

HOME LIFE ON AN OSTRICH FARM.

CHAPTER I.

PORT ELIZABETH AND WALMER.

Early ambitions realized—Voyage to South Africa—Cape Town and Wynberg—Profusion of flowers—Port Elizabeth—Christmas decorations—Public library—Malays—Walmer—Hottentot huts—Our little house—Pretty gardens—Honey-suckers—Flowers of Walmer Common—Wax-creeper—Ixias—Scarlet heath—Natal lilies—“Upholstery flower”—Ticks—Commence ostrich-farming—Counting the birds—A ride after an ostrich.

IN the year 1881, leaving our native land wrapped in the cold fogs of November, my husband and I started for South Africa; where it was the intention of the former to resume the occupation of ostrich-farming, engaged in which he had already spent many years in the Cape Colony. It was my first visit to South Africa, and I was looking forward with great pleasure to the realization of a very early wish; for the adventures of settlers in far-off lands had always from childhood been my favourite reading, and I had become firmly convinced that a colonial life would suit me better than any other. Nor have I been disappointed; but,

looking back now on our life in South Africa, I can truthfully say that, though certainly lacking in adventure, it has—unlike many things long wished for and attained at last—in no way fallen short of my expectations.

The few hours we spent at Madeira were unfortunately during the night; and the beautiful island I was so longing to see remained hidden from view in a most tantalizing manner, without even the moonlight to give us some faint outline of its far-famed loveliness.

After a safe, but most uneventful voyage, enlivened by no more stirring incidents than the occasional breaking down of the engines, we at last looked up at the glories of Table Mountain, and came suddenly into summer; enjoying the flowers and bright sunshine of Cape Town all the more after the dreary weather we had left in England. We landed, and spent a few very pleasant days at the pretty suburb of Wynberg, from whence we took several beautiful drives. On one occasion we left the carriage, and walked over such a carpet of lovely and bright-coloured wild flowers as I have only once seen equalled, when riding some years before through Palestine and Syria. At the end of five minutes we stopped, and counted all the different sorts we had gathered, finding twenty-eight.

Another day we collected a number of leaves of the silver tree, which is found only on Table Mountain. The long, pointed leaves seem made of the glossiest pale-grey satin; you can write and paint on their soft

surface, and numbers of them are for sale in the Cape Town shops, adorned with highly-coloured pictures of Table Mountain, steamers going at full speed, groups of flowers, Christmas good wishes, etc. We preferred, however, when enclosing the leaves in our letters home, to send them in all their native beauty, and with no clumsy human attempts at improvement.

The beautiful plumbago is one of the most common plants, and many of the hedges about Wynberg consist entirely of it; the masses of its delicate blue-grey flowers forming as graceful a setting for the pretty, neatly-kept gardens as can well be imagined.

We were quite sorry when the time came for going back to our steamer, Port Elizabeth being our destination. We landed there a few days before Christmas; and, soon after our arrival, walked out to Walmer to call on friends, whom we found busily engaged in decorating the little church. Their materials consisted simply of magnificent blue water-lilies—evidently the sacred blue lotus of the ancient Egyptians, with the sculptured representations of which they are identical—and large, pure white arums, or, as the colonists unromantically call them, “pig-lilies;” both being among the commonest of wild flowers about Walmer. These, with a few large fern-fronds, and the arum’s own glossy leaves, formed the loveliest Christmas decoration I have ever seen.

There is not much to see in Port Elizabeth; indeed, it is rather uglier than the generality of colonial towns, built simply for business, and with no thought of the

picturesque—and what few attempts at ornament have been made are rather disfiguring than otherwise. On a bare hill above the town there is a conspicuous monument, the builders of which appear to have been long undecided as to whether it should be a small pyramid or large obelisk; the result being an ugly compromise between the two. Another work of art, more nearly approaching the obelisk form, but equally far from the Egyptian model both in its shape and in the designs which decorate it, stands in the market-place, in front of the town hall. This latter was by far the best-looking building in Port Elizabeth, until, a few years ago, its appearance was completely spoilt by the addition of an ugly and ponderous clock-tower, quite out of proportion to the rest of the structure, which it seems threatening to crush with its overpowering size and weight. The interior of the town hall, however, compensates for its outward deficiencies; for it contains a most excellent public library, plentifully supplied with books of all kinds, newspapers, and magazines, in two comfortable and well-arranged rooms. It would be well indeed if England would take a lesson from the Cape Colony in this respect; for in all the smaller towns which we visited, *i.e.*, Cradock, Graaff-Reinet, Uitenhage, etc., we found good public libraries. There is a good club in Port Elizabeth, and several hotels, all of which we have tried at different times, finding the Standard (Main Street), though small and of unpretending exterior, by far the most comfortable. A little way out of the town there is a very good

botanical garden, with a large conservatory, containing many beautiful palms, tree-ferns, and other tropical plants.

The Malays are the most picturesque feature of Port Elizabeth; and their bright-coloured Eastern dresses, and the monotonous chant of the priest announcing the hours of prayer from the minaret of the mosque, form a pleasing contrast to the surrounding everyday sights and sounds. Like most other Orientals, they are perfect artists in their appreciation of colour; and, fortunately, they are still old-fashioned enough not yet to have adopted the hideous coal-tar dyes with which Europe has demoralized the taste of some of their brethren in Cairo and Algiers. On Fridays, when all are wearing their best, you often see the most beautiful materials, and the loveliest combinations of colour; especially in the flowing robes of the priests, the tints of which always harmonize perfectly. Thus, for instance, you will see an outer garment of turquoise blue, worn over an inner one of "old gold;" delicate salmon colour over soft creamy white; rich orange in combination with the deepest maroon; with an infinite variety of other lovely tints, any of which a painter might covet for his studio. The Malays often wear as turbans some of the beautiful *sarongs* of Java, which are simply ordinary calico, painted by hand with a few good colours, and in the most artistic designs; of course there are never two alike, and in these days of machine-made sameness they are refreshing to behold. Some of the men wear immense hats, made of palm leaves

very firmly and solidly plaited, and tapering to a point ; they are made to fit the head by means of a small crown fixed inside, very like that of a college cap.

The Malay women, instead of gliding about veiled to the eyes, like their Mohammedan sisters in other parts of the world, wear the quaint costume which was the fashion among the Dutch women at the time when the Malay race first came as slaves to the Cape. The waist of the dress is extremely short ; and the long and voluminous skirts, of which an infinite number seem to be worn, commence close under the arms, spreading out, stiffly starched and spotlessly clean, to dimensions rivalling those of the old hooped petticoats. The good-natured brown faces are most unbecomingly framed by bright-coloured silk handkerchiefs tightly bound under the chin, somewhat after the fashion of the Algerian Jewesses—giving the wearers an appearance of perpetual toothache. Many of the women wear noisy wooden clogs ; kept from parting company with the bare feet by nothing but a kind of large button, curiously ornamented, projecting between the two first toes.

In the early days of slavery, when the Malays were brought up in the Dutch families, nearly all were Christians ; and even so recently as when Sir Bartle Frere was governor there were comparatively few among them who could read the Koran. During the last few years, however, Mohammedanism has been rapidly gaining ground everywhere—the great university of El Azhar in Cairo, especially, training thou-

sands of students to go out as emissaries into all parts of the East to make converts—and the Malays, in constantly increasing numbers, are embracing the creed of Islam. Many of them now save up their money for the pilgrimage to Mecca, which is their great ambition. They are very ignorant; and their Mohammedan fatalism, prejudicing them against all sanitary precautions—especially vaccination—adds very much to the difficulty of contending with small-pox and other epidemics when they appear. In 1882, when there was so severe an outbreak of small-pox in Cape Town and other parts of the colony, the Malays not only opposed all attempts made by the authorities to isolate cases, but did all in their power to spread the disease; many of them being found throwing infected clothing into houses.

After staying about a week in the town, we went out to live at Walmer, which is by far the pleasantest part of all the surroundings of Port Elizabeth, and which deserves to be more generally chosen as a residence by the wealthier inhabitants. It stands high, in a most healthy situation, and full in the path of that rough but benevolent south-east wind, which, owing to its kindly property of sweeping away the germs of disease, is called “the Cape doctor.” Away beyond Walmer stretch miles of undulating common, covered with short bush and numberless varieties of wild flowers; and a breezy walk across part of this same common leads to Port Elizabeth. The walk is rather a long one; and often, before the arrival of our little

“spider” from America, it would have been a comfort, after a long day in town, to avail ourselves of one of the numerous hired carriages for the return journey, were not the drivers of these vehicles so exorbitant in their charges as almost to rival those of New York. They demand ten shillings for the drive to Walmer, taking the passenger only one way; and this too often in a vehicle so near the last stage of dilapidation as to suggest fears of the final collapse occurring on the road. The importunity of the drivers is most troublesome; and when, in spite of their efforts, you remain obdurate, and they fail to secure you as a “fare,” they do their best to run over you, hoping no doubt that they may thus at least have a chance of driving you to the hospital. Their cab-stand, where, like a row of vultures, they sit waiting for their prey, is on the market-place; and as you cross the latter, bound for the reading-room, with ears deaf to their shouts, and eyes resolutely fixed on the door of the town hall, leaving no doubt as to your intention *not* to take a drive, the whole rank move forward in a simultaneous charge; pursuing and surrounding you with artful strategic movements and demoniac cries, and with so evident an intention to knock you down if possible, that when at last you stand safe on the town hall steps, you realize the feelings of Tam O’Shanter on gaining “the keystone of the brig.”

On the common, about half-way between Port Elizabeth and Walmer, there is a little group of Hottentot huts, shaped like large bee-hives, and made of the strangest building-material I ever saw, *i.e.*, a

thick mass of the oldest and filthiest rags imaginable. How they hold together has always been a mystery to me; for they flap and flutter ominously in the almost incessant wind, and seem threatening to wing their way across the common and invade the verandahs and gardens of Walmer. Although I have ventured into a good many queer human habitations in different parts of the world, I have never felt inclined to explore the interior of one of these huts, which look as forbidding as their ugly, yellow-skinned inmates. There is no window, no proper outlet for smoke, no room for any one of average figure to stand upright, and the hole which serves as a door is much too low for any more dignified entrance than on all fours—an attitude which, though quite worth while when threading the passages of the Great Pyramid, would hardly be repaid by the sight of the Hottentot in his home; and by the possible acquaintance of creeping, crawling and hopping legions. Numbers of dirty, monkey-like children, and ugly, aggressive dogs of the pariah type, swarm round these huts; the dogs often taking the trouble to pursue the passer-by a long distance on his way, irritating his horse and himself by their clamour, and always keeping just out of reach of the whip.

With the exception of the few remaining Bushmen, the Hottentots are the ugliest and most degraded of all the South African natives. The Kaffirs are much pleasanter to look at, some of the young girls being rather nice-looking, with graceful figures, on which

blankets of a beautiful artistic terra-cotta colour are draped in folds worthy of an Arab *burnous*. Occasionally some of the red ochre with which the blankets are coloured is daubed over the face and head, the effect being rather startling. The slender, bronze-like arms are often completely hidden from wrist to elbow by a long spirally-twisted brass wire, looking like a succession of the thinnest bangles quite close together.

We found a comfortable little furnished house at Walmer, in which we spent the first five months after our arrival. It was just a convenient size for our small party, consisting, besides my husband and myself, of our two English servants, and Toto, a beautiful collie. The rooms were all on the ground floor; shaded, and indeed almost darkened, by a broad verandah running the whole length of the front. This absence of sufficient light in nearly all colonial houses strikes the new-comer unpleasantly; but one gets used to it, and in the heat and strong glare of the Cape summer the darkened rooms are restful and comforting. At one end of our verandah we made a little fernery, which we kept green and bright with trophies brought home from some of our longer walks and rides—also an aviary, the little inhabitants of which kept up a constant chorus, always pleasant to hear, and never loud enough to be troublesome. The Cape canary is a greenish bird, with a very pretty soft note, quite different from the piercing screech of his terrible yellow brother in English homes. Another soft-voiced little singer is the *rooibeek*, or red-beak, a wee thing very

like an avadavat; a few goldfinches completed our collection, and all were very tame and happy in their little home. The broad leaves of two fine banana-plants shaded birds and ferns from the sun, which otherwise would have beaten in on them too fiercely through the window of the verandah. A banana-plant is a delightful thing to cultivate; it grows so rapidly, and is so full of health and strength; and the unfolding of each magnificent leaf is a new pleasure.

We were within a short walk of our friends' house; and during the frequent absences of T——, my husband, often away for several weeks at a time while searching in different parts of the country for a suitable farm, it was very pleasant for me to have kind neighbours so near, and a bright welcome always awaiting me. Their garden was a large and beautiful one, and its luxuriance of lovely flowers, roses especially, gave ample evidence of their mistress's own care and love for them. Nearly all the houses in Walmer have good gardens, enclosed by the prettiest of hedges, sometimes of pomegranate, plumbago, or passion flowers, but most often of tall American aloes, round the sweet flowers of which the pretty honey-suckers—magnified humming-birds, substantial instead of insect-like—are continually hovering, their jewelled dresses of green, red, and yellow flashing in the sun at every turn of their rapid flight. Close under the hedge, and shaded by the aloe's blue-green spikes, the white arums grow in the thickest profusion. No dining-table in Walmer need be without a simple and beautiful decoration, for

if there is no time for a ramble in search of flowers on the surrounding common, you need only run out and pick a few arums from the nearest hedge or small stream; and a few of them go a long way.

But the treasures of the common are endless; and first and loveliest among them all is the little "wax-creeper,"* than which, tiny as it is, I do not think a more perfect flower could be imagined. It is as modest as a little violet; and you have to seek it out in its hiding-places under the thick foliage of the bushes, round the stems of which it twines so tightly that it is a work of some time to disentangle it. You also get many scratches during the process, for it loves to choose as its protectors the most prickly plants; but when at last you hold the delicate wreath in your hands, and look into its minute beauties—the graceful curves of the slender stalk and tendrils, no two of which ever grow alike; the long, narrow, dark-green leaves; and the clusters of brilliant, carmine-tinted flowers, each like a tiny, exquisitely-shaped vase cut out in glistening wax—you are amply rewarded. It is indeed one of the masterpieces of nature, and the first sight of it was a pleasure I can never forget.

This little flower does not bear transplanting. We often tried to domesticate it in our garden, but the plants invariably died. It was quite the rarest of all our flowers. We have never seen it anywhere but about Walmer, and there it grows only in small patches; five

* *Microlooma lineare*.

or six plants close together, and then perhaps no more of them to be seen during the whole of a long walk.

Another of our favourites was the *aantblom*, a kind of *ixia*, whose lovely flowers range through all possible shades of rose-colour and orange, from the deepest to the palest tints of pink and yellow, down to the purest white. A large bouquet of nothing but these delicate, fragile-looking blossoms, each one of a different shade, brought to us by some little neighbours soon after our arrival, was a delightful surprise. So also was the first finding of the sweet Cape jessamine growing wild; but this is one of the rarer plants.

Then there is the scarlet heath; its cluster of large, velvet-like flowers so vivid in colouring as to look like a flame of fire when the sun comes glancing through it. It is the most beautiful of all the Cape heaths, numerous and lovely as they are—though a delicately-shaded pink and white one comes very near it in beauty. The blue lobelias grow profusely all over the common; they are much larger and finer than those in English gardens, and are of the deepest ultra-marine, only a few here and there being a very pretty pale blue. Occasionally—but this is very rare—you find a pure white lobelia. Another flower of our home gardens, the *gazania*, is very plentiful, the ground being everywhere studded with its large, bright orange-coloured stars.

Pink and white *immortelles*, gladioli, *ixias*, and irises of all kinds abound; some of the latter are tiny specimens, yet they are pencilled with all the same

delicate lines as the larger sorts, though on so small a scale that you almost need a magnifying glass to enable you to see all their beauties. Then there are the Natal lilies, growing in large round clusters, each in itself sufficient to fill a flower-vase; you have but to break a thick, succulent stem, and a perfect, ready-made bouquet of pink, sweet-scented flowers is in your hand.

Some of the plants about Walmer are more curious than beautiful; one especially—which, not knowing its real name,* we called “the upholstery flower”—is like an enormous tassel of red or pink fringe, gaudily ornamented outside with a stiff pattern in green and brown. It is about seven or eight inches long, solid and heavy in proportion; and looks as if in the fitness of things it ought to be at the end of a thick red and green cord looping up the gorgeous curtains of an American hotel. The flower is shaped like a gigantic thistle, but the plant on which it grows is a shrub, with a hard, woody stem, and laurel-like leaves. These are only a few specimens of the common’s wealth of flowers; each time we went out we brought home a different collection, and our little rooms were bright with that intensity of colouring which makes the great difference between these children of the sun and the flora of colder climates.

A search for flowers on the common, or, indeed, a walk anywhere about Walmer, is attended by one very unpleasant penalty—you invariably come home covered with ticks. There are several varieties of these tor-

* We have since found that this plant is a *Protea*.

mentors ; the tiny, almost invisible ones being by far the worst and most numerous, and their bites, or rather their presence beneath one's skin, causing intense irritation. The large ticks, though they do not confine their attentions wholly to animals, are much more troublesome to them than to the human race, and our poor horses, dog, and other creatures suffered terribly from their attacks. One day, soon after our arrival, I was much amused by the clumsy antics of a number of fowls, which were continually jumping up and pecking at some cattle grazing near. On investigation, I found that they were regaling on the fat ticks with which the poor animals were covered ; and our appetite for the Walmer poultry was considerably lessened by the discovery. Ticks abound everywhere along the coast, but as soon as you move inland you are free from the torment.

We had not been very long in Walmer before T—— commenced his ostrich-farming with the purchase of forty-nine young birds, most of them only a few months old, and all wearing the rough, black and grey plumage which, under the name of "chicken-feathers," forms the ostrich's clothing during the first three or four years of his life. We kept them at night in a small enclosure near the house, and during the day-time they grazed on the common, herded by a troublesome little Kaffir boy, who required more looking after than all his charges. The business of counting the latter when they were brought home in the evening was by no means so easy as one would imagine, for the

tiresome birds did all in their power to hinder it, and if quiet enough before, seemed always prompted by some mischievous demon to begin moving about as soon as the counting commenced; then, just when we were about half "through"—to use a convenient Americanism—they would get so hopelessly mixed up that we had to begin all over again.

One day T—— and I had the excitement of an ostrich-hunt on horseback. One of our birds, which was much larger than any of the others, being nearly full-grown, and which had to be kept separate lest he should ill-treat his weaker brethren, had got away, and we had a long ride after him; T—— following him up by his *spoor*, or footprints, with as unerring an eye as that of a Red Indian, until at last we were rewarded by the sight of a small head and long snake-like neck above the distant bushes. Then came the very enjoyable but somewhat difficult work of driving our prisoner home. He would trot before us quietly enough for a while, with his curious springy step, till he thought we were off our guard, when he would make an abrupt and unexpected run in the wrong direction; and a prompt rush, like that of the *picador* in a bull-fight, was necessary to cut off his retreat. The horses quite understood what they had to do, and seemed to enter into the spirit of it, and enjoy it as we did.

CHAPTER II.

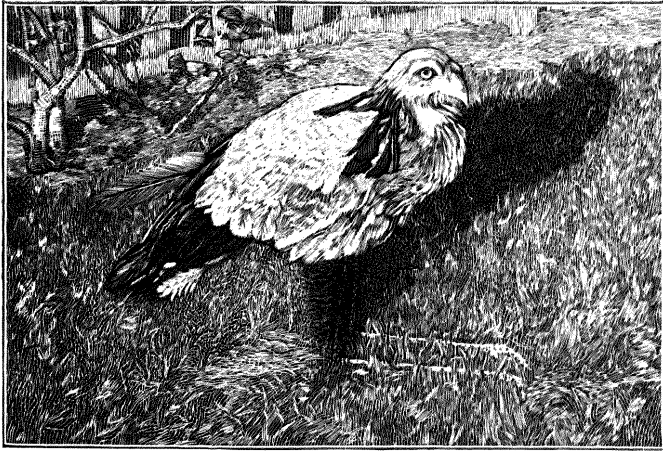
SOME OF OUR PETS.

Friendliness of South African birds and beasts—Our Secretary bird—Ungainly appearance of Jacob—His queer ways—Tragic fate of a kitten—A persecuted fowl—Our Dikkops—A baby buffalo—Wounded buffalo more dangerous than lion—A lucky stumble—Hunter attacked by "rogue" buffalo—A midnight ride—Followed by a lion—Toto—A pugnacious goose—South African climate dangerous to imported dogs—Toto and the crows—Animals offered by Moors in exchange for Toto.

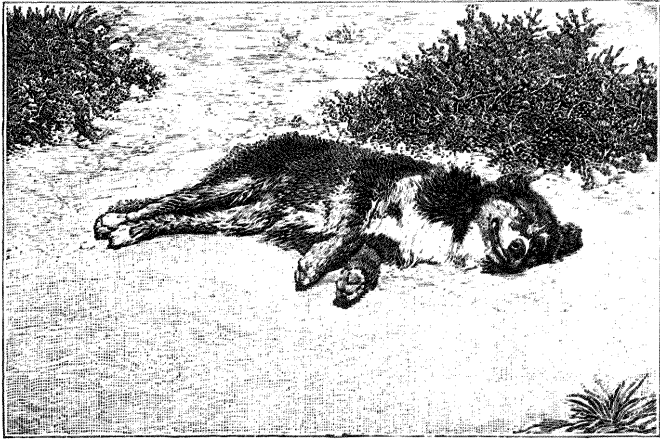
SOUTH AFRICA is the land of pet animals. The feathered and four-footed creatures are all delightful. They have the quaintest and most amusing ways, and they are very easily tamed. The little time and attention which in a busy colonial home can be spared for the pets is always repaid a hundredfold; and often you are surprised to find how quickly the bird or beast which only a few days ago was one of the wild creatures of the *veldt*—torn suddenly from nest or burrow, and abruptly turned out from the depths of a sack or of a Hottentot's pocket into a human home—has become an intimate friend, with a clearly-marked individual character, most interesting to study, and quite different from those of all its fellows, even of the same kind. On one point, however, the whole collection is

sure to be unanimous, and that is a strong feeling of rivalry, and jealousy of one another, each one striving to be first in the affections of master and mistress. A great fondness for and sympathy with animals is not the least among the many tastes which T—— and I have in common; and in our up-country home, far off as we were from human neighbours, we were always surrounded by numbers of animal and bird friends.

We began to form the nucleus of our small menagerie while still at Walmer; and one of our first acquisitions was a secretary bird. The friends near whom we lived possessed three of these creatures, which had all been found, infants together, in one nest on an ostrich farm near Port Elizabeth; and to my great delight, one of them was given to us. "Jacob," as we named him, turned out a most amusing pet. His personal appearance was decidedly comical; reminding us of a little old-fashioned man in a grey coat and tight black knee-breeches; with pale flesh-coloured stockings clothing the thinnest and most angular of legs, the joints of which might have been stiff with chronic rheumatism, so slowly and cautiously did Jacob bend them when picking anything up, or when settling himself down into his favourite squatting attitude. Not by any means a nice old man did Jacob resemble, but an old reprobate, with evil-looking eye, yellow parchment complexion, bald head, hooked nose and fiendish grin; with his shoulders shrugged up, his hands tucked away under his coat-tails, and several



JACOB.



TOTO.

pens stuck behind his ear. Altogether an uncanny-looking creature, and one which, had he appeared in England some two or three centuries ago, would have stood a very fair chance of being burned alive in company with the old witches and their cats; indeed, he looked the part of a familiar spirit far better than the blackest cat could possibly do.

Yet with all his diabolical appearance, Jacob was very friendly and affectionate, and soon grew most absurdly tame—too tame, in fact. He would come running to us the moment we appeared in the verandah, and would follow us about the garden, nibbling like a puppy at our hands and clothes. He would walk, quite uninvited, into the house, where his long-legged ungainly figure looked strangely out of place, and where he was much too noisy to be allowed to remain, although the broadest of hints in the shape of wet bath-sponges, soft clothes-brushes, Moorish slippers, and what other harmless missiles came to hand, were quite unavailing to convince him he was not wanted. The noisy scuffle and indignant gruntings attendant on his forcible expulsion had hardly subsided before he would reappear, walking sedately in at the first door or window available, as if nothing had happened.

His objectionable noises were very numerous; and some of them were unpleasantly suggestive of a hospital. He would commence, for instance, with what seemed a frightful attack of asthma, and would appear to be very near the final gasp; then for about ten minutes he would have violent and alarming hiccups;

the performance concluding with a repulsively realistic imitation of a consumptive cough, at the last stage. His favourite noise of all was a harsh, rasping croak, which he would keep up for any length of time, and with the regularity of a piece of clockwork ; this noise was supposed to be a gentle intimation that Jacob was hungry, though the old impostor had probably had a substantial feed just before coming to pose as a starving beggar under our windows. The monotonous grating sound was exasperating; and, when driven quite beyond endurance, T—— would have recourse to extreme measures, and would fling towards Jacob a large dried puff-adder's skin, one of a collection of trophies hanging on the walls of our cottage. The sight of this always threw Jacob into a state of abject terror. He seemed quite to lose his wits, and would dance about wildly, jumping up several feet from the ground in a grotesque manner ; till at last, grunting his loudest, and with the pen-like feathers on his head bristling with excitement, he would clear the little white fence, and go off at railway speed across the common, where he would remain out of sight all the rest of the day ; only returning at dusk to squat solemnly for the night in his accustomed corner of the garden.

His dread of the puff-adder's skin inclined us to doubt the truth of the popular belief in the secretary's usefulness as a destroyer of snakes, on account of which a heavy fine is imposed by the Cape Government on any one found killing one of these birds. I certainly do not think Jacob would have faced a full-

grown puff-adder, though we once saw him kill and eat a small young one in the garden, beating it to death with his strong feet, and then swallowing it at one gulp. He was like a boa-constrictor in his capacity for "putting himself outside" the animals on which he fed—lizards, rats, toads, frogs, fat juicy locusts, young chickens, alas! and some of the smaller pets if left incautiously within his reach, even little kittens—all went down whole. The last-named animals were his favourite delicacy, and he was fortunate enough while at Walmer to get plenty of them. His enormous appetite, and our difficulty in satisfying it, were well known in the neighbourhood, and the owners of several prolific cats, instead of drowning the superfluous progeny, bestowed them on us as offerings to Jacob. They were killed and given to him at the rate of one a day. Once, however, by an unlucky accident, one of them got into his clutches without the preliminary knock on the head; and the old barbarian swallowed it alive. For some minutes we could hear the poor thing mew-ing piteously in Jacob's interior, while he himself stood there listening and looking all round in a puzzled manner, to see where the noise came from. He evidently thought there was another kitten somewhere, and seemed much disappointed at not finding it.

One day, when there had been a great catch of rats, he swallowed three large ones in succession, but these were almost too much even for him; the tail of the last rat protruded from his bill, and it was a long time before it quite disappeared from view. The butcher

had orders to bring liberal supplies for Jacob every day, and the greedy bird soon learned to know the hour at which he called. He would stand solemnly looking in the direction from which the cart came, and as soon as it appeared, he would run in his ungainly fashion to meet it.

Jacob was largely endowed with that quality which is best expressed by the American word "cussedness;" and though friendly enough with us, he was very spiteful and malicious towards all other creatures on the place. He grew much worse after we went to live up-country, and became at last a kind of feathered Ishmael; hated by all his fellows, and returning their dislike with interest. Some time after we settled on our farm we found that he had been systematically inflicting a cruel course of ill-treatment on one unfortunate fowl, which, having been chosen as the next victim for the table, was enclosed, with a view to fattening, in a little old packing-case with wooden bars nailed across the front. Somehow, in spite of abundant mealies and much soaked bread, that fowl never would get fat, nor had his predecessor ever done so; we had grown weary of feeding up the latter for weeks with no result, and in despair had killed and eaten him at last—a poor bag of bones, not worth a tithe of the food he had consumed. And now here was another, apparently suffering from the same kind of atrophy; the whole thing was a puzzle to us, until one day the mystery was solved, and Jacob stood revealed as the author of the mischief. He had devised an ingenious way of per-

secuting the poor prisoner, and on seeing it we no longer wondered at the latter's careworn looks. Jacob would come up to his box, and make defiant and insulting noises at him—none could do this better than he—until the imbecile curiosity of fowls prompted the victim to protrude his head and neck through the bars; then, before he had time to draw back, Jacob's foot would come down with a vicious dab on his head. The foolish creature never seemed to learn wisdom by experience, though he must have been nearly stunned many times, and his head all but knocked off by Jacob's great powerful foot and leg; yet as often as the foe challenged him, his poor simple face would look inquiringly out, only to meet another buffet. As he would not take care of himself, we had to move him into a safe place; where he no longer died daily, and was able at last to fulfil his destiny by becoming respectably fat.

One day T—— returned from bathing, his Turkish towel, instead of being as usual filled with blue lotus for the dining-table, showing very evident signs of living contents; and two of the queerest little birds came tumbling out of it. They were young dikkops, a little covey of which he had surprised near his bathing-place. They possessed very foolish, vacant faces; and their large, round, bright yellow eyes were utterly void of expression, just as if a bird-stuffer had furnished them with two pairs of glass eyes many sizes too large. Their great thick legs, on the enormously swollen-looking knee-joints of which they squatted in

a comical manner, were just as much out of proportion as the eyes, and of the same vivid yellow; indeed, the bird-stuffer seemed to have finished off his work with a thick coating of the brightest gamboge over legs and bill. They had no tail to speak of, and their soft plumage was of all different shades of brown and grey, very prettily marked. The dikkop (a Dutch name, meaning "thickhead"), is a small kind of bustard, and is by far the best of the many delicious game-birds of South Africa. It is a nocturnal bird, sleepy during the daytime, but lively and noisy at night—as we soon found to our discomfort. Not being able to decide at once on a place for our newly-acquired specimens, we put them into our bedroom for the first night, but they were soon awake—so, alas! were we—and their plaintive cry, sounding incessantly from all parts of the room as they ran restlessly to and fro, speedily obliged us to turn them out. We found permanent quarters for them at the end of the verandah, opposite the fernery, where my American trunks—too large to go into the house—had been placed. These we arranged to form a little enclosure, in which the dikkops were safe from the voracious Jacob, who would soon have swallowed them, legs and all, if he had had the chance. One, evidently the smallest and weakest of the covey, we named Benjamin; but, unlike his Scriptural namesake, he received rather a smaller than a larger portion of the good things of this world, the greedy Joseph taking advantage of his own superior size and strength to get the lion's share of all the food, and Benjamin

meekly submitting ; till we interfered, and by separating the two at feeding-time ensured an equal division. Joseph's general conduct was cruel and unbrotherly ; and when one day, during the process of packing to move up-country, he came to an untimely end, being accidentally crushed under the heaviest "Saratoga," we naturally expected Benjamin to rejoice. Instead of this, however, the little fellow pined and fretted ; refusing to eat, and calling incessantly with his little mournful cry of three soft musical notes in a minor key, as if hoping to bring back his oppressor—from whom he ought to have been thankful to be free—and at the end of two days he also was dead.

During one of T——'s journeys up-country he made a strange purchase, which he forwarded at once to me by train. It was a baby buffalo, which had been taken alive by the hunters who shot its mother. The buffalo being a rare animal in the Cape Colony, we looked on this little specimen as a great acquisition ; and, had he lived, he would have been a very valuable, though perhaps in time somewhat formidable addition to the menagerie ; but the railway officials to whose care he was consigned being no exception to the generality of Cape colonists—whose usual way of doing business is to let things take care of themselves—the poor little fellow was put into the train without being fastened or secured in any way, and the jolting he received *en route* knocked him about so that he arrived in a very sad state, with his head cut and bleeding in several places ; and did not live many days.

The buffalo is considered by all hunters a far more dangerous animal to encounter than the lion, and almost as formidable as the elephant or rhinoceros. When wounded, he has an ugly trick of lying in wait, hidden in the bush, with only his nose out; and turning the tables on the pursuer by making an unexpected charge. Many hunters have been killed in this manner by infuriated buffaloes.

When T—— was hunting in the interior some years before, a friend who was there with him met with an exciting adventure. Having come across a herd of buffaloes he fired into the midst of them; then, unaware that he had wounded one of the animals, he rode in pursuit of the herd. On coming up with them, he dismounted, and was just preparing to fire again, when a shout from his brother, who was behind, made him look round, just in time to see the wounded buffalo, which had emerged from the bush, charging him furiously. He gave him both barrels, each shot striking him in the centre of the forehead; but, as the buffalo always charges with his nose in the air, both bullets glanced off, and Mr. B—— escaped only by a quick jump on one side. The buffalo passed him; then turning round, tossed and killed the horse. The next shot finished the buffalo's career; and on the great head, which has been kept as a trophy, are the marks of the two first bullets, showing how calm was the presence of mind, and how true the aim, in that moment of danger.

Another of T——'s hunting companions, chased in a

similar manner by a wounded buffalo, owed his life to a lucky stumble, which so astonished the animal that he stood still for a few seconds staring at the prostrate figure; giving the hunter time to get up and take refuge behind a tree, from whence he shot his assailant.

The most dangerous buffaloes are the old solitary bulls which have been turned out of the herd; they become as artful and malicious as rogue elephants, and often hide in the bush when they get your wind, to rush out on you unexpectedly. On another of T——'s hunting expeditions, on the river Sabie, not far from Delagoa Bay, one of the party was walking quietly along with his rifle over his shoulder, when he was suddenly attacked by one of these "rogues," and so frightfully gored that for a time he was not expected to live. T—— started off at once to fetch a doctor; and rode all through the night, steering his course by the stars, to an encampment which most fortunately happened to be within about thirty miles. It was that of a party who were bringing up a number of *mitrailleuses* and other arms, taken in the Franco-Prussian war and presented by Germany to the Transvaal Government. In the camp there were an immense number of donkeys, which were used for the transport of the guns; and when one commenced braying, all the others immediately following suit, it was a Pandemonium which made night hideous indeed. On retracing his course the next day, accompanied by the doctor, T—— saw by the spoor that during that midnight ride he had been followed by a lion.

And now, though the transition seems rather an abrupt one from savage beasts to the sweetest and gentlest of domestic pets, our dear old dog Toto deserves a little notice. We brought him from England with us—he is a dog of Kent, being a native of the Weald—and when put on board the steamer at Southampton he was not many months old. He still had the blunt nose and thick paws of puppyhood; also its mischievous little needle-like teeth, with which he ate off the straps of our portmanteaus, and, when allowed an occasional run on deck, did considerable damage to the Madeira chairs of the passengers. Fortunately he was so general a favourite that his iniquities were overlooked. The children on board were especially fond of him, and would often petition for him to be let loose, to join in their games. He seemed to grow up during the voyage—possibly the sea air hastened his development—and he had almost attained full size and perfect proportions by the time we landed in Cape Town; he, poor fellow, being in such wild delight at finding himself again on *terra firma* and released from the narrowness of ship life, that he was quite mad with excitement, jumping and dragging at his chain, and knocking us nearly off our legs, besides involving us and himself in numerous entanglements with the legs of others. We had to be perpetually apologizing for his conduct, and really felt quite ashamed of him.

He is a large black-and-tan collie; with a soft glossy coat, a big black feather of a tail, and the most superb

white frill ; of which latter he is justly proud, drawing himself up to show it off to the best advantage whenever it is stroked or admired. Altogether he is a very vain dog, quite conscious of his good looks. His big, honest, loving brown eyes have none of that sly, shifty look which gives a treacherous appearance to so many collies ; his face, which is as good and kind as it is pretty, has a great range of expression, and it is wonderful to see how instantly it will change from a benevolent smile, or even a downright laugh, to a pathetic, deeply injured, or scornful look, if Toto considers himself slighted or insulted. We have to study his feelings carefully, for he is proud and sensitive even beyond the usual nature of collies ; and if we have been unfortunate enough to offend him—as often as not quite unintentionally—he will give us the cut direct for several days ; repelling all advances with the most freezing indifference, and plainly, though always politely, for he is a thorough gentleman, intimating his wish to drop our acquaintance.

Sometimes we are puzzled to know why Toto is haughty and distant towards us, or ignores our existence ; and, on looking back, recall perhaps that so long ago as the day before yesterday one of us, in the hurry of daily work, finding his large form obstructing the door through which we had to pass, told him, somewhat impatiently, to get out of the way.

Or perhaps—worse still—we may have laughed at him. Possibly the mouse he was chasing on the veldt popped into the safety of a hole just as he had all but

caught it, and we unfeelingly made a joke of his disappointment—or, in his excessive zeal to hold himself very upright when sitting up to beg at dinner, dear Toto may have leaned back just a little too far and rolled over on to his back; a painful position for so majestic an animal, and one which ought to have commanded respectful silence, instead of provoking an unkind laugh. This misfortune has happened several times to poor Toto, especially during the process of learning his threefold trick of sitting up to beg, “asking”—with a little short bark—for bone or biscuit, and finally catching the contribution in his mouth. It is really difficult to refrain from laughing at his sudden collapse, preceded as it always is by an extra self-satisfied look—just the expression of the dog in Caldecott’s “House that Jack built,” as he sits smiling and all-unconscious of the cow coming up behind to toss him. A conceited protrusion of Toto’s big white shirt-frill is usually the occasion of falling, and no doubt he deserves to be laughed at; but the poor fellow’s evident distress, and his “countenance more in sorrow than in anger” at our cruel mirth, have led us to make great efforts to keep our gravity, and, with true politeness, to pretend not to see him.

Though Toto is not generally a demonstrative dog, there is no mistake about his affection for us; he shows it in many quiet little sympathetic ways, and seems even more human than the generality of collies. He has constituted himself my special guardian and protector, and though at all times a very devoted attendant,

he would always take extra care of me whenever, during T——'s journeys about the country, I was left at home alone. Then the faithful old fellow would not leave me for an instant. The silent sympathy with which he thrust his nose lovingly into my hand cheered the dreary moment when, after watching T—— out of sight, I turned to walk back to the lonely house; and his quiet unobtrusive presence enlivened all the weeks of solitude. He would lie at my feet as I sat working or writing; follow me from room to room or out of doors, always close at my heels; and curl himself up to sleep under my bed, when at any time during the night the slightest word or movement on my part would produce a responsive "tap, tap," of his tail upon the floor. And when his master returned, he always seemed to look to him for approbation; his whole manner expressing his pride in the good care he had taken of house and mistress.

Our garden at Walmer was constantly invaded by neighbouring fowls and ducks, which would lie in wait outside, ready to slip in the instant the little gate was left open; the fowls of course found plenty of occupation among the flowers; while the ducks would at once make for a large tub, generally full of photographic prints taking their final bath under a tap of slowly-trickling water. The horrid birds seemed to take a delight in driving their clumsy bills through the soft, sodden paper; and after several prints from our best negatives had been destroyed, we summoned Toto to our aid. He threw himself with great energy into the

work of ridding us of the intruders. He would lie in ambush for them, and when, much to his delight, they appeared inside the gate, he would rush to the attack, chasing first one and then another about the garden till he caught it; then, lifting it and carrying it out in his mouth as gently as a cat carries her kitten, he would deposit it outside, with much angry quacking or frightened screeching from the victim, as the case might be, but without the loss of a feather.

Once he, in his turn, was attacked by a pugnacious goose, which he was endeavouring to drive out of the garden; and which turned on him savagely, keeping up a desperate battle with him for a long time, until it was quite exhausted, and sat down panting. It chased him many times round our small lawn, and once, in its excitement, put its head right into his mouth. Luckily for the goose, Toto was so utterly bewildered by its strange conduct, that he missed the golden opportunity of snapping off the imbecile head so invitingly presented.

He was equally zealous in keeping the garden free from cats; and in pursuit of one of these he actually climbed so far into the lower branches of a tree that his victim, evidently expecting to see him come all the way to the top, gave himself up for lost, and dropped to the ground in a fit.

Imported dogs often die in South Africa; especially if they remain near Port Elizabeth, or if they have distemper, which is much more severe in the colony than it is in Europe. Poor Toto laboured under both these disadvantages; for during our stay at Walmer he

was attacked with distemper, and, the summer being also an unusually hot one, everything seemed against him. He was so ill that we quite gave up all hope of saving him, and bitterly regretted having brought him out with us. Just when he was at his worst, however, business called us away for a few days to Cradock, which is some distance inland; and T——, knowing it to be a healthy place for dogs, suggested that we should take the poor creature with us—dying as he seemed to be—on the slight chance that the change of climate might save him. We left him there—parting from him sadly and without much hope of seeing him again; but we were leaving him in the kindest of hands, and, thanks to the careful nursing he received, as well as to the timely change of air, he lived—indeed, I am glad to say, lives still. He remained some months at Cradock, whence from time to time came the good news of his steady improvement, and finally, some time after we had settled up-country, the announcement that he would be sent off to us at the first opportunity.

Then, one day as we sat at dinner, we heard a sudden and startling tumult in the kitchen; the welcoming voices of the servants; a frantic scuffle outside the sitting-room door; and in rushed Toto, handsomer and fuller of life and spirits than ever; whining and howling with delight, and nearly upsetting us, chairs and all, besides endangering everything on the table, as he jumped wildly to lick our faces. He had been brought from Klipplaat by a passing waggon, in the usual "promiscuous" manner in which property, ani-

mate as well as inanimate, is delivered at its destination on Cape farms.

After thus paying his footing in South Africa nearly with his life, Toto was thoroughly acclimatized, and passed through several very hot summers on the farm without a day's illness; only showing by increased liveliness his preference for the cooler weather; being very happy on the occasional really cold days of our short winter, and—like everyone else—cross during a hot wind. He has now accompanied us back to England, where—probably on the strength of being an old traveller who has twice crossed the line—he gives himself great airs, and makes no secret of his contempt for the stay-at-home dogs who have not had his advantages. This involves him in many fights; and the brother and sister with whom—having no settled home in England—we have occasionally left him, have several times been threatened with summonses for his misdeeds.

Toto is now getting on in years—those few years, alas! which make up the little span of a dog's life—but he is still lively enough; and the crows at Mogador, where we spent the winter of 1888-89, will long remember the games they have had with that comical foreign dog, so unlike any of the jackal-like creatures to which they were accustomed. They knew him well, and always seemed to look out for him; and, as soon as he emerged from the ugly white-washed gateway of the town, and approached their favourite haunt, the dirty rubbish-heaps just outside the walls, they would fly close up to him, challenging him to catch them.

Undaunted by invariable failure, he was always ready, and would dash noisily after them ; while they, enjoying the joke—for every crow is a fellow of infinite jest—flew tantalizingly along close in front of his nose, and only just out of his reach. Sometimes they would settle on the ground a long way off, and—apparently oblivious of him—become so deeply absorbed in searching for the choicest morsels of rubbish that Toto, deluded by the well-acted little play, would make a wild charge. But the artless-looking crows, who all the while were thinking of him, had accurately calculated time and distance ; and as he galloped up—confident that this time at least he was really going to catch one—they would allow him to come within an inch of touching them before they would appear to see him at all ; then, rising slowly into the air—as if it were hardly worth the trouble to get out of his way—they would hover, croaking contemptuously, above his head, just out of reach of his spring.

And when at last he was tired out with racing after them, and—being, like Hamlet, “fat and scant of breath”—could only fling himself panting on the sand, they would walk derisively all round him ; come up defiantly, close to his gasping mouth, and all but perch on him. Before we left, several of the native dogs had learned the game ; possibly their descendants will keep it up, and—who knows ?—some naturalist of the future may record his discovery of a strange friendship between dogs and crows in Mogador.

From the latter place T—— made several expeditions

to the interior, travelling on foot and in native dress, for the purpose of distributing Arabic Testaments—on one occasion going as far as the city of Morocco. On these trips Toto accompanied his master, and—far from being the object of contempt and aversion, as a dog usually is in Mohammedan lands—was universally admired and coveted by the natives ; by some of whom—had T—— not eaten of their bread and salt, thus placing them on their honour—it is extremely likely that he would have been stolen. It was something quite new to them to see a dog actually fond of his master, and treated by the latter as a friend ; full of intelligence, too, and altogether different from their own uninteresting dogs ; his clever tricks—which seemed to them almost uncanny—earned him many a good feed ; and among the variety of animals offered at different times in exchange for him, were two donkeys, a horse, and a young camel.

Toto can boast, too, of having spent many nights in quarters where probably never dog has slept before—*i.e.* in Mohammedan mosques. These were the usual sleeping-places assigned to the travellers by the simple village folk, whose toleration contrasts strongly with the fanaticism of the towns. There the mosques are held very sacred ; and for Europeans to look in at their doors, even from across the street, gives great offence.

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And now, as I write, the old dog—faithful and friendly as ever—sits up begging ; no longer conceitedly and unsteadily as in his youth, but in the

more sober fashion of the poor, fat, apoplectic-looking bears at the Zoo; with legs well spread out to afford the firm foundation needed by the portliness of advancing years. His kind eyes are fixed very lovingly and deferentially on the tiny face of his present queen and mistress, the little fair-haired girl who has come to us since we left the Cape; and who, with a regal air of command, holds out her biscuit to the seated Colossus, who, not so long ago, towered above her small head, and bids him "ask for it." Together these two friends and playfellows make so pretty a picture, that we could wish Briton Rivière or Burton Barber were here to see it and give it to the world.

CHAPTER III.

PLANTS OF THE KARROO.

We move up-country—Situation of farm—Strange vegetation of Karroo district—*Karoo* plant—*Fei-bosch*—*Brack-bosch*—Our flowers—*Speckboom*—Bitter aloes—Thorny plants—*Wacht-een-Beetje*—Ostriches killed by prickly pear—Finger-poll—Wild tobacco fatal to ostriches—Carelessness of colonists—Euphorbias—Candle-bush.

OUR five months at Walmer passed so pleasantly, that in spite of my longing to be settled on a place of our own, and the impatience I felt to enter on all the duties and pleasures of farm life among the ostriches, I was really sorry when the time of departure came, and in the beginning of winter—*i.e.* towards the latter part of May—we left the little house, the first home of our married life, and took our journey up-country. We had no very long distance to travel, for the farm in the Karroo district which T—— had chosen was only a day's journey from "The Bay," as Port Elizabeth, like San Francisco, is familiarly called; and instead of being, like many proprietors of farms, quite out of the world, and obliged to drive for two or even three days to reach the railway, we had our choice of two stations; the nearest, Klipplaat, being only fifteen miles from us, and the railway journey not more than eight hours.

Our farm, extending over twelve thousand acres, was situated in a long valley running between two ranges of mountains, the steepness of which rendered enclosing unnecessary in many parts; thus saving much expense in starting the farm, an entirely new one, and chosen purposely by T—— on this account. For it sometimes happens that land on which ostriches have run for years becomes at last unhealthy for the birds. We were in that part of the Karroo which is called the Zwart Ruggens, or "black rugged country;" so named from the appearance it presents when, during the frequent long droughts, the bush loses all its verdure, and becomes outwardly so black and dry-looking that no one unacquainted with this most curious kind of vegetation would suppose it capable of containing the smallest amount of nutriment for ostriches, sheep, or goats. But if you break one of these apparently dried-up sticks, you find it all green and succulent inside, full of a very nourishing saline juice; and thus, even in long droughts which sometimes last more than a year, this country is able to support stock in a most marvellous manner, of which, judging by outward appearance, it certainly does not seem capable. It seems strange that in this land of dryness the plants are so full of moisture; one wonders whence it can possibly have come.

The little *karroo* plant, from which the district takes its name, is one of the best kinds of bush for ostriches, as well as for sheep and goats; it grows in little compact round tufts not more than seven or

eight inches from the ground, and though so valuable to farmers, it is but unpretending in appearance, with tiny, narrow leaves, and a little, round, bright yellow flower, exactly resembling the centre of an English daisy after its oracle has been consulted, and its last petal pulled by some enquiring Marguérite.

The *fei-bosch* is another of our commonest and most useful plants; its pinkish-lilac flower is very like that of the portulacca, and its little flat succulent leaves look like miniature prickly pear leaves without the prickles; hence its name, from *Turk-fei*, Turkish fig. When flowering in large masses, and seen at a little distance, the *fei-bosch* might almost be taken for heather.

The *brack-bosch*, which completes our trio of very best kinds of ostrich-bush, is a taller and more graceful plant than either of the preceding, with blue-green leaves, and blossom consisting of a spike of little greenish tufts; but there are an endless variety of other plants, among which there is hardly one that is not good nourishing food for the birds.

All are alike succulent and full of salt, giving out a crisp, crackling sound as you walk over them; all have the same strange way of growing, each plant a little isolated patch by itself, just as the tufts of wool grow on the Hottentots' heads; and the flowers of nearly all are of the portulacca type, some large, some small, some growing singly, others in clusters; they are of different colours—white, yellow, orange, red, pink, lilac, etc. They are very delicate and fragile flowers;

and, pretty as they are, it is useless to attempt carrying them home, for they close up and fade as soon as they are gathered.

Indeed, nearly all the flowers in that part of the world are unsatisfactory; and those few among them which will keep for a very short time in water are almost useless for table decorations, as they seem incapable of adapting themselves to any sort or form of flower-vase. They are pretty enough in themselves; but the large, thick, stubborn stems, all out of proportion with the flowers, refuse to bend themselves to any graceful form or combination; they all seem starting away from one another in an angular, uncomfortable manner, and of course any pretty arrangement of flowers which *will* not arrange *themselves* is impossible. Our thoughts often went back longingly to the flowers of Walmer, compared with which prolific region the Karroo is poverty indeed.

A cineraria, very nearly as large as the cultivated varieties, and of a beautiful deep blue, on which the Dutch have bestowed the euphonious name of *blaauw-blometje* (little blue flower), several tiny irises, and a rather rare bulb, the hyacinth-like blossoms of which, as well as the upper part of the stalk, are of a lovely tint between scarlet and deep rose-colour, and all soft and velvety in texture, are among our prettiest flowers.

Then there are the minosa's balls of soft, sweet-scented yellow fringe, perfuming the air all round for a long distance, and making the trees seem all of gold