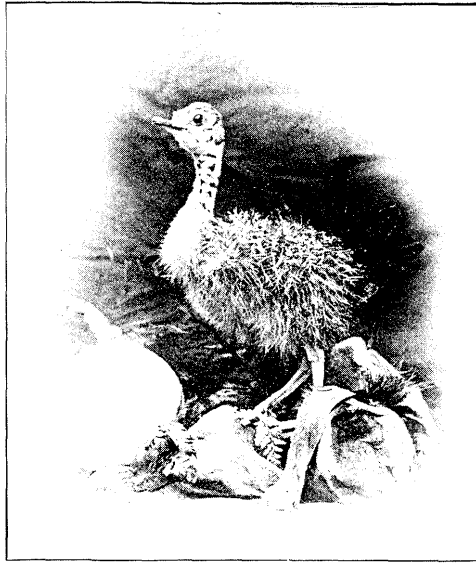


has died in good condition has a large quantity of beautiful, soft, bright yellow fat. This, being most useful, is always carefully put away in jars; and there is no fat equal to it for guns, saddles, harness, boots, etc.

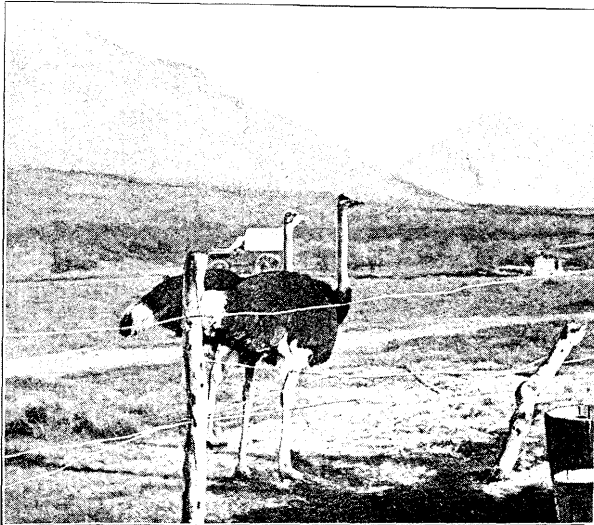
Besides waltzing and fighting, there are endless other ways in which ostriches—always ingenious in devising plans for their own destruction—manage to get their legs broken, and their throats consequently cut; but the favourite form of *felo-de-se* is collision with the wire fences. These seem to have some magnetic attraction for the *vogels*, as the Dutch call them—the word, appropriately enough, too, being pronounced “fools.”

“Another bird killed in the wires!” How familiar any one living on an ostrich farm becomes with these words of woe! Anything, or nothing—the latter indeed more frequently—suffices either to frighten or embolden an ostrich into flinging himself headlong into the nearest fence. The appearance of a strange dog, for instance—and in spite of strict orders the Kaffirs always *will* bring dogs about the place—is quite certain, whatever may be the view taken of it by the ostrich, to lead but to one result. Say the dog is coming along on the opposite side of the fence. An imbecile boldness and pugnacity straightway inspire the ostrich; he has no eyes for anything but the dog, and, leaving the fence entirely out of his calculations, he makes a mad, blind charge, which lands him well in the wires; and if he is extricated from the latter with unbroken legs, his owner may be congratulated on a very unusual stroke of luck. If, on the other hand, the dog and bird



OSTRICH-CHICK.

*(Photographed from case in Stanley and African Exhibition.)*



OSTRICHES MEDITATING ESCAPE THROUGH DEFECTIVE FENCE.

are on the same side of the fence—then, even Burns's mouse had no greater "panic" in his "breastie" than that which impels the senseless biped to dash straight into the wires on his left; though miles of unfenced *veldt*, along which he might run with safety and soon distance the dog, stretch away to his right. The dog, of course, was not in either case troubling his head about the ostrich; and only wonders what all the commotion is about.

One of T——'s birds performed the "happy despatch" in quite a novel manner. Seeing a tempting quince growing on the further side of a hedge, he squeezed his head and neck through a narrow fork in the branches to reach it. Having secured and eaten his prize, he tried to draw his head back. But what was difficult enough before was now impossible; his neck, bulging with the quince, kept him a prisoner, there was no one at hand to help, and the more he tugged and jumped in the frenzied manner of ostriches when held by the head, the more firmly he stuck. And he was found at last, with his neck broken, and his head, to all intents and purposes, pulled off.

Another ostrich, running up against some projecting ends of wire, tore his throat open; inflicting so deep a gash as to divide the *oesophagus*. T—— (surgeon as well as everything else a colonist requires to be) went in quest of needle and thread to sew up the wound; and, on returning, found that his patient, having discovered a sack of mealies, was busily helping himself to the contents; though with the unsatisfactory result

that the food, as soon as swallowed, tumbled out again through the slit in his throat. Nothing daunted, however, and apparently insensible to pain, the feathered Tantalus continued to feed; wondering no doubt why, having eaten so much, he remained hungry. Thanks to T——'s care, this bird, a rare exception to the general rule of wounded ostriches, actually recovered.

Talking of the ostrich's food-passage, it is rather a curious sight to watch the progress of a large bone, or of a good beakful of mealies, as it travels down the long throat of the bird. During its journey, the large, slowly-moving lump is seen to make the circuit of the whole neck, and while passing round the back of the latter it looks comical indeed. Queer things sometimes find their way down this tortuous passage; the excessive queerness of some of them giving rise to the frequent boast of those persons fortunately able to eat anything, fearless of consequences, that they "have the digestion of an ostrich." But those miscellaneous collections of old bones, glass and china, stones, jewellery, hardware, and odds and ends of all sorts, with which the creature stores his interior, till one is reminded of Mark Twain's "solid dog," fed on paving-stones—far from showing that an ostrich has a good digestion, are necessary to prevent his having a very bad one. They are, of course, simply his teeth, the millstones which grind his food; only they are situated in his stomach instead of in his mouth, and, on an immensely-magnified scale, they only perform the work of those grains of sand with which the little cage-bird

keeps himself healthy. Certainly ostriches occasionally show a sad want of discrimination, and make choice of articles which are quite unsuitable for their purpose. The manager's lighted pipe, for instance, was snatched and greedily swallowed by one of our birds before any one could stop him; and for a while the thief was very anxiously watched to see if evil consequences would ensue. Luckily, however, the strange fare did not seem to disagree with him. Another bird picked a gimlet out of a post, in which, for one moment, it had been carelessly left sticking—tossed it down his throat, and was none the worse for it.

Ostriches, like magpies, are attracted by everything bright and glittering; hence the frequent and just complaints brought against them for theft. But their own interior is the only hiding-place where they bestow the precious stones and other articles of jewellery which, whenever they have a chance, they will always steal.

One day, while yet new to the colony, and to the ways of ostriches, I was standing with T— by the side of one of the camps, looking over the fence at the birds, and much amused by the curious, dancing manner in which the creatures moved, as if hung on wires; when suddenly one of them, with a motion as quick as lightning, made a dash at my earring, a little round knob of gold, exactly the size and colour of a mealie (Indian corn seed), for which perhaps he took it; and I only drew back just in time to save it—and probably a piece of the ear with it—from going down his throat.

A newly-arrived gentleman was less fortunate. He,

too, was looking over a fence into a camp, when the sharp eye of an ostrich spied a beautiful diamond in his pin, and in an instant the jewel was picked out and swallowed. A kind of court-martial was held on the ostrich; the relative values of himself and of the diamond being accurately calculated, that his judges might decide whether he should live or die. Fortunately for him it was just the time when ostriches were expensive; and his value was estimated at £100, while the diamond was only worth £90. Those £10 saved his life; and the diamond was allowed to remain and perform the part of an extra-good millstone in his interior. Had he waited till the present time to furnish his internal economy thus expensively he would have been very promptly sacrificed. But people should not wear diamonds on ostrich farms.

When, soon after our return from the Cape, we were staying for a time in London, one of our first expeditions was to the Zoo. There, with great delight and amusement, we walked about, looking up one after another of our old South African friends. But it was a cold, gloomy day; and in the houses as well as out of doors the exiles from that sunny land seemed much depressed by their changed conditions of climate. The meerkats, curled up in a half-torpid state, were no longer the merry little rogues they had once been, when in happier days they stood on their hind legs outside their burrows, toasting their little backs in their native sunshine. The baboon was morose; the snakes sleepy; the African buffalo no longer terrible as in the wilds

of his old home, but a poor dejected creature, utterly crushed and broken-hearted by long residence under cold, grey skies. Altogether, everything hailing from Austral Africa looked very homesick that dull day, with the sole exception of the secretary bird, which, after a long and persevering search—for old Jacob's sake—we at last succeeded in finding. He was a delightful bird; as tame as our own old friend, and evidently a great favourite with his keeper. We felt wickedly covetous, as the man, pleased at the interest we showed, put the intelligent bird through a number of comical performances, which included the "killing" of a stuffed ratskin, kept for the purpose of displaying how the secretary in his wild state beats to death the mice, lizards, and other creatures on which he feeds.

But where were the ostriches? Just as actors, when they have a holiday, usually spend it in going to the theatre, so, of all the creatures in the Zoo, those we were most anxious to see were the great birds of whose company during the last few years we might reasonably be supposed to have had enough. But no ostriches were to be seen; and the keeper of whom we inquired told us that all were dead. On asking the cause of death, we heard that it was "because the people fed them on pennies." We went to the office of the secretary of the gardens, and found that this statement was really true, and that the post-mortem examination of each poor bird had brought to light a large number of copper coins which had been swallowed. We were glad to hear that any ostriches kept in the gardens in

future were to be separated by glass from a public idiotic enough to waste its money in poisoning them.

After this, we were quite able to believe a story told us of how a girl was one day seen at the Zoo, feeding these same unfortunate birds with some ten or twelve pairs of old kid gloves, evidently saved up for the purpose, and presented, one after another, tightly rolled up into a ball; the creatures gulping them down quite as a matter of course, and looking out for more.



## CHAPTER VIII.

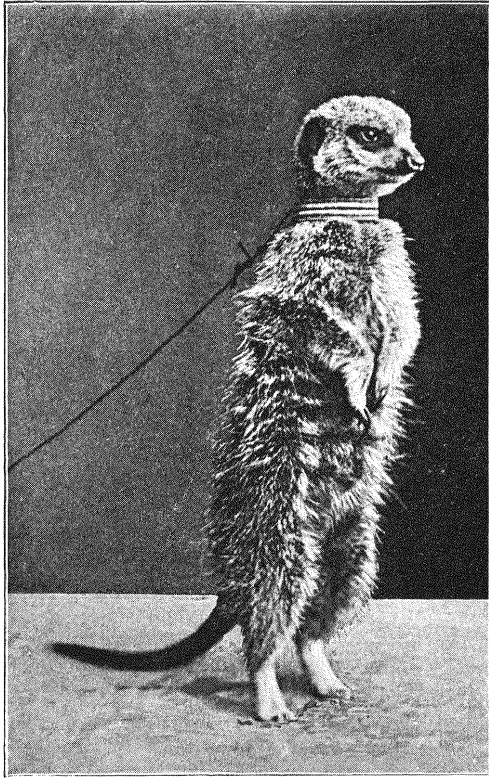
### MEERKATS.

Meerkats plentiful in the Karroo—Their appearance—Intelligence—Fearlessness—Friendship for dogs—A meerkat in England—Meerkat an inveterate thief—An owl in Tangier—Taming full-grown meerkat—Tiny twins—A sad accident—Different characters of meerkats—The turkey-herd—Bob and the meerkat—"The Mouse."

THE little meerkats were surely created for the express purpose of being made into pet animals. Certainly no prettier or funnier little live toys could possibly be imagined. Nearly every homestead in the Karroo has its tame meerkat, or more likely two or three, all as much petted and indulged, and requiring as much looking after, as spoilt and mischievous children. In their wild state, these little creatures are gregarious, and live, like the prairie-dogs and biscachas of the Western Continent, in deep holes underground, feeding chiefly on succulent bulbs, which they scratch up with the long, curved, black claws on their fore-feet. They are devoted sun-worshippers; and in the early morning, before it is daylight, they emerge from their burrows, and wait in rows till their divinity appears, when they bask joyfully in his beams.

They are very numerous in the Karroo; and as you ride or drive along through the *veldt* you often come upon little colonies of them, sitting up sunning themselves, and looking, in their quaint and pretty favourite attitude, like tiny dogs begging. As you approach, they look at you fearlessly and impudently, allowing you to come quite close; then, when their confiding manner has tempted you to get down in the wild hope of catching one of them, suddenly all pop so swiftly into their little holes, that they seem to have disappeared by magic.

There are two kinds of meerkats; one red, with a bushy tail like that of a squirrel, the other grey, with a pointed tail, and it is this latter kind which makes so charming a pet. The quaint, old-fashioned little fellow is as neatly made as a small bird; his coat, of the softest fur, with markings not unlike those of a tabby cat, is always well kept and spotlessly clean; his tiny feet, ears, and nose are all most daintily and delicately finished off; and the broad circle of black bordering his large dark eyes serves, like the anti-mony of an Egyptian beauty, to enhance the size and brilliancy of the orbs. A curious kind of seam, starting from the middle of his chin and running underneath him the whole length of his body, gives him somewhat the appearance of a stuffed animal which has not been very carefully sewn up. His bright, pretty little face is capable of assuming the greatest variety of expressions, that which it most frequently wears when in repose being a contented,



A MEERKAT.

self-satisfied smirk ; impudence and independence displaying themselves at the same time in every line of his plump little figure. With his large, prominent forehead, giving evidence of the ample brain within, one need not, perhaps, wonder at his being one of the most sagacious of animals ; although it is certainly almost startling to find all the intelligence of a dog in a wee thing which you can put in your pocket, or which, if buttoned up on a cold day inside the breast of your ulster, is as likely as not, when tired of that retreat, to squirm out down your sleeve. He is absolutely without fear ; and with consummate coolness and audacity will walk up to the largest and most forbidding-looking dog, although a perfect stranger to him, and, carefully investigating the intruder on all sides with great curiosity, express disgust and defiance in a succession of little, short, sharp barks—"quark ! quark ! quark !" He is soon on the friendliest terms with all the resident dogs in the place ; showing a marked preference for those possessing soft, long-haired coats, on which he evidently looks as a provision of nature existing solely for his benefit, and in which, like the little Sybarite that he is, he nestles luxuriously on cold days, chattering and scolding indignantly, with a vicious display of teeth, if the dog, getting up and going away, rudely disturbs his nap. Out of doors he is the inseparable satellite of the dog ; and during strolls about the farm—in which, by-the-by, one is often attended by a motley crew of furred and feathered friends—the meerkat is sure to be seen following

immediately in the wake of the dog, as closely as the latter follows master and mistress. Even a good long walk does not seem to tire his strong little legs, or, at any rate, if it does he is too plucky to give in and turn back, and as long as the dog keeps going on, he valiantly follows every *détour* of that animal's erratic course. Often, when starting for a ride or drive, we have been obliged to shut up our meerkat, so determined was he to come with us.

The astonishment of dogs in England at a meerkat brought home by us was most amusing. They would run after him, apparently taking him for some kind of rat; and when, to their amazement, instead of running away, he boldly trotted up to them, and, calmly and somewhat contemptuously surveying them, began to beg, they would hang their heads and draw back, with looks plainly expressive of their opinion that he was "no canny." It was fortunate for him that he inspired them with such awe, for otherwise he would certainly have died the death of a rat on one of the numerous occasions when he got away and wandered on his own account through the Kentish village where we were staying. The human natives whose cottages and shops he invaded, and to whom, with patronizing coolness and colonial absence of ceremony, he introduced himself, were scarcely less puzzled than the dogs at the queer animal we had brought from "foreign parts."

Every meerkat is an inveterate little thief; and if you leave him for one instant where a meal is prepared, you are sure on returning to see him jump guiltily off

the table and make for the nearest hiding-place, chattering triumphantly as he goes, like a blackbird caught stealing fruit; an overturned milk-jug, dishes rifled of their contents, and sticky trails of butter, jam, or gravy across the tablecloth, proclaiming how profitably he has used his opportunity. He revels in mischief; and the reckless destructiveness in which he indulges, with no possibility of advantage to himself, but just for the fun of the thing, often brings you to the end of your patience. You vow that you will endure him no longer. You must get rid of him. The great Newton himself could not have pardoned such a constantly-offending Diamond. But the little rogue knows what is passing through your mind; and he knows, too, how to get on the right side of you. He assumes his prettiest attitude and his most benevolent smile; and as he sits bolt upright, turning his little head from side to side with quick, jerky movements, calling to you in the softest and sweetest of the numerous voices with which nature has endowed him, he is so irresistibly comical that, whatever he may have done, you cannot find it in your heart to be wroth with him very long. He is soon restored to favour; and then, to express his extreme contentment, he goes and lies flat on his stomach in the sunshine, with his legs stretched out straight. He is so flat that he seems all poured out over the ground, and looks like an empty skin. What becomes of his bones on these occasions is a constant source of wonder.

The only other creature I have seen capable of so

entirely changing its form at a moment's notice was a little owl we have since had in Tangier. This was a delightful pet, full of character and intelligence, though but a tiny thing not more than four inches high—a good part of this height consisting of the two long, ear-like tufts of feathers on the head. The absurd little fellow, who looked like one of the owl pepper-pots come to life, had many amusing ways; but what delighted us most about him was the startling abruptness with which not only his manner, but his whole appearance, even his shape, would change as if by magic, according to his frame of mind. He would sit, for instance, in a contemplative attitude, his eyes sleepily half-closed, his "ears" sticking up very straight, and his body looking extremely long and thin, as long as no one was interfering with him; but once disturb his repose, and instantly he would change his shape and become a fat little ball of soft fluffiness;—a grey powder-puff—with no ears visible, and two great yellow eyes glaring at you with the most ireful expression.

Unfortunately, relying too much on the tameness of our owl, and fearful of spoiling his beauty, we neglected the precaution of cutting one of his wings, in consequence of which we were one day left lamenting this prettiest of North African pets; and though we tried hard to procure another, explaining, with the little amount of Spanish at our command, to all the small boys in Tangier that we wanted "*un pajarito con orejas*" ("a little bird with ears,") we never looked upon his like again, and I imagine he must have been an uncommon bird.

The best chance of capturing full-grown meerkats is when, during long droughts, little companies of them are travelling in search of water; they often have to go long distances, and when they are thus far from their holes it is possible, though by no means easy, to run one down. In a few days, even if quite old when caught, a meerkat will know his name, come to you when called, or at least answer you with a little soft, bird-like note from whatever corner of the room he may be hiding in; scramble up into your lap, eat out of your hand, and altogether be nearly as tame as one which has been brought up in the house from infancy; though of course there is always the chance that, knowing the joys of liberty, he may some day, like the owl, take it into his head to desert.

T——, riding one day, and encountering a little travelling party of meerkats, gave chase on horseback. One of the animals, a very large, fat one, made for a hole, but found it a tight fit. He stuck fast, and T—— pulled him out ignominiously by the tail, and rode off with him. The mare—a wild, half-broken young thing—was so mad with fright at the way in which the little fury, though tethered by a handkerchief, dashed about, scratching and tearing at her sides, that she bolted all the way home. And when T—— set the new inmate down on the floor of the sitting-room, where it stood at bay, snarling savagely at us, it seemed about as unpromising a specimen on which to exercise our powers of taming animals as could well be imagined. But, refusing to



be daunted, we began by tying our captive to the leg of the table, where he had to accustom himself to seeing us constantly passing and repassing; and though at first he tried to fly at us every time we came near, he soon saw that we had no evil designs against him, and was reassured by our careful avoidance of abrupt movements and sudden noises—most important of all rules to be observed in taming wild creatures. In a few hours he was sufficiently at home to drink milk—though cautiously and watchfully—from a teaspoon held out to him; and in four days he was following us about the house like a little dog.

This meerkat, the largest and handsomest we have ever seen, cannot have been anything less than the chief of his tribe. His powerful, tusk-like teeth, his unusually broad and capacious forehead, his superior intelligence, even for so clever a creature as a meerkat, all proclaimed him born to command. When one day he repaid the care and affection of many weeks by cruelly and ungratefully leaving us, we felt little doubt that, after giving civilization a fair trial, and comparing it with his old life, he had decided in favour of the latter, and started off home. We have often wondered whether he succeeded in finding his way back to his subterranean kingdom. And if so, did he find his subjects still faithful? or was he forgotten, and did another king reign in his stead?

One evening, when the men returned from the camps, one of the ostrich-herds displayed, nestling together in the palm of his hand, two baby meerkats, no larger

than good fat mice, which he had caught in the veldt. Rewarding the captor, in the usual Karroo style of barter, with a pound of coffee, we took possession of his prize; and though at first our chance of rearing the tiny animals seemed doubtful, they flourished, grew up into fine specimens of their kind, and were among the most amusing of all our pets. They looked like a perfectly-matched pair of little images with heads moving by clockwork, as they stood, bolt upright, in their favourite places, one against each doorpost, and, critically surveying the view with an air of never having seen it before, revelled in the hot sunshine which came pouring in through the open doorway.

Unlike "birds in their little nests," and more after the unamiable fashion of human twins—who generally have to be sent to separate schools—they got on very badly together; and their frequent fights displayed most comically the strong contrast of the two energetic little characters. One of them was selfish and greedy, and, however liberal the supply of food presented—even though it were three times as much as he could possibly eat—always wanted all for himself. Jumping into the middle of the plate, he would stand—a miniature dog in the manger—noisily defending the contents against his gentler brother, whom he would attack and bite savagely if he ventured near. The other was a far nobler and finer character; and, though he too could "bark and bite" on occasion in an equally unbrotherly manner, it was no such base, material

cause of jealousy which impelled him to do battle. Our notice and our affection were what *he* wanted all for himself; and so bitterly did he resent every kind word, every slightest caress bestowed on his companion, that it was the instant signal for war, and, flying at the other, he would attack him as vengefully as he in his turn was attacked at feeding-time.

Both brothers were on terms of insolent and contemptuous familiarity with Toto; on whom they looked as their slave, whom they made the butt for their jokes, and in the soft warmth of whose coat they slept as on the most luxurious of fur rugs. And when *he* wanted to sleep and *they* did not, how they relished the fun of keeping him awake against his will! What riotous games they would have, chasing each other backwards and forwards across his recumbent form, pulling his poor tired eyes open with their mischievous black claws, scratching and tickling his nose to make him sneeze, and trying their hardest to burrow into his ear or his mouth. One snap of his powerful jaws, and their frivolous career would promptly have been cut short; but the good old dog—who, in spite of all their teasing, loved the troublesome imps—submitted patiently, though they did make his eyes water.

One day, alas! tired out with play, they were comfortably nestling close up against their big friend's side, and all three were taking their afternoon nap. Perhaps Toto had a disturbing dream, perhaps the flies bothered him and made him restless,—at any rate during his sleep he rolled over on to one of the

meerkats—our favourite, of course—and, all unconscious of what he was doing, crushed and suffocated the poor little fellow. Though no one thought of blaming Toto for what was purely accidental, he instantly and completely realized that he had caused the death; and as we stood lamenting over the flattened little body, the poor old dog's distress was most pathetic. He seemed quite overcome with shame; and as he stole from one of us to the other, timidly licking our hands, his expressive face pleaded eloquently for the forgiveness he had no need to ask. With all our efforts to reassure him it was a long time before his sensitive conscience recovered from the shock. The surviving little brother lived to a good old age, came home with us, and succumbed at last to the severities of an English winter.

The variety of character in our numerous meerkats formed quite an amusing study. They differed as much as human beings, and among them all there was but one which was stupid. He, poor fellow, met with injuries in early life at the hands of one of the cruel boys who looked after the little ostriches; who, in a passion with him for getting in the way, picked him up and flung him across the kitchen. He landed in a saucepan, received spinal damage, and grew up stunted in mind and body. And when, one day, he came suddenly to his end by tumbling into that disappointing fountain-basin of which mention has been made, we felt that on the whole it was rather a happy release.

One of our meerkats was the devoted ally of the turkeys, and would go out into the *veldt* with them every day; accompanying them on all their wanderings, and apparently looking upon himself as their herd. He would come trotting home with them in the evening, full of his own importance, and evidently taking to himself the credit of having brought them all safely back.

Another was fond of rambling off all by himself, sometimes going a very long way from home. On one occasion some friends from a distant farm, driving to call on us, saw near the road what they took for a wild meerkat, and set their collie at it. But animals have a wonderful instinct for detecting the difference between tame and wild creatures; and good Bob, dearly though he loved a scamper after any of the swift-footed denizens of the *veldt*, saw at once that this was not lawful game. So, instead of the expected chase, there was a friendly and demonstrative greeting between the two animals. The dog stood wagging his tail at the meerkat, the meerkat sat up "quarking" at the dog, and our friends, guessing that the little creature belonged to us, took him up into their Cape cart, and brought him to his home.

Another meerkat, being so incorrigibly savage that handling him was always attended with serious damage to the fingers, had to wear a muzzle, improvised for him by T—— out of one of the little wire baskets made for the spouts of teapots.

Another, though young and tiny, was a born tyrant; displaying the most overbearing and imperious of

characters. In company with two full-grown meerkats, we brought him to England; the trio being taken on board the steamer in a large birdcage. There, however, owing to the truculent conduct of "the Mouse," as we called the little one, it was soon found impossible for all three to remain together; and separate quarters had to be provided for the two older animals. For the impudent mite, hardly out of babyhood, domineered over his seniors in most lordly fashion; forbidding them to take their share of the food, and dancing and jumping excitedly in the dish if they ventured to approach it; while they, although they could easily have made short work of the Mouse, calmly submitted; enduring his tyranny with that wonderful patience and forbearance so often shown by animals to one another under provocation which we human beings would bitterly resent. Perhaps they were overawed by the antics of the pugnacious atom, and thought he was not quite canny; or perhaps they looked leniently on his conduct as on that of a spoilt child accustomed to be humoured.

## CHAPTER IX.

### BOBBY.

Bobby's babyhood—Insatiable appetite—Variety of noises made by Bobby—His tameness—Narrow escape from drowning—A warlike head-gear—Bobby the worse for drink—His love of mischief—He disarms his master—Meerkat persecuted by Bobby—Bobby takes to dishonest ways—He becomes a prisoner—His clever tricks—Death of Bobby.

“ Out of question thou wert born in a merry hour.”

BOBBY was our tame crow. We brought him up from earliest infancy; indeed our acquaintance with him commenced when he was nothing but a speckled, reddish-brown egg, in a nest—or, rather, a flat, untidy bundle of sticks—in one of the few and stunted trees on the Klipplaat road. We were anxious to have one of these crows; knowing what intelligent and amusing birds they are, and having struck up a friendship with one on a neighbouring farm, a comical old one-legged fellow, with an inexhaustible fund of high spirits and solemn impudence, which made him a general favourite.

So we kept an eye on this egg; riding up to the tree occasionally, and watching the progress of the young bird through various stages of ugliness and bareness; until at last we took Bobby home with us, an ungainly,

half-fledged creature, very unsteady on his legs and ragged as to his clothing, which latter indeed consisted more of stiff black quills than anything else. His immense bill was perpetually open; displaying the depths of his wide red throat as he shouted defiantly for porridge, of which he never seemed to have enough. He would take it with a loud, greedy noise, swallowing as much of your finger with it as possible, and apparently very much disappointed at having to let the latter go again. He seemed to live in hope that, if he only held on long enough, it would surely come off at last and slip quite down his throat. If we passed anywhere near his basket—even though he had just had an ample feed—he would shoot up, like a black Jack-in-the-box with a large red mouth, demanding more porridge. The vegetarian diet suited him, and he grew into a very large, handsome bird, with the glossiest and softest of blue-black plumage.

He soon refused to stop in his basket; tumbling out head first, and hobbling about the room; then, as his strength increased, he walked and flew about outside the house; always coming at night to sleep on our window. In the morning, as soon as it was light, he would fly in, and wake us up by settling on us and pecking us gently. Then, having given us his morning greeting, he would depart on his rounds outside; and presently we would hear him on the top of the house, or on the wire fence, practising some of his endless variety of noises; imitating the fowls, the donkeys, the dogs, or holding long conversations with himself, the



greater part of which sounded like very bad language. One day we heard the cackling of a hen, which had apparently laid an egg on the top of the American windmill; and, on looking up, found that Bobby had selected this airy height as his practising-ground. It was one of his favourite places; and often, when there, he would catch sight of us the moment we came out of the house, and would come flying straight down to us, settling, sometimes quite unexpectedly, on a head or shoulder. He knew his name, and would come to us when we called him; unless indeed we had detected him in some mischief, when he would walk off, and keep carefully out of reach until he thought his offence was forgotten.

He was our constant companion out of doors; and when I went round to the store, gave out the men's rations, fed the ostriches and fowls, or superintended the washing, he was sure to be either following close at my heels like a dog, or perched on my shoulder, whispering confidentially in my ear in a most affectionate manner, while his bright little jewel of an eye watched all I did with great interest. His devotion to his master often led him to fly down the well after him, when work had to be done or superintended there. On one occasion he overshot the mark and got into the water, where he very narrowly escaped being drowned. He was pulled out with some difficulty, very wet and miserable, too frightened to know friends from foes, and biting his rescuer with all his might.

He would accompany us on our walks; and often took

long rides with T——, whose white sun-helmet became a most imposing headgear, as Bobby surmounted it, spreading his great black wings; reminding us of the raven-crest of some ancient Scandinavian warrior. Then, while in full gallop, he would dart after one of the great gaudy locusts—four inches long, and looking like painted toys daubed with red, yellow, and green—and, catching it on the wing with unerring aim, would fly back with it to his place on the sun-helmet, where he would regale with many noises expressive of satisfaction.

Bobby was not a “temperance” bird; indeed, his tastes lay in quite an opposite direction. We first discovered his propensity by accident, and in this manner. One day, when doctoring a sick fowl, which needed “picking up,” I had mixed some porridge with wine, making it very strong. Just as I was about to administer it, Bobby came hurrying up, with his inquiring mind, as usual, all on the *qui vive* to see what was going on. He plunged his bill into the porridge, and helped himself to a large mouthful; then, finding it to his taste, he went on eating noisily and greedily, till he had “taken on board” a considerable amount, and walked off satisfied. Then, having attended to my patient, I went indoors, thinking no more of Bobby till, some time after, Nancy, our Hottentot “help,” came running to us, calling out, “Missis! Missis! Bobby drunk!” We went outside; and there, sure enough, was Bobby, on his back, his little black feet helplessly kicking the air, his bill wide open, and a

variety of the most astonishing sounds proceeding therefrom, compared with which his usual, every-day profanity was mild.

He soon recovered, and was on his legs again, none the worse for the adventure; but it left him with a decided taste for stimulants, which he strove to indulge on all possible occasions. From that day he followed me to the store more pertinaciously than ever; sitting on the tap of the cask while I drew the wine for meals, bending down and twisting his neck to reach the stream as it flowed into the jug. He gradually learned to turn the tap himself, and was delighted if he could catch a few drops. At last he became clever enough to set the wine running altogether; and, as he never learned to turn the tap back again, great caution was necessary to see that he did not remain behind in the store, which he was always trying to do. He would often give a good deal of trouble by flying to the very topmost shelf, from whence it was difficult to dislodge him; and where a chase after him involved climbing over numerous sacks on my part, and much knocking over of bottles and tins on that of Bobby.

Bobby loved mischief; he revelled in it, not for the sake of any good which it brought him, but simply out of what the Americans call "cussedness." He was never so happy as when busily engaged in some work of destruction. When discovered, he would retreat to a safe distance, and, if pursued, would always manage to keep just out of reach; though not too far for you to see the twinkle of enjoyment in his wicked old eye,

and hear his defiant croak ; and as he strutted before you, looking back triumphantly over his shoulder, you felt that he was laughing at you.

The garden was his favourite field of operations ; and, considering the time and trouble spent in producing that little oasis, and in persuading plants to grow in it, it was no small trial to be disappointed of one crop of vegetables after another, simply owing to his careful destruction of the young plants almost as soon as they showed their heads above ground. It was provoking, on going down to the garden, to find that the few rows of peas or French beans, which we had so carefully sown and watered, and which only the day before were coming up so promisingly, had been butchered to make Bobby's holiday, and were now all rooted up, dried and shrivelled in the hot sun, and lying, neatly arranged in order, each one in the place where it had grown. The culprit himself would probably be out of sight, for his gardening operations were usually carried on in the early morning, thus securing a quiet uninterrupted time among the plants before we were about ; but once we caught him. We were out earlier than usual, and found Bobby so deeply engrossed in putting the finishing touches to a row of beans which he had pulled up and laid in their places with even more than his usual neatness, that he only looked up in time to see his offended master a few yards off, and just preparing to throw a good-sized stone. In an instant Bobby's mind was made up. Instead of attempting flight, and getting hit by the stone, he

impulsively threw himself on T——'s generosity, and flew straight to his hand; looking up confidently in his face, and at once winning the pardon he sought. His loving ways made us forgive many of his iniquities.

He liked to be "around" during meals; experimenting on the different articles of food, and occasionally dipping his bill into a cup of tea, or what pleased him still more, a glass of wine. But, unfortunately, he did not confine his attentions to the provisions, and was constantly attempting to carry off the spoons and forks: we narrowly escaped losing several of them, and he succeeded in getting away with one knife, which we never saw again. He also flew off with one of T——'s razors, and, when just above the middle of the dam, dropped it into the water.

At last his thieving propensities obliged us to forbid him the house, and Toto learned to chase him out the instant he appeared inside the door; the noisy hunt often ending in Bobby's being caught, and gently but firmly held down under the paws of Toto, who would lie wagging his tail contentedly, while Bobby, hurt nowhere but in his pride, vented his rage in discordant croaks. He became very jealous of Toto and the other pets which, less mischievous than himself, were allowed indoors; and he delighted especially in teasing the little meerkat, no less constant an attendant than himself among the small train of animal friends which followed us outside. Bobby would come up noiselessly behind, and, catching the tip of the meerkat's tail in his bill,

would lift the little fellow off his legs, take him up a few feet into the air, and drop him suddenly. Then, after waiting a few moments till his victim had recovered his composure, and was off his guard, he would repeat the performance. The meerkat, a plucky, independent little character, resented the insult, and scolded and chattered vehemently, showing all his small teeth as he hung helplessly by the tail: but he was powerless against Bobby, and had to submit to being whisked up unexpectedly as often as his tormentor, by right of superior strength, chose to indulge his practical joke.

As Bobby grew older he lost his simple vegetarian tastes, despised porridge, and began to pick up a dishonest living about the fowl-house. He would fly to meet us in the morning, and perch on our shoulders with an impudent assumption of innocence; quite unconscious that the yellow stickiness of his bill told us he had just been breakfasting off several eggs. Then he took to eating the little chickens; and here his talent for mimicking the fowls stood him in good stead, and no doubt gained him many a dinner; his exact imitation of the hen's call to her young ones attracting victims within his reach. Many battles were fought by the maternal hens in defence of their progeny; in which Bobby always got the best of it, going off triumphantly with his prize, to regale in safety on the roof, or at the top of the windmill. Our poor little broods of chickens, which had enemies enough before in the shape of hawks, wild cats, snakes, etc., diminished

rapidly with this traitor in the camp, whose capacious appetite was equal to consuming as many as four a day, with eggs *ad libitum*.

For this, and for his offences in the garden, Bobby was at last sentenced to be tied up: a little bangle of twisted wire was fastened round one leg, and attached to a long piece of stout wire outside our window; and there, so long as there were little chickens about the house, or tender young vegetables in the garden, he had to remain. We felt much compunction at treating our old friend thus, and feared that with his keen appreciation of freedom, and love of independence, he would pine in captivity; but Bobby did nothing of the kind. He was a far greater philosopher than we thought, and resigned himself at once to circumstances; making the best of things in a manner which some of the human race might well imitate. He harboured no resentment against us for depriving him of freedom; but, with his sweet temper quite unimpaired by his reverse of fortune, would give us just as warm and joyful a welcome, and caress us as lovingly, as in brighter days. He did not sit idle on the perch to which we had condemned him; but, his love of mischief breaking out in quite a new direction, he immediately consoled himself by commencing destructive operations on the window in which he sat, and on as much of the outside of the house as came within reach of his tether. He broke away the plaster from the wall, knocked out the mortar from between the bricks, and carefully picked all the putty out of the window, the panes of which he

loosened so that they were always threatening to fall out ; and in a very short time our room, which was in reality the newest part of the house, looked like an old ruin, with crumbling wall and dilapidated window.

He had a variety of resources at his command ; and when not engaged in the destruction of the house, he would often be found busy on another work he had in hand, that of trying to free himself from his bonds. No human prisoner, filing through the iron bars of his dungeon, ever worked more perseveringly for his freedom than did Bobby,—biting through strand after strand of his cord of steel wires, or slowly, but surely, unfastening the twisted bangle on his leg ; until at last some day he would be missing from his place—devastation in the garden, empty eggshells in the hens' nests, and sad gaps among the rising generation of fowls showing the good use he had made of his opportunities. No small amount of stratagem was required to recapture him when loose ; and much time and trouble had to be expended, and tempting dainties displayed, to entice him within reach—a fat mouse, if there happened to be one in the trap, being the most effective bait.

Bobby would have been invaluable to an exhibitor of performing animals ; his intelligence in learning the few tricks we had the leisure to teach him showed that he would have been capable of distinguishing himself if he had been educated as a member of a “happy family.” We often brought him in to show his tricks before visitors ; and his solemn way of performing them added much to the amusement he caused. He



was a true humourist, and knew that his joke was more telling when made with serious face and grave deportment.

He would lie "dead," flat on his back, with his blue eyelids drawn up over his eyes; remaining motionless for any length of time we chose, and waiting for the word of command, when he would scramble to his feet in a great hurry, with a self-satisfied croak at his own cleverness. He would hang by his bill from one of our fingers, which he had swallowed to its point of junction with the hand; and, with his wings drooping, and his legs hanging straight down in a limp and helpless manner, looking altogether a most strange and grotesque object, would allow us to carry him about wherever we liked. A little string of dark red beads, brought from Jerusalem, would always throw him into a perfect frenzy of real or pretended fright—probably the latter; and if they were put anywhere near him, or, worse still, flung across his back, he at once commenced a series of startling antics, jumping and hopping about as if possessed, and uttering very uncanny sounds.

As the time for our return to England drew near, we made up our minds that we could not leave Bobby behind—he must be one of the little party of friendly animals which were to accompany us home; and we were already discussing in what kind of cage or box he should travel, wondering how he would like being enclosed in so small a space, and how he would behave at sea; friends in England had promised him a welcome,

and were looking forward to seeing him—when, after all, we had to part with him. Just three weeks before we sailed poor old Bobby was suddenly paralyzed, and died in a few hours. We never knew what caused his death: whether his unconquerable curiosity had led him to eat something poisonous; whether the enforced sedentary life he had led for so many weeks together had undermined his constitution; or whether occasional dead snakes, and the contents of the mouse-traps, which during his detention were always contributed in hope of partially satisfying his large appetite, were perhaps unwholesome diet, and shortened his days, we cannot tell. But Bobby was sadly missed; and we still regret that brightest and most comical of all our pets.

Some will perhaps say, "What foolish people these must have been, to tolerate a black imp of mischief who destroyed their vegetables, ate their eggs, killed their chickens, did his best to pull down their house, and whose neck ought to have been wrung!" But, just as among the human race those characters we love best are not always the most faultless, so poor Bobby, full of imperfections as he was—far from honest, not always sober, and with that terrible bent for mischief making him so often a nuisance—yet possessed so many lovable qualities that his failings were redeemed; and he lives in our recollection as one of the kindest and most faithful of all our South African friends. We could have better spared a better bird.

## CHAPTER X.

### OUR SERVANTS.

A retrospective vision—Phillis in her domain—Her destructiveness—Her ideas on personal adornment—The woes of a mistress—Eye-service—Abrupt departure of Phillis—Left in the lurch—Nancy and her successors—Cure of sham sickness—The thief's dose—Our ostrich-herd—A bride purchased with cows—English and natives at the Cape—Character of Zulus and Kaffirs.

“ Man's work is from sun to sun,  
But woman's work is never done.”

It is always amusing, for those who have tried house-keeping in South Africa, to hear people in England talk of their “bad” servants. Ladies—who, after the short quarter of an hour devoted to interviewing the cook and giving the day's orders, need trouble themselves no more throughout the twenty-four hours as to the carrying out of those orders, but are free to pursue their own occupations, uninterrupted by a constant need of superintending those of their domestics,—sit in their beautifully-kept drawing-rooms or at their well-appointed dining-tables,—whose spotless linen and bright glass and silver are so delicious a novelty to eyes long accustomed to the Karroo's rough-and-ready backwoods style,—and, much to your surprise, complain

bitterly of the unsatisfactory parlour-maid, or are pathetic over the iniquities of the cook who has just sent up a faultless little dinner. When any one, thus blissfully unconscious of what a really bad servant is, appeals to the lady colonist for sympathy, the unfeeling reply of the latter not unfrequently is: "You should try South African servants!" And instantly, before the mind's eye of that lady colonist, there arises a retrospective vision of the average "coloured help" of Cape farms; that yellow Hottentot or dark-skinned Kaffir, attired in a scanty and ragged cotton dress; her woolly head surmounted by a battered and not always over-clean *kappje* (sun-bonnet), or tied up in a red and yellow handkerchief of the loudest pattern, twisted into an ugly little tight turban. She stands, in the bright morning sunshine, against a background of dirty dishes and uncleaned saucepans, left neglected since last evening's meal; and of the comfort and advantage to herself of cleaning which before the adhering remnants of contents have dried and hardened it is absolutely impossible to convince her. Dogs, fowls, turkeys, and little pigs, in company with all the pet animals of the family and an occasional young ostrich, are kindly acting the part of scavengers on her unswept kitchen floor; where they are *habitués*, her wastefulness and untidiness affording them so good a living that they have grown bold, and, refusing to get out of your way, get under your feet and trip you up at every turn if you are rash enough to enter the dirty domain of their protectress. The latter, like some malevolent

goddess, is surrounded by an atmosphere of most evil-smelling fumes, prominent among which is the paraffin with which, to save herself trouble, she liberally feeds the fire every time it becomes low ; while the dense smoke and steam arising from several pots and saucepans on the stove proclaim the contents to be in various stages of burning,—the climax being reached by what was once the soup, but of which nothing now remains but a few dried and charred fragments of bone, tightly adhering to an utterly ruined pot—new last week. In answer to all expostulation the doer of the mischief has no word of regret or apology, but, taking the occurrence as a matter of course, shows all her even white teeth in a bright, good-tempered smile, as she says, “ Yes, missis, de soup is burnt.”

Then still more horrible whiffs assail you, viz., the combined odours of the various articles of food which she has put away, carefully covered up in jars and tins, where she has forgotten them ; and where, in the close atmosphere of her stuffy kitchen, with the thermometer at 100°, they have promptly gone bad. She has no “ nose ” ; and, though her kitchen may be pervaded with odours which knock you down, she remains smiling and contented, and needs to be informed of the fact that there is a bad smell before she will set to work—with great surprise—to hunt out the cause of it ; too often revealing sights which make you shudder.

If it is anywhere near a meal-time, her fire is sure to be very low, if not out altogether ; she has, of course, forgotten to tell the men, before starting for the camps

in the morning, to chop wood for her day's needs; and as they, like all the coloured race, never perform the most every-day duty unless specially reminded, she has to do this work herself, with much difficulty and dawdling; the luncheon or dinner being accordingly delayed indefinitely. If, on the contrary, it is between meals, and no cooking will be required for several hours, there is a roaring fire, over the hottest part of which the chances are ten to one that you will find the empty kettle; while you are fortunate indeed if in your immediate and anxious investigation of the boiler you are yet in time to avert irretrievable damage.

Any dirty water or refuse which is thrown away at all is flung just outside the kitchen door, where it lies in unsightly heaps and pools, attracting myriads of flies; a plentiful sprinkling of which, needless to state, find their way, in a drowned, boiled, baked, roast or fried condition, into every article of food sent to table. Occasionally a teaspoon is tossed out among the rubbish, and lies glittering in the sunshine, ready to tempt the first ostrich that happens to prowl past the door. A very frequent counting of plate is necessary; and indeed, with such careless and not always honest servants, it is best to have no silver in daily use.

Breakages are ruinously numerous; each rough-handed Phillis in succession having her own private hiding-place, generally in the middle of some large bush, where—in spite of the standing promise that any accident honestly confessed will receive instant pardon—the fragments of all the glass, earthenware, and

china destroyed through her carelessness are quietly put away out of sight, and, as she hopes, out of mind. Then perhaps, one day, having a little time to spare, you are looking about among the bushes to find out where the white turkey lays, and suddenly see, gleaming out through the dark foliage, what you at first take for a goodly number of the expected eggs. But alas! on closer investigation you recognize the familiar patterns of your pretty breakfast and dinner services; chosen carefully in England, with bright anticipations of the colonial home for which they were destined. For a long time their number has been mysteriously but steadily decreasing; till now there are but two soup-plates left, the cracked and chipped vegetable-dishes cannot among them boast of one handle, and the tureen, being without a lid, has to be covered ignominiously with a plate. Egg-cups there are none, and their places have long been supplied—not altogether unsuccessfully—by napkin-rings.

Constant relays of cups and saucers, as well as of glasses, are needed from Port Elizabeth; a dozen of either lasting but a very short time in the coloured girl's destructive hands. Opportunities of getting things sent up to the farm do not present themselves every week; and to be provided, at one and the same time, with a sufficient supply of both glass and china is as unheard-of a state of affluence as was the possession, by poor Mr. Wilfer, of a hat and a complete suit of clothes all new together. An influx of unexpected visitors is sure to arrive at the time of greatest defi-

ciency ; and the wine at dinner often has to be poured into a motley collection of drinking-vessels, among which breakfast and tea-cups, in a sadly saucerless and handleless condition, largely predominate over glasses. Another time it is the china which is conspicuous by its absence ; a large party of strangers who have outspanned at the dam are asked in to rest for an hour or two on their journey, and the hostess finds herself obliged to hand the afternoon tea to her guests in tumblers.

The linen fares no better at the hands of Phillis than does the china. The best table-cloths and most delicate articles of clothing are invariably hung to dry, either on ungalvanized wires which streak them with iron-mould, or on the thorniest bushes available, from whose cruel hooks, pointing in all directions, it is impossible to free them without many a rent. You spend much time and trouble over the work of extricating them, remonstrate with Phillis for the hundredth time on her rough treatment of them, and soon after, passing again, find that, all having been spread out on the stony ground near the dam, right in the path of the ostriches coming up from the water, numerous muddy impressions of large, two-toed feet crossing and recrossing the linen necessitate the whole wash being done over again. Although a clothes-line and pegs are provided, they are contemptuously ignored, and—the latter especially—never used except under the closest supervision ; thus handkerchiefs, socks, and all the lighter articles of wearing-apparel are allowed to go flying away across



the veldt; where, on long rides, you occasionally recognize fragments of them flapping about dismally on the bushes.

A strict watch has to be kept on the table-napkins, or they are sure to be carried to the kitchen and pressed into the dirtiest of service as dish-cloths, lamp-cleaners, etc. However many kitchen-cloths and dusters may have been given out, you never find one which is fit to touch; nor, until experience has taught you to keep the paraffin and its attendant rags under lock and key, and yourself to superintend the cleaning and filling of the lamps, is there one cloth which does not communicate the smell and flavour of the oil to every plate, cup, and glass brought to table. Every cloth is saturated with grease, all have large holes burnt in them, and a good many have been deliberately torn into quarters, or into whatever smaller sizes Phillis may have judged convenient for her ends. She has spared only those which, with their broad pink-and-white borders—with "Teacloth" in large letters, and a little teapot in each corner—have pleased her eye, and struck her as suitable adornments for her person; and which accordingly you often find twisted round the woolly head in place of the red and yellow turban, or gracefully draped on neck and shoulders as a *fichu*.

Like other daughters of Eve, she possesses her due amount of vanity, and has her own ideas—though they are sometimes strange ones—on the subject of improving her personal appearance. If she is of a careful turn of mind, and mends her own dresses—though

most frequently she wears them torn and buttonless, fastened together only by the numerous black or white safety-pins which she has abstracted—she scorns to patch with the same colour, or anything near it, but introduces as much variety as possible into the garment by choosing the strongest contrasts of hue and greatest diversity of materials. Thus her pink or yellow cotton dress will be patched with a piece of scarlet flannel or bright blue woollen stuff; the blue skirt, of which the latter is a portion, having been tastefully repaired with a large square of Turkey red.

One day a bottle of salad oil is dropped and broken on the sitting-room floor; and Phillis is called in to remove the traces of the accident. Why does she look so delighted as she goes down on her knees beside the unctuous pool? and why does she not proceed to wipe it up? The reason is soon seen when she prepares for action by whisking off her bright handkerchief-turban. Then the pallid palms of her monkey-like hands are plunged blissfully into the oily mess, and again and again vigorously rubbed over head and countenance, till the thick mass of wool is saturated and dripping like a wet sponge, and the laughing face shines like a mirror. She is far too much absorbed to notice the amusement her performance is giving to hosts and guests; and when all the late contents of the bottle have been successfully transferred to her person, she goes back in high glee to her kitchen, rejoicing in her increased loveliness.

The house work is no less of a failure than are the

kitchen and laundry departments. The art of bed-making has to be taught, with much patience and perseverance, to each successive untutored savage; who—if she has not come straight from some bee-hive-shaped hut where beds are totally unknown—has lived in a Boer's house where, when it is thought worth while to make the beds at all (by no means an every-day business) it is never done till the evening, when it is just time to return to them—and then is not done in a manner which at all accords with English ideas. In the morning, each portion of the room and each article of furniture which requires cleaning or dusting must be separately and individually pointed out to your handmaiden; the corner where you do not specially tell her to sweep, and the table or bookshelf which you forget to commend to the attentions of her feather-brush, being invariably left untouched. It is the same with all the rest of her work; you have long ago found it impossible to make her understand a thing once for all, or to establish any sort of regular routine. She needs to be daily reminded of each daily duty, or it is not done. And then, unless under constant supervision, most wearying to her mistress, it is sure to be done wrong. Of course she never thinks of reminding *you* of anything, but is only too delighted if you have forgotten it. If, through some unlucky oversight, you have not told her to put the joint into the oven and the potatoes on the fire, the chances are that both will be found uncooked when the dinner-hour arrives. And even when all is ready to be served up, you must

again remind her of each dish, and of the proper order in which it is to make its entrance, or it is quite certain to be brought in at the wrong stage of the repast—if brought at all. But perhaps you have become absorbed in the conversation at table, and so are unobservant of the non-appearance of the greens or other vegetables, till next morning you find them, still in the saucepan, and in a cold and sodden condition.

Thus every detail of each day's "trivial round" has to pass through the mind of the mistress, who is compelled to neglect her work in looking after that of a servant who will not use her own head. One goes to bed at night footsore with running after this terrible servant; and with a head still more wearied by the constant strain of doing all the thinking for every department of the housekeeping. Of course it amounts to much the same as doing the work yourself; and but for "the honour of the thing"—like the Irishman strutting along proudly inside the bottomless sedan-chair, though complaining that he "might as well have walked"—you might as well be without a servant. With South African domestics one realizes indeed the meaning of the word "eye-service"; for not one of them, even the best, knows what it is to be conscientious. They never do a thing right because it *is* right; whatever they think will not be seen is neglected; and they are placidly indifferent as to whether their work is done well or badly, and whether you are pleased or not. One gets so tired of the apathetic yellow or black faces; which never brighten but into a childish laugh, gener-

ally at something which is the reverse of a laughing matter for the employer.

Altogether, Phillis is in every way exasperating, and is the great drawback to life on Cape farms. But she is the only kind of servant available ; and if you lose patience with her and let her go, you may have to do the whole work of the house yourself, possibly for a week or more, till another, closely resembling her, or perhaps worse, can be found. Therefore, you put up with much, rather than make a change which would involve the training of a raw recruit all unused to English ways, to cleanliness, and to comfort ; and indeed hardly acquainted with the rudiments of civilization.

But, unluckily, Phillis herself loves change ; it is irksome to her volatile nature to remain long in one place ; and accordingly, just as she is becoming used to your ways, and you flatter yourself that you will eventually get her into some sort of training, she flits off, regardless of the inconvenience she may cause. She never tells you in a straightforward manner that she wishes to leave ; never gives you time to look out for a substitute ; but departs unexpectedly, and always in one of two ways. Most commonly she rises in sudden insubordination, gets up a row of the first magnitude on some trifling pretence, and behaves in so turbulent and uproarious a manner that you are thankful to be rid of her at any cost, and dismiss her then and there ; which is just what she wanted.

Or, if she is one of the more peaceful and amiable sort, and has some kindly feeling for the "missis," she

leaves the latter in the lurch in a less offensive, though even more heartless manner. She does not *ask* for a holiday, but announces her intention of taking one; faithfully promises to return at the end of four days, and departs, riding astride on a lean and ragged scarecrow of a horse, brought for her by a party of Hottentot friends. It is true she leaves no possessions behind to ensure her coming back; for she never has any luggage, and her wardrobe, being of the scantiest, is all well contained in the handkerchief-bundle which jogs at her side as she trots off. But new chums, fresh from England, and innocent of the ways of the Karroo, are always taken in the first time the trick is played on them; and as the queer-looking cavalcade departs, bearing in its midst the giggling Phillis, no disquieting suspicions cross the mistress's mind. She determines to make the best of it for those four days, and goes bravely to work; either single-handed, or with the so-called help of a small Hottentot girl, who comes just when she chooses—sometimes remaining away a whole day, sometimes arriving in the afternoon when most of the work is done—and who lives so far off that going after her would be useless waste of time. The hours are counted to the time appointed for Phillis's return, but—needless to state—she is never again seen or heard of; and the victim of her fraud learns by experience that as soon as a servant talks of a holiday it is time to begin the weary search for a successor; never found without plenty of riding about the country, much inquiring on neighbouring and distant farms, and many disappointments.

It is not much use taking English servants to the Karroo; the life is too dull for them, they hear of high wages to be had in Port Elizabeth and other towns, and you never keep them long. The man and wife, both excellent servants, who came with us from England, left us soon after we came up-country; and from that time we had none but coloured servants for house and farm. There was indeed a sudden transformation in our little kitchen; from the quiet, neatly-dressed, white-aproned Mrs. Wells to noisy Hottentot Nancy, in dirtiest of pink cotton, profusely patched with blue and yellow. And the kitchen itself was no less changed than its presiding genius. Now began a time of good hard work for me—for which the usual bringing-up of English girls, followed by years of travel and of hotel life, was not the best of training; and, though I had learned much from Mrs. Wells, I was often sadly at a loss during the first weeks after her departure. No dish, however simple, which I myself was not able to cook, could be cooked by Nancy or any of her successors; all were obliged to see it done at least once before they would attempt it. At this time cookery-books were almost my only literature; and many times a day I sought counsel in a bulky volume wherein recipes and prescriptions, law and natural history, etiquette and the poultry-yard, formed a somewhat startling jumble; and whose index presented, in immediate juxtaposition, such incongruous subjects as liver, lobster, lumbago—marmalade, mayonnaise, measles, meat—shrimps, Shropshire pudding, sick-room, sirloin, sitting-

hens, etc. As many despairing sighs as ever fluttered the inky pages of a school lesson-book were breathed over this stout volume. T——, who, after living for years in rougher places than the Karroo, has acquired considerable experience and is a capital cook, helped me out of many a difficulty; and in time I learned to be a tolerably good general servant—which you must be yourself, if you are ever to do any good with Kaffirs or Hottentots. But it was a pity that, when young, instead of many of the things learned at school, I did not acquire what would at this time have made me more independent of servants.

Why is not a knowledge of cooking and house-keeping made a part of every English girl's education? Then, in the event of a colonial life being one day her lot, she is to some extent prepared to encounter the difficulties of that life; while, even if she should marry a millionaire, and be waited on hand and foot for the rest of her days, she is none the worse for possessing the knowledge of how things ought to be done in her house—indeed, every woman who orders a dinner should know something of how it is to be cooked.

Nancy, our first native servant, was also the best we ever had; always bright and good-tempered, and singing over her work in a really charming voice. On the whole she was far more intelligent than most of her race; and we were really sorry when the equestrian family party carried her from our sight, never to return. Then came a succession of "cautions," each worse than her predecessor; and between them all



we did indeed, as Mark Twain has it, "know something about woe."

Nancy's immediate successor was in every respect her opposite; idle, impudent, surly, and dishonest; eating as much as two men, but doing no work that was worth anything. She kept yawning all day with loud howls that were most depressing to hear; and when I went into the kitchen I was pretty sure to find her fast asleep, with head and arms on the table.

Our next specimen was a nearly white half-caste, with light-coloured wool, and pale-grey, dead-looking eyes; who always reminded us of one of the horrible, sickly-looking white lizards, so common in Karroo houses. She was half-witted, and most uncanny-looking; with such a ghastly, cold, unsympathetic manner and stony stare that we named her Medusa. We could have picked out many a better servant from the Earlswood Asylum. I was continually trying to think of all the idiotic things she might possibly do, and thus guard against them beforehand; yet she always took me by surprise by doing something ten times more stupid than anything I had dreamed of.

Then came a tall, gaunt old Mozambique negress; in appearance unpleasantly like an ancient Egyptian mummy, and with clothing which looked as though it had been "resurrected" at the same time as herself from a repose of some three thousand years. Only a dirty old black pipe, seldom absent from her lips, savoured, not of the necropolis of Thebes or of Memphis, but of the very vilest Boer tobacco. Besides being an

inveterate old thief, she was the exact opposite of a total abstainer ; and the frequent " drop too much " in which she indulged was always the occasion for a display of choice language and a reckless destruction of crockery.

But these are enough ; suffice it to say that the same types of character ran through a long line of successors, and that, taking them all round, I had about the same amount of trouble with all of them.

T——'s men required almost as much looking after as my women ; and, in order to get his herds off to work in good time, it was generally necessary for him to go down himself at sunrise to their little huts, not far from the house, and wake them up. As a rule they were not fond of work ; and many were the excuses they would invent in order to avoid it as much as possible. Being " sick " was of course a favourite plea ; and, whatever the nature of the complaint from which they professed themselves to be suffering, they were always convinced that a *suppje* (drink) of prickly pear brandy or of " Cape smoke " \* would be just the thing to set them right. At one time quite an epidemic of sham sickness broke out ; but, as we soon saw through the trick, and knew that our would-be patients were perfectly well, we did not indulge them with their favourite remedy, but determined to make an example. We accordingly treated a very palpable case of shamming with a medicine of our own concoction. We mixed a good saucerful of Gregory's powder and castor oil into

\* Boer brandy.

the thickest of paste; and prolonged the agony by making the man eat the stuff with a teaspoon, while we stood sternly on guard, to see that there was no evasion. And then we promised a second dose in the event of the first failing to effect a cure. No need to say that the victim hastened to report himself quite well, and that as long as he remained on the farm he was never "sick" again. The fame of the terrible medicine spread, and we did not hear of much more illness among our men.

This dose was mild, however, in comparison with one of which I have heard, which was prepared by some gentlemen of our acquaintance. They were living in a tent on the Diamond Fields; and for some time had noticed a very rapid diminution of their supply of brandy. Not knowing which of their native servants was the culprit, they resolved to set a trap; and, putting a little croton oil into the brandy-bottle, left the latter in a temptingly prominent position. The next morning one of the servants, a big, stout fellow, was missing; and for ten days nothing was seen or heard of him. When, at the end of that time, he reappeared, he was transformed into such a poor, limp, wasted living skeleton that he could hardly be recognised. He went back to his work without a word; and never again did the brandy-bottle's attractions lure him from the path of honesty.

The best and most hard-working of all our men was a sturdy Zulu, who, both in face and figure, exactly resembled that life-like wooden statue—one

of the oldest in the world—which, in the Museum at Cairo, gives us so accurate a portrait of an ancient Egyptian. In looking at it you feel that you can read the character of this man who lived three or four thousand years ago; and know that, although one of the best-tempered of souls, he was as obstinate as Pharaoh himself. Nor were these qualities lacking in his modern fac-simile, the ostrich-herd; whose broad countenance, as he strode after his long-legged charges, bearing, in place of the Egyptian's staff of office, a stout tackey, wore the identical expression which that artist of long ago has caught so well. The good fellow showed a laudable tenacity of purpose in the steady perseverance with which he was putting by all he could save of his wages, and investing the money in cows. With these latter it was his intention to purchase a wife, as soon as a sufficient number could be collected to satisfy the demands of the prospective father-in-law.

A marriage after this fashion, although not quite in accordance with English ideas, has certainly the advantage of inducing good habits in the intending Benedick. In the first place, he learns to economize instead of spending his money on drink. He will, of course, take as many *suppjes* as you like to offer him; but you will never find him going off on the spree for two or three days, and coming back considerably the worse for his outing, as those of his brethren who have not his motive for thrift are too fond of doing. He is altogether a better servant than they, being less independent and more anxious to please. Often, too, he