the other as carpenter’s shop and coach-house; while a stream of pure water, about eight feet wide, forms the outer boundary of the enclosure.

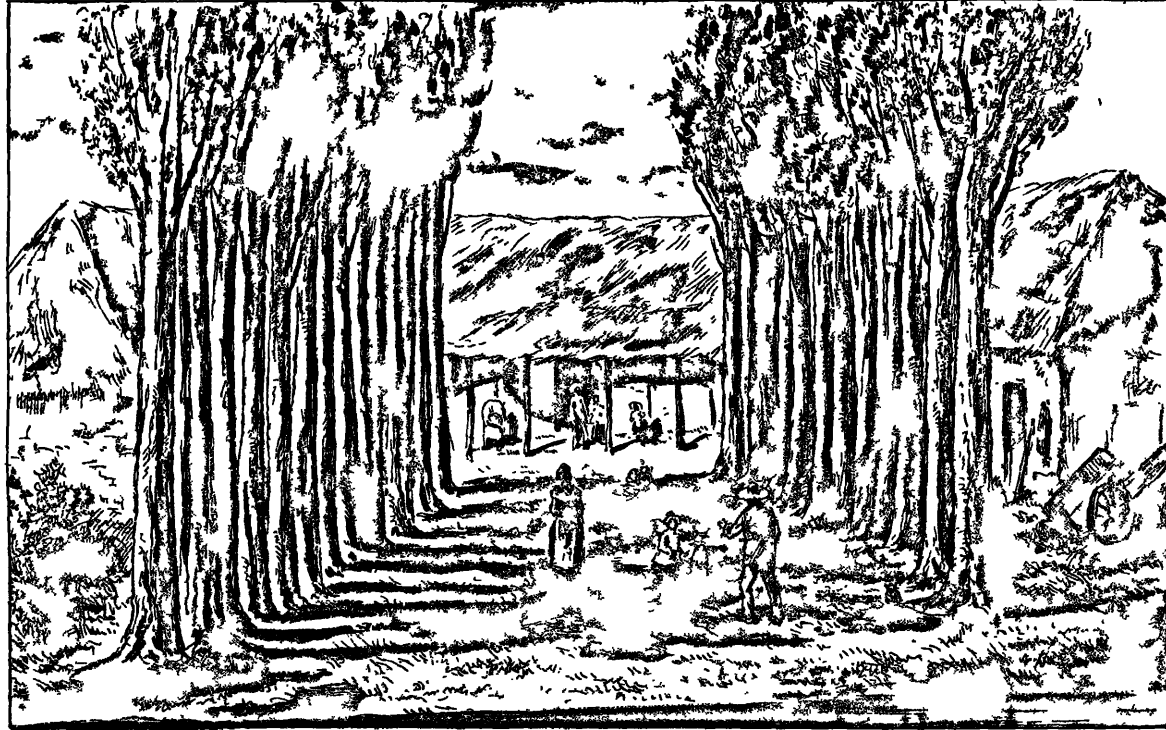
If ever peace and happiness dwelt anywhere, it does most assuredly here. The repose is perfect, and the solitude not oppressive, from the brightness of the surroundings.

Turtle-doves, finches, cuckoos, and many more species of birds, swarm in the trees and bushes, and from morning to night charm the ear with their notes of praise and love.

The Kaffir kraals, which form a village or town of rather less than fifteen thousand inhabitants, are over a mile distant, the school and church being removed from here about half that space.

The fields adjoining—for Mr. Jansen farms about twenty-five acres—are surrounded by fine quince hedges, which here remain green all the year round.

Long before an early breakfast I was out to enjoy the balmy morning air. There was plenty of life and amusement to be witnessed by those who love rural scenes—cows being milked, oxen yoked, and horses, donkeys, and fat cattle driven off to pasture. As to poultry, they were



Lirikani Mission Station.

there in hundreds, and of every domestic variety and species.

Even pets were not deficient. At one side of the hall door was fastened a large tame baboon, that rejoiced in the name of Katrina; on the other side a dear little grey monkey, happy in the cognomen of Thomaso.

Dogs and cats were not wanting. Possibly I have forgotten or overlooked some other domestic favourites; if so, I must apologize for the omission.

After breakfast we entered into business, the result of which was that my host sent his principal servant to inform the two chiefs that I was residing at his house, and desired to see them to discuss important affairs connected with the Imperial Government.

One of these captains, or chiefs, he informed me, I should doubtless see on the morrow; the other in the course of a few days.

“But this delay I cannot endure; I must be off and at work,” I exclaimed.

“If you hurry these people, they will do nothing for you; they have no idea of the value of time,” he courteously rejoined.

“Explain for my information, please,” I asked, “the meaning of there being two captains, or chiefs, or kings. I thought all these tribes were monarchical.”

“So they are; but here is an exception—one is the proper king, the other a pretender. The

story is not long, and you should know it. A former chief died, and his son (the heir) was an infant. In consequence, a regent was appointed during his minority. The young king had scarcely come of age when he also died, leaving behind him a boy. This infant, of course, was rightful heir to the chieftainship, but his age precluded him from reigning. Thus the same regent, by name Moyloe, continued to manage the affairs of the people. He also had a son, the same age as the young king; the boys were brought up together until they were eighteen years old, when Moyloe died. Then the proper heir asserted his rights, the other denied them; one half the people adhered to the former, the remainder to the latter. They then submitted the case to the Transvaal Government, who procrastinated giving a decision.

"When our flag was unfurled over the Transvaal the case was brought before our then Administrator; he also deferred the subject, but promised it should have his earliest consideration, but from that time to this no further steps have been taken.

"The result has been a fight, and several on both sides have been killed.

"The tribe, since their country has become a portion of her Majesty's dominions, has never been asked to pay taxes, although a large sum appropriated for that purpose now lies idle in its possession.

“At the present time I believe they are loyal, at least the rightful heir’s party are, yet all consider they have been neglected.”

I am well aware of the difficulties my country has had to contend with lately in South Africa; still, I think that an urgent effort should have been made, even for no other reason than for the sake of setting example, in a case like this.

“Gopani, the rightful heir, is a Christian; E’Calapin, the pretender, is not,” said my informant.

That showed me at once where his leaning was.

“Whether Christians or not,” say I, “justice should be done, to show the native tribes that we Englishmen are too honourable to make a distinction.”

Kaffirs, as a rule, are terribly ignorant; nay, it is with few exceptions that we find any that possess the most trifling elements of education; but they highly appreciate honour.

Gopani, the legal heir, paid me a visit next day, and listened to all I had to say.

“I will call my people together to-morrow, and consult them; next day after I will give you an answer,” was his response.

“You know my Government could *commandere* you if they thought proper, but they do not wish to act towards you as the Boers did,” I responded.

“I know that well; what you say is correct; but although I am chief, I never do anything with-

out talking to my old men. Moreover, you come to me as my neighbour to borrow my oxen or my waggons, not to take them from me by force,” was his answer.

An hour after he sent me a fat sheep, with the following message: “ You have travelled far, and must be hungry and tired; eat and rest with us; your people are now my people.”

This young man was wondrously courteous and prepossessing, about five feet eleven inches in height, with a most pleasing expression of countenance, while the symmetry of his figure was perfect.

With the exception of Kama, king of Bamanwato, I never was so captivated with a coloured man.

The succeeding day being Sunday, I went to the humble, unpretending church, to hear my friend read the service (Lutheran) and preach. In the place of worship there were no other white men, although the congregation must have mustered at least one hundred and fifty persons.

All were dressed in European clothes—a little gaudy, it is true, in colouring, but neater or cleaner no people could have been.

The service appeared to me rather long, but this did not try their patience.

The perfect quiet that reigned throughout the building would have put an English audience to the blush!

The singing was also excellent; the most

fastidious ear could not have found fault with it—except that of a professional.

The scene was wondrously impressive, and certainly extraordinary when we regard it as the result of the teaching of *one* man, and that in the short period of eighteen years.

There is one little thing I cannot help mentioning—it nearly made me laugh. You must confess that the circumstance was trying to any person who could appreciate a joke.

There were several communicants—I think eight—so on the communion-table stood the wine in a black bottle, and what label do you suppose that bottle bore upon it? Give it up? Well, nothing less than that of the immortal “Bass’s pale ale, bottled by Foster of London.”

I did not taste the stuff inside the glass tene-ment, to tell my readers whether the contents were beer, or that another liquid had been substituted. I imagine the latter must have been the case, as the clergyman did not employ a cork-screw before doling it out, nor did I see any refractory foam come over the edges of the chalice.

After a one o’clock dinner, I walked through the kraals, and spent a couple of hours among the people. They treated me with the greatest courtesy.

Some one having informed Gopani of my being in his proximity, he came and asked me to visit him, and I did so. He was living in a fairly comfortable two-roomed house. On my entering

an American rocking-chair was produced for my special use; and while resting in this most comfortable invention of human ingenuity, I discovered numerous dark-eyed, woolly-pated, handsome-figured and well-limbed members of the community “ taking stock ” of me.

These were the wife, sisters, and other female relations of the young chief, to whom I was not introduced.

At last the inevitable Kaffir beer was brought forth. With much suffering and martyrdom I took two drinks, and as soon after as was admissible begged to be excused remaining, on the grounds of urgent private affairs. My request was at once granted. It is indeed a pity that my old colonel of “ The Royals ” had not been sent here to learn courtesy.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE HOSTILE CHIEFS.

My horses are having an uncommonly good time of it here. They have the run of Mr. Jansen's stockyard and of the hill sides, with a good feed of soaked mealies night and morning. Bobby and Tommy look fresh and fit; but the big bay horse has had a severe attack of diarrhœa, which, I fear, will incapacitate him from going any further; while the mutilated state of the pony's mouth has so hindered his feeding, that he has fallen off to such an extent as to render him totally unfit for the severe service before him.

It behoves me therefore to obtain another horse, but the cost of such an animal here as would suit my purpose, I fear, will not be less than sixty pounds—a sum I feel very disinclined to part with.

It is a sad thing to have to deal with public money, more particularly in a place where no receipts can be obtained.

Possibly this last statement of mine may need explanation.

A large proportion of the Boer population are

unable to write; the half-educated will neither sign a receipt nor write their names across a cheque, nor will they receive a cheque in payment for anything. Of course the remainder—the educated part of the inhabitants of Dutch descent—are as liberal and advanced as any other civilized people.

I cannot help thinking often that the ignorance of so large a number of these people is owing to the *Predicants*, or preachers, who prefer to keep their flocks in subservience. It is a remarkable fact that these men invariably commence life poor as the proverbial church mouse, and in a few years possess large flocks and herds. They are incessantly travelling about the country, and are received with open doors; consequently they have no outlay; and their fees for marrying and christening appear, to the eye of an European, preposterously large.

While sitting on the porch, superintending the stuffing of my saddles—for a man, to travel with success in these regions, must be a Jack-of-all trades—a tall, erect figure, followed by a dozen attendants, approached me.

E'Calapin is the leader of this band.

Pretender as he may be, a right-royal-looking personage he is! bears himself like a soldier, looks you straight and resolutely in the face, and has that physique which denotes a capacity for enduring great fatigue, and which is also capable of great activity.

He is very black, the eye is large, with an expression of severity and determination.

His clothes are European ; and, contrary to the habit of the majority of chiefs, he has well-made boots upon his feet.

After being introduced by Mr. Jansen, and chairs having been brought upon the verandah, the chief, missionary, and myself seated ourselves ; whilst the swarthy retinue, each armed with a knobkerry, squat in a circle around, all eyes and ears to see and hear whatever takes place. From his countenance it is easy to see that the object of my visit is not approved by him, nor indeed by his retainers.

For ten minutes, what we should in Scotland call a "dour" expression rests on his face ; nevertheless, his manner is not without a certain charm. He urges many objections to what I propose, but never interrupts me while I am speaking. In twenty minutes the interview was over, and he had assured me that he would call the heads of his people together, and visit me in two days to give me his answer.

These delays are most trying ; but I am informed that both chiefs have villages of considerable size at distances of thirty or forty miles off ; so, if it be the habit of the people, and has been practised by their forefathers, to consult all the minor headmen, I cannot expect that they will waive it on my account.

In the afternoon Gopani sent me a very nice