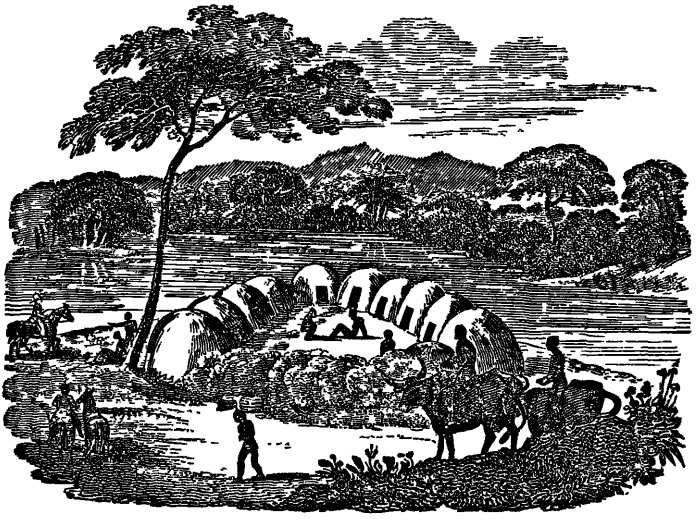


CHAPTER XIII.

Korannas.—Bivouac on the Banks of the Cradock.—Westhuizen's Kraal.—Migratory Springboks.—Journey through the Nieuwveld.—Village of Beaufort.

JUNE 26.—On awaking at dawn of day, a curious scene presented itself to me. I was in the midst of a considerable kraal, situated on a ridge of land which commanded an extensive view of the windings of the Great River. The kraal, or cattle-fold, was formed partly by the cabins of

the natives arranged in the shape of a half moon, and partly by a hedge of thorns which completed the circle. The prefixed vignette, sketched on the spot, will convey some idea of the scenery. The horde consisted of about fifty souls, and were in possession of above 200 cattle. Their huts, all fronting inward to the kraal, are constructed of mats stretched over a frame of sticks in the shape of a bee-hive, and afford but an indifferent shelter in cold weather; but they are easily removed with them on their pack-oxen, as they migrate from place to place; and seem quite to satisfy their ideas of comfort, though excessively dirty and swarming with vermin.

These Korannas do not differ very greatly in manners or appearance from the Namaqua Hottentots. Like them they wear the old sheep-skin dress, and preserve the original customs of their nation, which were described by Kolben a hundred years ago, but which the Hottentots in the Colony have long ago abandoned and forgotten. Some of their common customs which I myself witnessed, indicated, certainly, a very low state of both mental and physical refinement—much lower

than that of the Caffers. They are, however, a good-natured, and, on the whole, a good-looking race, having many of them fine formed heads and prominent features. They lead an indolent, wandering life, living chiefly on the milk of their cattle, and seldom roaming far from the banks of the Gariep and its tributary branches. Their cattle much resemble those of the Bechuana and Caffer tribes, being smaller than the Colonial breed, or that of the Namaquas. Some of their kraals possess also goats and sheep.*

* I again borrow one of Mr. Pringle's African sketches to diversify my pages :—

THE KORANNA.

Fast by his wild resounding river
The listless Koran lingers ever ;
Still drives his heifers forth to feed,
Sooth'd by the gorrah's humming reed ; †
A wanderer still uncheck'd doth range,
As humour calls, or seasons change ;
His tent of mats and household gear
All packed upon the patient steer.
Midst all his wanderings, hating toil,
He never tills the stubborn soil ;

† A musical instrument of very simple construction, peculiar to the Hottentot tribes. It is described both by Lichtenstein and Burchell.

Having rewarded the Griqua who had guided me hither, I bade adieu to these simple and good-humoured sons of the wilderness, who, previous to my departure, filled my two holster bottles with milk. Our route lay through a country abounding with game, but in its other features too closely resembling much of what I had already passed through to require description. On our left, about ten o'clock, we had the junction of the Yellow and

But on the milky dams depends,
And what spontaneous Nature sends.
Or, should long-parching droughts prevail,
And milk, and bulbs, and locusts fail,*
He lays him down to sleep away
In languid sloth the weary day;
Oft as he feels gaunt hunger's stound,
Still tightening "famine's girdle" round;†
Lulled by the sound of the Gariep
Beneath the willows murmuring deep:
Till thunder-clouds, surcharged with rain,
Pour verdure o'er the desert plain,—
And call the famish'd dreamer from his trance,
To feast on milk and mead, and wake the moonlight dance.

* Locusts and white ants are eaten both by the Koran and Bushman tribes, in seasons of scarcity.

† The "girdle of emptiness," as the Arabs call it, is frequently resorted to by all the nomadic tribes of Southern Africa who do not cultivate the earth, and whose means of subsistence are consequently precarious.

Cradock Rivers *(Ky* and *Nu Gariep)*: on our right, the great desert which stretches five or six hundred miles westward, even to the mouth of the Gariep,—a region occupied only by wandering Korannas, Bushmen, lions, and the wild game on which they feed.

As we rode along, I observed several gemsboks. This is a beautiful and noble-looking antelope. His long, straight, sharp horns incline a little backward, and it is said the animal can use them with formidable effect in self-defence. Instances are mentioned by the farmers, of the gemsbok and the lion being sometimes found lying dead together, the former having struck his horns into the heart of his destroyer as he sprang upon him and broke his back.

Unsaddled at noon, and refreshed ourselves with our bottles of milk and a little bread with which Mrs. Melvill had supplied me. Proceeded across a barren plain without water or a single bush or tree. At a great distance beyond were the banks of the Cradock River, towards which we pushed on with all speed, in order to reach water and fuel before night. We got there just at sun-

set, and having turned loose our horses to graze, Frederick and I exerted ourselves vigorously to collect enough of dry wood for our watchfires before the short twilight was over. We then tied up our weary steeds near our central fire, kindling five others around us, to keep off the prowlers of the desert. Having supplied ourselves with water from the river, which rolled its calm broad current in front of us, we made our supper of a little bread soaked in it, reserving as much as would afford us a meal next day, and bring us again to the haunts of white men. At a distance above we heard the roaring of a rapid or cataract, the sound of which floated down the stream,

"Like tumults heard from some far distant town,"

lulling us softly to repose. This was one of the pleasantest nights I ever passed in the wilds. The air was mild and dry, with scarcely a breath stirring, and the stars were shining bright above in the clear deep sky, displaying all the constellations of the southern hemisphere.

About midnight, however, I was suddenly awakened by my clothes on fire. The fire had

spread to the long grass among which we lay, and was burning all round and under me before I was awakened by the crackling of my handsome fur carosse. Except some little damage sustained by it, however, I suffered no injury from this accident,—which is indeed a very common one to travellers, if they are not careful to prevent their fires from spreading, by first burning off the dry grass to a little distance around them, and then extinguishing the flame with a green branch.*

27.—A little after three in the morning we ventured to turn out our poor horses to graze, having a long dreary journey before us to-day ere we could reach the first kraal of the Colonists; and just as the sun began to gild the neighbouring hills, we mounted our steeds and left our bivouac, to which we gave the name of Hippopota-

* Dr. Gill, a brother traveller, lately met with a more disastrous accident on the banks of the Gariep, from a similar cause. The tilt of his waggon caught fire; and as forty or fifty pounds of gunpowder were stored within it, no one durst attempt to extinguish the flames,—until the powder exploded, shattering the vehicle into a thousand pieces, and totally destroying the numerous botanical and anatomical collections which the unfortunate naturalist had spent so many weary months in selecting and arranging.

mus station, from the number of those animals of which we saw the traces on the river banks. We pursued our journey up the Cradock, not without apprehension of falling into some of the numerous pits made by the Bushmen and Korannas for entrapping the unwieldy hippopotamus. At a distance on the opposite bank we observed a few straggling Bushmen, and the curling smoke ascending from some Koranna encampment.

After a hard ride of about five hours, we reached Vanderwalt's-Drift, where I had first crossed the Cradock on my way north. Here we began to consider ourselves on beaten ground; and Frederick pointed out a distant mountain, near which, he said, the boor resided whom Captain Stockenstrom had directed to provide me with horses. From this place we were distant, according to his calculation, about seven hours, or upwards of forty miles. We had therefore no time to lose; so, after letting our horses graze a little, and breakfasting on our last crust of bread, we saddled up about one o'clock, and pushed forward at a round rate.

For some time our course lay W. S. W. over

extensive plains, gradually rising from the river Beyond these, a range of naked mountains presented themselves, which, as we approached, separated into detached hills, admitting us into the midst of them without any perceptible ascent. About sunset, Frederick, who was a little ahead of me, suddenly stopped, and beckoned me to come up. When I had done so, he said with strong marks of alarm, "Prepare your gun; there stand two lions!"—pointing to two animals in front of us, which I instantly perceived to be not lions, but large hyænas, to which the glare of the setting sun gave a gigantic appearance. I therefore fired upon them without hesitation, and they went scampering off with the cowardice natural to their tribe.

Two hours after sunset, when our horses were almost knocked up, and our hopes of reaching the haunts of men that evening nearly gone, we spied a light at a distance, and urged on our drooping steeds, till after another tedious hour we reached, to our great joy, an encampment of several boors, with their waggons, flocks, and herds, and our friend Westhuizen among them.

They had come thus far with their cattle for the sake of pasturage, but intended returning the following day towards the Colony,—so that I was very fortunate in not being a day later.

After the usual compliments, and when I had taken a seat among them at the fire, and got them hushed to silence, I proceeded to explain the commotions which existed in the Bechuana country—the devastations of the Mantatees, or savage cannibals, and what I had myself witnessed at Lattakoo. This news excited their curiosity and amazement to the highest pitch; especially the reports of the invaders being cannibals. Some of them said that they had heard tell in their youth of *Menschen-vreeders* (men-eaters,) but that till now they had believed such stories to be only old women's tales. They now began, however, to entertain some serious apprehensions of the marauding hordes crossing the Great River. I thought it was proper to put them on the alert, though not to alarm them with unnecessary terrors, and I therefore explained, as far as I could, the precise state of affairs among the Griquas and Bechuanas.

I found that Westhuizen had here a flock of 6,300 sheep, which he was obliged to guard from the lions and hyænas, by keeping up every night a circle of fires around the kraals; nor was this precaution always found sufficient. This boor told me that the day after he and his party had left me at the ford of the Cradock River, to return to the Landdrost, at Vanderwalt's, they were benighted and obliged to sleep in the waggon; and that before morning three of the horses were killed by lions. All the boors expressed their surprise at my returning safe, and without loss, through a country abounding so much with beasts of prey.

Having taken a hearty supper with these jolly shepherds, I retired into one of their waggons, and enjoyed a night of profound repose, free from the dread of being attacked by Bushmen or wild beasts, and thankful for my safe return into a more civilized community.

28.—This morning I was awakened by the bleating of sheep and lowing of cattle around me, and rejoiced to hear such homely sounds.

This country is excellent for grazing, and is

resorted to by the colonists on that account. About forty miles westward, is situated a tract of country called Burder's Lake by the Missionaries. It is a valley about fifty miles in length, occupied by a chain of pools, which are in fact part of the channel of the Brak River, a periodical stream, which only flows after copious rains, and even the pools are frequently dried up for a whole season.

My friend Westhuizen, having abundance of horses, kindly proposed to drive me himself a stage in his waggon. To this I willingly agreed, and having left here my lad Frederick, to enable him to join the Landdrost on the surveying party at the Zeekoe River (parting not without regret on both sides, after the toils and dangers we had encountered together), I left Bok's-kraal, as the spot is called, and rattled away with Westhuizen in his eight-horse vehicle, through a wild, hilly country, abounding with game, but generally deficient in water. After a sharp ride we reached Jakhal's-Fonteyn, the first "request place" in a district called the Winterveld, which extends between this and the Nieuwveld mountains.

I had been furnished by Captain Stockenstrom

with a written order directing all the inhabitants, whom I might call upon, to supply me with relays of horses and guides; but I found that the news I brought respecting the Mantatees, was generally sufficient to procure me every requisite aid without producing my order. On Westhuizen mentioning to the matron of Jakhal's-Fonteyn some of my intelligence respecting the invaders, she exclaimed, with every mark of terror, "Now God help us, our children, and our children's children! for I always dreaded some great mischief from the savages to the northward." On being told that the Mantatees were cannibals, she inquired if they "had eyes in their legs!" having been told in her youth, she said, that the cannibals were so provided. On this point, I replied, I could not furnish *ocular* evidence, having had no opportunity of inspecting them so narrowly; but I was certain, at least, that they could see very well, and run very fast.

Having satisfied Westhuizen for the trouble I had given him and the horses with which he had furnished me, I started from this place with two horses and a guide, and soon reached another

boor's of the name of Zwarts. On inquiring for horses, he said, "Ik heb geen paarden, Mynheer" (I have no horses, Sir); but when I told him that it was of little consequence to me to hasten my journey, but, perhaps, of very important consequence to the Colony, and particularly to the frontier boors; and proceeded to relate the news of the Mantatees, he instantly changed his tone—asked me to come into his tent and drink a cup of "tea-water" with his *vrouw* while he sent out for horses; and scarcely had I time to drink of the dismal "tea-water," when I was informed that the horses were already saddled. Up I started, therefore, and galloped on.

A little before dusk I reached the place of the Veld-Cornet Oberholzer, which lies close under a lofty table mountain, much resembling in appearance that at Cape Town. Having explained to this functionary the nature of the commotions now existing in the Bechuana country, and the possibility of their extending to the borders of the Colony, he urged me to write immediately a full account of what I had heard and seen to the Landdrost Stockenstrom, offering at the same

time to forward my letter by express, while I myself proceeded direct to Cape Town by the way of Beaufort. Having acceded to this suggestion, I retired to rest at a late hour.

29.—The Veld-Cornet not only sent off my dispatches to Captain Stockenstrom, but furnished me with an additional order to all the inhabitants of his district, to afford me every aid in their power, and speed me on without delay. Leaving this hospitable and active man, I proceeded through a parched Karroo country, obtaining relays at several places without delay or difficulty; but from the necessity of going from one boor's house to another, for this purpose, my course was considerably lengthened in a zig-zag manner. I passed through prodigious flocks of springboks, spread over the plains as far as the eye could reach: the number it is impossible to estimate with any nicety, but I suppose I saw at least 100,000 in the course of fifty miles. They were migrating from the great desert towards the Colony. In a thorny ravine we also startled a few koodoos; but the latter animal is usually found in greater numbers on the banks of the Gariep and its

branches, than in the plains.* Stopped this night with a family of the name of Botha.

30.—Pursued my journey in a similar manner through a country of the same description, and reached, late at night, the encampment of a boor named Burgers, who, I found, was related to the master of Arend, the runaway slave whom I met in the Bechuana country. With this person I made arrangements for purchasing Arend's freedom from his owner.† The colonists, as I came along, inquired anxiously if I had seen many springboks, and were much concerned to hear that they were advancing upon them; for these beautiful creatures, when they spread over the inhabited country in such migrations, are more dreaded than even the devouring lo-

* An engraving of the koodoo and springbok will be found in a subsequent part of the work.

† This was ultimately effected through the friendly agency of Captain Stockenstrom; though not without considerable delay and difficulty; for the master finding an Englishman interested in obtaining the slave's freedom stood out stoutly, a long while, for 4000 rix-dollars (about double the slave's value, had he been in his hands), but at length he agreed to take 1500 rix-dollars; and poor Arend is now a freeman, having honourably repaid the purchase money by remitting ivory to Cape Town.

custs; they eat up entirely both corn and pasture, and frequently oblige the farmers to fly with their flocks to other districts.*

* The following account of the *Trek-bokken*, or migrating springboks, is from the pen of my friend Captain Stockenstrom, who has often personally witnessed the scenes he so vividly describes:—

"It is scarcely possible for a person passing over some of the extensive tracts of the interior, and admiring that elegant antelope the springbok, thinly scattered over the plains, and bounding in playful innocence, to figure to himself, that these ornaments of the desert can often become as destructive as the locusts themselves. The incredible numbers which sometimes pour in from the north, during protracted droughts, distress the farmer inconceivably. Any attempt at numerical computation would be vain; and by trying to come near the truth, the writer would subject himself in the eyes of those who have no knowledge of the country, to a suspicion that he was availing himself of a traveller's assumed privilege. Yet it is well known in the interior, that on the approach of the *Trek-bokken*, the grazier makes up his mind to look for pasturage for his flocks elsewhere, and considers himself entirely dispossessed of his lands until heavy rains fall. Every attempt to save the cultivated fields, if they be not enclosed by high and thick hedges, proves abortive. Heaps of dry manure (the fuel of the Sneeuwbergen and other parts) are placed close to each other round the fields, and set on fire in the evening, so as to cause a dense smoke, by which it is hoped the antelopes will be deterred from their inroads; but the dawn of day exposes the inefficacy of the precaution, by showing the lands, which appeared proud of their promising verdure the evening before, covered with thousands, and reaped level with the

JULY 1.—This forenoon I ascended the first part of the Nieuwveld ridge of mountains, being

ground. Instances have been known of some of these prodigious droves passing through flocks of sheep, and numbers of the latter, carried along with the torrent, being lost to their owner, and becoming a prey to the wild beasts. As long as these droughts last, their inroads and depredations continue; and the havock committed upon them is of course great, as they constitute the food of all classes; but no sooner do the rains fall, than they disappear, and in a few days become as scarce on the northern borders as in the more protected districts of Bruintjes-Hoogte and Camdeboo.

"The African colonists themselves can form no conception of the cause of the extraordinary appearance of these animals; and, from their not being able to account for it, those who have not been eye-witnesses of these scenes, consider their accounts as exaggerated; but a little more minute inspection of the country south of the Orange River solves the difficulty at once. The immense desert tracts between that river and our Colony, westward of the Zeekoe River, destitute of permanent springs, and therefore uninhabitable by human beings for any length of time, are, notwithstanding, interspersed with stagnant pools, and "*vleys*," or natural reservoirs of brackish water, which, however bad, satisfies the game. In these extensive, boundless plains, the springboks multiply, undisturbed by the hunter, (except when occasionally a Bosjesman is by starvation driven to make the attempt,) until the country literally swarms with them; when, perhaps, one year out of four or five, a lasting drought leaves the pools exhausted, and parches up the soil, naturally inclined to sterility. Want then, principally of water, drives those myriads of animals either to the Orange River or to the Colony, when they intrude in the manner above de-

the first abrupt rise I had met with since leaving the banks of the Gariep. The Nieuwveld chain is continued eastward by the Sneeuwberg, and that by the Boschberg, the Cahaberg, the Winterberg, and the mountains of Cafferland, extending even to the vicinity of Delagoa Bay. In the mountains to-day I passed through another multitudinous division of the migrating springboks.

About four o'clock I reached the house of a man of the name of De Clercq. This old gentleman was sitting smoking his pipe with all the dignity of a Turkish Paçha. Seeing nothing in my jaded appearance that demanded particular ceremony, he kept his seat, scarcely deigning to honour me with a condescending nod, and, on my asking him to supply me with horses and a guide for hire he grumbled out—"You may just as well attempt

scribed. But when the bountiful thunder-clouds pour their torrents upon our burnt-up country, reanimating vegetation, and restoring plenty to all graminivorous animals,—then, when we could, perhaps, afford to harbour those unwelcome visitors, their own instinct and our persecutions propel them again to their more sterile but more peaceful valleys and plains, to recruit the numbers lost during their migration, and to resume their attacks upon us when their wants shall again compel them.

"*Graaff-Reinet, Feb. 10th,* 1824."

to hang me up as to procure horses from me."— "Very well," said I, "my good friend, it is all one to me. I see you have got a good house, and a hospitable-looking *vrouw;* so I 'll e'en take up my lodging with you, with all my heart, till you are in better humour." With that I presented him my order; on seeing which he instantly assumed a more civil tone, saying, "Come, come, we shall see what can be done for you, as you seem a good sort of fellow;" and on explaining the nature of my journey, he soon produced two horses and a guide.

Although I had come about fifty miles to-day, and had still above forty to ride before I could reach Beaufort, I resolved to make a hard push for it. Leaving, therefore, old De Clercq, (whom, notwithstanding his gruff dignity, I found to be a friendly sort of man,) I descended through a defile from the mountains, and found myself at sunset on the verge of the Great Karroo. The word *Karroo,* in the Hottentot language, signifies an arid desert, and is specially applied to this great wilderness, extending between the Zwartbergen, or Black Mountains, on the one side,

and the Nieuwveld and Sneeuwberg ridge on the other. This plain is about three hundred miles in length, and at a rough average, about eighty in breadth. With the exception of a few straggling spots around its skirts, supplied with permanent springs from the adjoining mountains, the Karroo is only fit for human residence during a few weeks in the year,—after the fall of the periodical, or rather the occasional rains, for sometimes more than one season intervenes without them. Its principal inhabitants, are, therefore, the wild game, especially springboks, and the beasts of prey who accompany them; and who, as the water and pasturage fail in one quarter, migrate to another.

Along the margin of this waste we galloped at a good rate, on a level beaten path. About halfway on I found a boor outspanned, and resting in his tent. He was travelling, he told me, to Cape Town, with some curious animals which he had been commissioned to bring down for a gentleman, and for which he was to receive 1000 rix-dollars. His menagerie consisted, I found, of a couple of gnoos, as many blesboks, and one zebra. He pressed me to take a *soopie* with him,

to which I willingly agreed, as the night was very chilly, but asked for water to mix with the brandy. "Ah!" said Mynheer, shrugging up his shoulders, "all you Englishmen murder good brandy by making grog of it: all your punch and your wine are but foul water, in my opinion, compared to the pure, unpolluted, high-flavoured brandy." So saying, he tossed off his *soopie*, and smacked his lips while I sipped my grog. This man expressed the general sentiments of the country boors on this point.

Reached Beaufort about midnight. The inhabitants of this little village were buried in sleep, but I called up Mr. Baird, the Deputy Landdrost, whom I knew, and was welcomed with much cordiality. I had rode to-day about ninety miles, and was glad to retire to a good bed, and a quiet room, once more.

When I set out on this journey, I could not have travelled half the distance daily, without being excessively fatigued. Now practice had trained me to continue this rapid progress, and with frequently only one meal in the twenty-four hours, without feeling at all oppressed or weakened by it.

2.—Mr. Baird having proposed to provide a horse-waggon to carry me across the Great Karroo, by the way of the Gamka River, I willingly accepted of this conveyance, and spent the forenoon in surveying the village, until the horses were brought from a farm in the neighbourhood.

Beaufort was created a sub-drostdy only a few years ago, and the village which has arisen in consequence of the establishment of the provincial magistracy, contains about thirty houses. It is situated near the base of the Nieuwveld mountains, on the verge of the Karroo. It is watered principally by a fountain, which forms one of the sources of the Gamka River; but this is too slender a stream to afford sufficient water for any extent of cultivation; and so precarious are the rains in this quarter, that none had fallen here, as I was told, for three years. From this single fact, some idea may be formed of the disadvantages of this part of the Colony; nor has it been found practicable to place the Drostdy in a more eligible situation, without removing it at least 150 miles, to the very outskirts of the district.

CHAPTER XIV.

Journey through the Great Karroo.—Description of the Cango Caverns.—Arrival at Hex River.—Drostdy of Worcester.—Franschehoek Pass.

JULY 2.—In the afternoon I left Beaufort in a waggon drawn by eight horses. I was accompanied by three boors, one of whom informed me, in the course of conversation, that he had lately been out upon a commando against the Bushmen, in which thirty of those unfortunate creatures were shot; namely, twenty-six men, two women, and two children! This is truly a shocking system; and it appears not a little extraordinary, that the enormities which Mr. Barrow so loudly reprobated thirty years ago, are still continued under the beneficent sway of England.

The Karroo was at this time dismally parched

up;—not a blade of grass, nor any green thing was to be seen, except the mimosas which skirt the banks of the dried-up river. We stopped this evening at a boor's house, about three hours from the Drostdy.

3.—After a long and tiresome day's journey, we outspanned, in the evening, near a pool in the channel of the Gamka, and kindled a large fire to keep off the lions which often infest this path.

4.—Reached Jakhal's-Fonteyn, the residence of Botha, one of my companions, a little after mid-day. This place lies near the foot of the Zwartberg, on the Dwyka, or Rhinoceros River. Owing to the severe drought, 1100 sheep, and a considerable number of cattle belonging to my host, had perished within the last fourteen months. Many of the neighbouring farmers had suffered equally. Botha, though only about forty-four years of age, was, I found, the father of nineteen children, all by one wife, who was a jolly-looking matron of his own age, and likely enough in appearance to have half-a-dozen more.

The Zwartberg, or Black Mountain ridge, divides the Great Karroo by an almost impassable

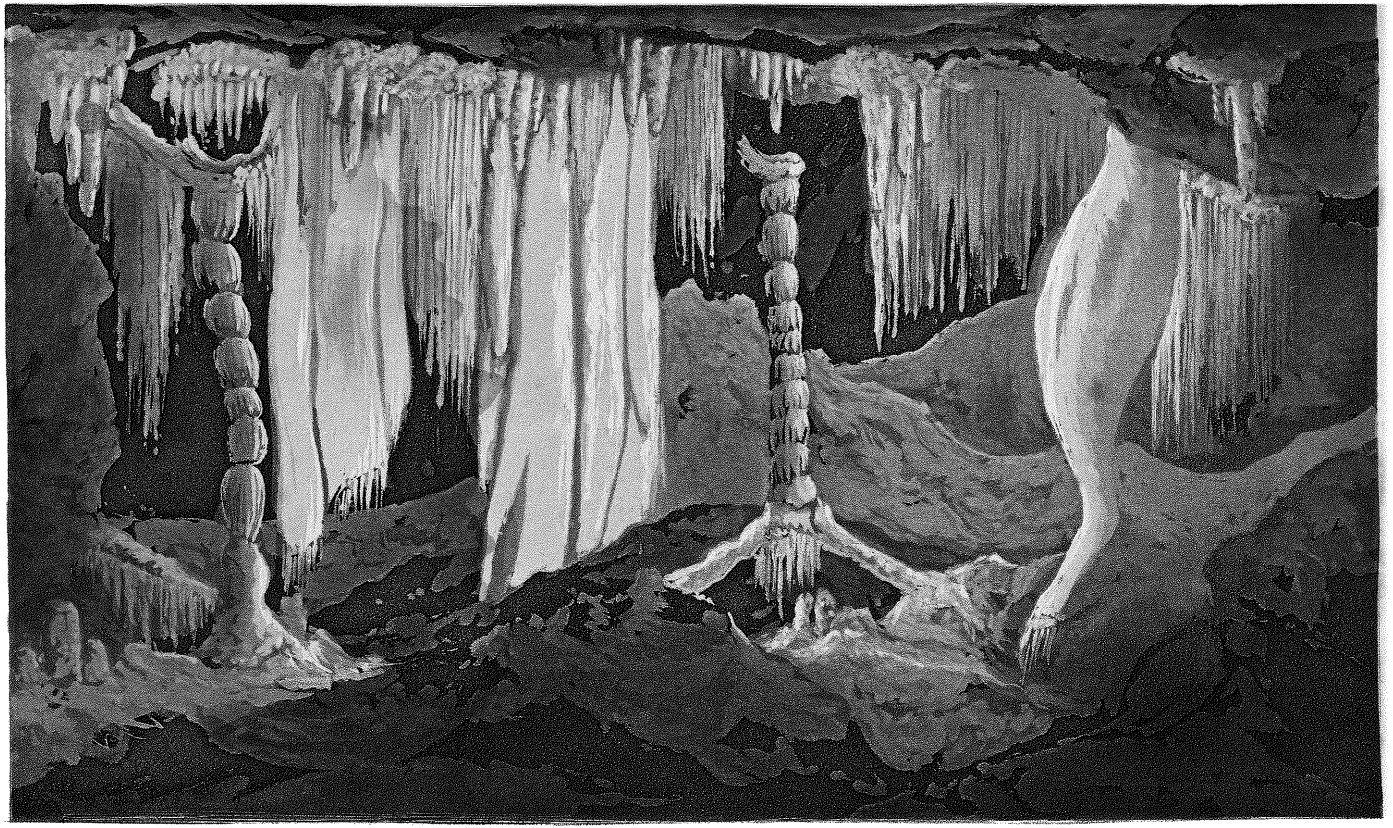
barrier from the Lange-Kloof, the valley of Oliphant's River, and other divisions of the George and Swellendam districts. The Gamka, and other torrents, issuing from the skirts of the Nieuwveld and Sneeuwberg, after sweeping the level Karroo, cross this ridge by narrow chasms, and swell with their transitory deluges the Gauritz and Chamtoos Rivers. Except for these outlets, the Great Karroo basin would apparently form (at least in rainy seasons) the bottom of a prodigious lake or marsh.

Directly across the Zwartberg, and at no great distance from the spot where I now halted, lies the small secluded tract called the Cango, containing the remarkable caverns which I visited in 1822, as has been briefly mentioned in the preface. These caverns were discovered so long ago as 1780, by a boor, who was out hunting among the mountains, and have been frequently visited since; but as they have been described by no preceding writer, some account of them may, perhaps, not be unacceptable, and may be as conveniently inserted here, as in any other part of my narrative.

Having arrived the preceding evening at a farmer's of the name of Botha, in the district of George, who resides a few miles from the caverns, I made arrangements with him to accompany me thither. Accordingly Mynheer Botha, with three of his sons, and two of his neighbours, and with five slaves to assist, proceeded along with me to the grotto early in the morning. It is in the side of a rocky hill which forms part of the Black Mountains. The mouth has the appearance of an irregular dark-looking gateway, of about twenty feet in height, and enters the rock about one hundred feet above the level of a brook which has its source in some desolate ravines to the eastward.

Advancing from the entrance about two hundred feet, in a crooked but horizontal direction, we came to an abrupt precipice of about thirty-three feet, which we descended by the aid of a ladder brought for the purpose. On reaching the bottom, several lighted torches borne by the slaves displayed a most magnificent scene. We found ourselves in an apartment about six hundred feet in length, by one hundred broad, and varying in

IV. 1.



G. Thompson Esq.r del.t

VIEW IN THE CANGO CAVERN BY TORCH LIGHT.

London. Publ.d by H. Colburn, Jan.y 1827.

height from sixty to seventy feet. This hall was adorned with the most splendid stalactites; some in the shape of columns, rising to the height of forty feet, and one majestic one not less than sixty; others assuming the fantastic forms of cauliflowers, festoons, and a variety of grotesque figures. Many of these stalactites were quite transparent, and reflected the glare of the torches with a very brilliant and enchanting effect. This apartment was called Van-Zyl's-Hall, after the name of its first discoverer.

From Van-Zyl's-Hall, a long range of apartments open up, one beyond another, which the boors and other visitors have distinguished by such names as suited their fancy. The first of these is called the Registry, from the circumstance of the wall being inscribed with the names of many visitors. It is about forty feet in diameter, and in height apparently about thirty feet. This served as the vestibule for a noble apartment, about one hundred and forty feet in length and breadth, and fifty feet in height, ornamented also, though not so splendidly as the first, by many gorgeous stalactites. A sort of gallery leads out

of this, about fifteen feet in breadth, and twenty in height at the entrance, but narrowing as it penetrates inward, till, at the distance of about sixty feet, it is terminated by another abrupt descent.

No one had hitherto explored the cavern beyond this spot, and as the ladder at the entrance could not conveniently be brought forward, I contrived to scramble down the precipice, which was only about fourteen feet in depth. Three of the slaves followed me, but so confusedly that all their torches were extinguished in coming down. Mine, fortunately, was not, and re-lighting theirs, I proceeded to explore the recesses of this farthest grotto. Finding the atmosphere here very oppressive, and being somewhat apprehensive of foul air, I directed the slaves to keep at a good distance behind me, in order that their lights might remain in reserve in the event of mine being extinguished. Proceeding in this manner, I fully examined this chamber, and found it to be about five hundred feet in length, by fifty broad, and varying in height from twenty to forty feet. At the extremity I was stopped by a wall or rock,

in the middle of which, about fifteen feet high, there appeared another opening. Fancying that this might be a continuation of the cavern, I contrived to clamber up, in the manner of a chimney-sweep, between two columns of spar, and examined this excavation also; but I found it to be merely a narrow chasm, remarkable neither in its extent nor decorations. Beyond this I discovered no opening, and considered it therefore as the *ne plus ultra* of the caverns. At this spot I calculated that I was about 1500 feet from the entrance.

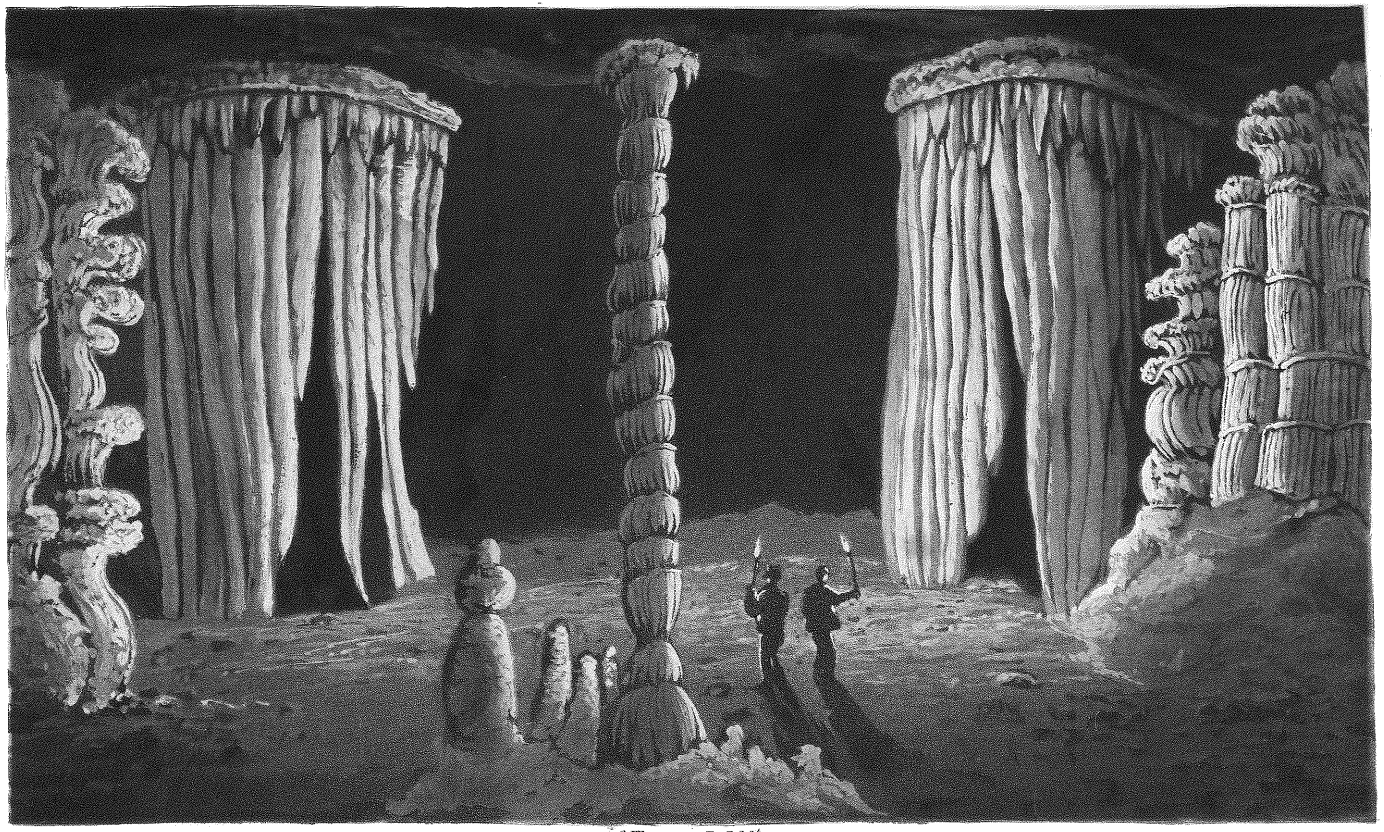
Retracing my steps, and again ascending the precipice (not without some difficulty), I returned to my companions, who were waiting with some anxiety for our safety at the last descent. I was congratulated on my success; and Mynheer Botha, the guardian of this Pandemonian palace, did me the honour to confer my name on the chamber I had now explored.

I then examined the whole of this immense cavern in detail, and was shown a variety of smaller chambers, or recesses, opening out of the great gallery, or range of state apartments. One

of the smaller grottoes is called the *Yskegel Kamer*, from its being hung round with stalactites resembling icicles. Another very beautiful one is called the Bath, on account of its containing several curious natural cisterns, formed by petrifactions, and resembling marble basins hollowed by art in the living rock. These basins were full of fresh water, delightfully cool and limpid.

The schistòze, or whinstone rock, which forms the walls and roof of this cavern, is hard and compact, but penetrated in many places by fissures, through which the water oozing after heavy rains, and strongly impregnated with calcareous matter, from the superincumbent strata through which it is filtered, forms, as it trickles drop by drop, the infinitude of grotesque and singular figures with which these grottoes abound; assuming, some the shapes of regular columns, others of cauliflowers, cascades, pulpits, animals, drapery, &c. &c. The drawings which I have given will convey a clearer idea of some of these to the reader than any attempt at more minute description.

In some parts of the caves the roof and walls



G. Thompson Esq.r del.t

VIEW IN THE CANGO CAVERN BY TORCH LIGHT.

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were covered with myriads of bats, many of which, awakened by the unwonted light and clamour, began to fly about, and it was with difficulty we could prevent them from extinguishing our lights The floor was in many places covered several feet deep with their excrement, dry as chaff; but it is remarkable that the Bath-room, probably from being moister than other parts of the cavern, was entirely free from this nuisance, and the water as pure and limpid as crystal.

Having once more surveyed Van-Zyl's-Hall, I ascended the ladder, requesting the rest of the party to fall back a little into the cavern, while I took a hasty sketch of them from the top of the precipice. The effect was strikingly picturesque. The glare of the torches held by the black slaves, showing dimly the bandit-looking forms of the boors, grim and fierce as Dirk Hatteraick himself,—and the strange, grotesque, unearthly shapes of the stalactites, half hidden, half revealed, formed altogether one of the most extraordinary scenes I ever witnessed, and vividly recalled to my imagination some of the descriptions of caverns in

the works of the ancient poets, probably suggested by actual scenery of the same character as that which I now contemplated.

On returning to upper day, I found that I had been nearly seven hours in surveying the caverns, and in sketching (with the aid of an old German draughtsman, who resided in the vicinity,) the drawings that accompany this volume, and several others which have not been engraved.

I now revert to my homeward route, along the southern skirts of the Great Karroo.

After some refreshment, and a short nap at Jakhal's-Fonteyn, I proceeded, as formerly, with horses and a guide; crossed the Dwyka and Bloed Rivers, and reached about midnight Hartebeest-Fonteyn. Though obliged to knock up the family at this untimely hour, I met with a most civil and hospitable reception, and supper and a shake-down were immediately provided for me.

5.—Proceeded with the same horses, not being able to procure a relay at this place. The country still miserably parched and barren. I had scarcely seen a single wild animal since leaving the Nieuwveld mountains. The skeletons of cat-

tle which had perished in crossing the barren desert, were numerous along our route.

After a delay of some hours, procured a farther relay of horses at the Veld-Cornet Olivier's, near the Buffalo River; which, like all the other rivers I had lately crossed, was only a dry channel, with here and there some scanty pools of brackish water. Slept this night at a place called Riet-Fonteyn.

6.—The country now began to look less desolate, some rain having fallen here recently; and as we approached the Bokkeveld mountains, birds and animals were again met with.

After crossing the lofty ridge which environs the Hex River, I reached that romantic valley about sunset, and viewed, with a degree of pleasure not easily described, the country rich with vegetation, studded with farms, and sparkling with rivulets, after travelling all the way from the Gariep, a distance of nearly 700 miles, without seeing a running stream or a green pasture.

Changing horses at the Veld-Cornet de Vos's, who has a handsome substantial house, with flourishing gardens and orchards, I pushed on to

Ralph Vandermerwe's, where I stopped for the night, after a hard day's ride of nearly 100 miles, having been exactly twenty hours on horseback.

7.—Emerging from this romantic valley, I reached the Drostdy of Worcester at an early hour, and breakfasted with Captain Trappes, the Landdrost. This village is of very recent establishment, and contains as yet only about ten houses. It has been made the seat of magistracy in place of Tulbagh, and the name of Worcester given to the district instead of the former Dutch appellation. Being the capital of a rich and populous district, it will doubtless rapidly increase in size, although the village of Tulbagh remains as its rival in some respects; and its local situation is not a little awkward in the rainy season, when the overflowing of the Breede and Hex Rivers renders it sometimes inaccessible from all sides but the Bokkeveld, for weeks together. A very spacious and magnificent Drostdy-house is now erecting here.

Leaving Worcester at eleven o'clock, I crossed the Breede River, passed the Brand-Vallei hot-springs, (described by Barrow, Lichtenstein, and

Burchell,) and changing horses at De Toit's, reached the commencement of the Franschehoek Pass at sunset. Two hundred English soldiers, under an engineer officer, had been employed for about two years in making a waggon-road through this steep and rugged defile; but more than half the work was still to be accomplished.* I got through, however, after a long and perilous scramble among bogs and precipices, and reached the house of my worthy friend the Veld-Cornet Hugo, in Franschehoek, about nine o'clock.

8.—Passing rapidly through the pleasant and well-known valleys of Franschehoek, Drakenstein, and the pass of Banghoek, I reached Stellenbosch to breakfast; and being supplied by the Landdrost, Mr. Ryneveld, with fresh horses, and a *dienaar* (police man) to accompany me, I arrived, in a few hours, at Rondebosch, the country residence of Colonel Bird, the colonial secretary, to whom I gave a hasty sketch of the state of affairs on the northern frontier, and what I had seen and heard of the Mantatee invaders. As this was

* This path has been since completed, and forms one of the most magnificent public works in the Colony. It is said to have cost about 7,000*l.* exclusive of the labour of the soldiery.

the first intimation that had reached Cape Town of the approach of these marauders, the news I brought excited some surprise; but the whole information resting solely upon my own authority, there were individuals who, at that time, were disposed to doubt the truth of the statement. However, Government appeared to appreciate duly the speedy assiduity with which I had travelled down with the intelligence, by forwarding ammunition to the frontier for the protection of the Colony.

In the evening I arrived in Cape Town, not a little pleased to reach my own quiet home after such a long and arduous excursion. On reviewing my route, I found I had been absent just eighty days, fifty of which had been occupied in actual travelling, and the remaining thirty spent at different places on my route. In this time I had traversed a space of about 3100 English miles; having travelled 2500 miles on horseback, and 600 in waggons. During the last fourteen days, (not including the one I spent at Beaufort,) I had travelled above 1100 miles, averaging nearly 80 miles per day.

CHAPTER XV.

Proceedings of the Griqua Commando.—Defeat of the Mantatees.—Barbarous Conduct of the Bechuanas.—Prisoners.—Language, Dress, and Weapons of the Invaders.

HAVING brought the journal of my excursion to the Bechuana country to a close, I now revert to the transactions that occurred there immediately after my departure; the particulars of which are both interesting in themselves, and requisite to be detailed here, in order to elucidate my subsequent remarks, and afford a more complete view of the character and condition of the native inhabitants of that quarter of Southern Africa. I am fortunately enabled to render these details perfectly authentic, from the written narratives of Messrs. Melvill and Moffat, which are now before

On Mr. Melvill's arrival at Kuruman, a meeting was held with the Missionaries and chiefs of the Griquas, and it was settled that Waterboer should act as chief captain on the expedition against the Mantatees, while Messrs. Melvill and Moffat accompanied them with the view of opening, if possible, a friendly intercourse with the savages, and of using their influence to prevent the unnecessary effusion of human blood. Mateebè and his chiefs were invited to join the commando with their warriors; but with an intimation, that in the event of a battle being inevitable, the Bechuanas must strictly refrain from the slaughter of women and children (as is their usual barbarous practice), and that all of the enemy who laid down their arms should receive quarter as prisoners of war. To these conditions Mateebè assented with apparent cordiality, and promised to issue orders that they should be carefully observed by his followers. How far this pledge was faithfully adhered to will be afterwards seen.

Before the expedition left Kuruman, each of the Griquas was furnished with fifteen rounds of powder and ball, which (with the exception of a

small quantity of gunpowder reserved) was all the ammunition that could be mustered.

It was Tuesday, the 24th of June, when they set off. At the Maquareen River Mateebè joined the commando with 500 warriors, and as many more were ordered to join from the towns to the westward under his control. As no dependance could be placed on the reports of the Bechuanas, a party of ten Griquas, commanded by Waterboer, and accompanied by Mr. Moffat, were sent forward to reconnoitre the enemy. Mr. Moffat gives the following account of the proceedings of this little party.

" We rode forward four hours, and then halted among some trees till morning. At daybreak we again proceeded with all speed. About ten o'clock we came in sight of the enemy, who were lying on a declivity, a short distance south from the town of Lattakoo. A second and more numerous division occupied the town itself. Waterboer and I rode up to a young woman whom we saw in one of the ravines. I put a few questions to her in the Bechuana language, to which she replied, that the invaders had come from a distant coun-

try; but we could gain from her no farther information of any interest. We then advanced within two musket-shots of the spot where they were lying. We found here, reclined under the shade of a small rock, an old man and his son; the latter without the least signs of animation, and the father scarcely able to tell us that they were dying of hunger. He begged for meat, and a piece was given, but we could elicit no intelligence from him.

"We stood here for nearly half an hour with the horses' bridles in our hands, to convince the enemy that we were neither afraid of them, nor disposed to do them injury. At the same time we dispatched one of our number to inform the commando, who were about twenty miles behind, of the posture of affairs. While we were yet standing, we observed that all the cattle were hastily collected and inclosed in the midst of the multitude. A few armed men then rushed out of the main body towards us; but, seeing us quietly awaiting their advance, as speedily retreated. We then re-mounted our horses, and slowly approached the congregated mass within

about one hundred yards. It had been agreed that I and another of our number should advance towards the enemy unarmed, and invite two or three of them to come forward and speak with us, while the rest of our party stood upon their guard. This plan, however, was entirely defeated. We had just halted within the above-mentioned distance, when the savages broke out with a most hideous and appalling yell; and I had scarcely time to say, 'Be upon your guard—they are preparing to attack,' when several hundreds of armed men rushed forward upon us in a most furious manner, throwing their weapons with such force and velocity, that we had scarcely time to turn our horses and gallop clear of them. One of our men narrowly escaped being knocked from his horse by one of their war clubs. Having retreated a few hundred paces, we stopped to deliberate, and seeing no possible means of bringing them to a parley, retired to a height at some distance, but within view of the enemy. Here we unsaddled our horses, and having shot two wild turkeys, buried them in the hot ashes to roast for our dinner, hoping that our peaceful demeanour

might excite familiarity in our opponents, and lead them to come to an interview: but not one of them approached us during the whole day.

"At sunset I left the advanced guard under the command of Waterboer, and rode back to confer with Mr. Melvill, as to our farther proceedings; and to devise, if possible, some scheme to bring the enemy to terms of peace, and prevent the dreadful consequences of a battle."

At break of day the commando proceeded forward, and a little after sunrise joined the party in advance, who had remained during the night behind a hill, about a mile from the savages. The attempt made the preceding day to come to an amicable understanding with them having altogether failed, but little expectation was indulged of succeeding in this benevolent purpose: it was, therefore, now judged expedient to make a decided impression upon them, and by showing them the terrible effects of fire-arms, to check their advance by fear, since it could not be done by friendship.

"It was about eight o'clock," says Mr. Melvill,

" when the Griquas galloped up towards them. They were encamped in an open plain, and continued sitting, without appearing the least alarmed at our approach. A few only were seen packing their oxen, and a large herd of cattle was inclosed in their centre, surrounded by men, women, and children. The whole of this division was estimated to be about 15,000 souls. We drew up in front of them, at the distance of about 150 yards: when suddenly, before half the Griquas had come up, they raised their frightful, savage yell, or war-whoop, and threw out their two wings, as if they intended to surround us, hundreds of their warriors rushing forward, and furiously discharging their clubs and javelins. So very sudden and impetuous was this assault, that we had scarcely time to turn our horses' heads, and gallop out of the reach of their missiles. Their appearance was truly formidable. The warriors were very tall, athletic men, quite black, with no other clothing than a sort of apron round their loins. They wore plumes of ostrich feathers on their heads, and their weapons consisted of spears, or

javelins, battle-axes, and clubs. They had large oval shields, which, when rushing forward, they held close to the ground on the left side.

" Finding that we had to do with a fierce and audacious enemy, the Griquas reserved their fire, in order to shoot deliberately, and not unnecessarily expend the small quantity of ammunition we possessed. As soon as we were out of reach of the enemy, therefore, the Griquas faced about, and Waterboer and some others dismounting, fired upon the foremost of the warriors, and levelled them with the ground. Somewhat daunted by this, their wings retreated upon the main body, crouching behind their shields whenever a shot was fired.

" In the meanwhile the Bechuana warriors came running down from the heights to join the combat; but little advantage was gained from their aid, for only a small number had courage to venture near enough to reach the enemy with their arrows, and all of them fled with the utmost precipitation, whenever a score or two of the more warlike Mantatees rushed forth against them.

" The Griquas were again approaching nearer,

when the enemy a second time suddenly poured forth their armed bands upon us, more numerous and fierce than at first. Our men had dismounted to take a better aim, for the shots fired from horseback produced little effect, and we had no ammunition to spare: but this mode of fighting was not without great danger; for the onset of the enemy was so fierce and sudden, and they ran with so much swiftness, endeavouring each time to surround our small party, that very brief space was allowed to jump into the saddles, and gallop out of their reach."

In this manner, alternately advancing and retreating, and pausing occasionally to give them an opportunity of coming to terms, if so disposed, the conflict continued for about two hours and a half. For some time the enemy evinced a very bold and resolute spirit, continually rushing out upon the horsemen, and treading over the bodies of their fallen countrymen with a furious and desperate courage. But when they found that all their efforts to surround or overtake the Griquas were in vain, and that their bravest warriors were falling thick on the field, mown down

by invisible weapons, against which their shields formed no defence, their audacity began to abate, though still they showed no intention of retreating. The Griquas had endeavoured to draw their warriors as far as possible into the plain, and then, by galloping between them and the main body, to cut them off, and so decide the conflict; but they speedily became aware of this design, and kept more closely in upon the circle of women and children which surrounded their cattle, appearing obstinately determined to stand by them.

The Griquas now approached more closely, and a number dismounting occupied a rising ground, from whence they could distinguish and select the warriors now driven in upon the multitude. Every shot was deadly, and the greatest confusion and dismay began to be manifest among the Mantatees. At length all the cattle burst out from the crowd which encircled them, and were taken possession of by the Griquas. The whole multitude then began to move slowly off in a compact body, quickening their pace as they retreated. After they had fled about half a mile in

the direction of Lattakoo, where the other division of their army lay encamped, the Griquas turned their left flank, with the view of driving them to the eastward, and preventing a junction of their forces. Thus driven in an opposite direction, they ascended a rising ground, when suddenly wheeling about, they rushed down upon their pursuers with as great fury as at the beginning. The Griquas being close upon them, it was with the utmost difficulty that many of them escaped falling into their hands. They then prosecuted their course as at first; and in spite of the destructive fire of their pursuers, who still endeavoured to turn them, effected a junction with their countrymen. Just as they entered the town, being reinforced by several thousand fresh warriors, they once more sallied out to battle; and it was not till they found their utmost efforts to close with their assailants fruitless, and till their two principal chiefs and bravest leaders had fallen, that they were with great slaughter driven back.

The whole united horde now began to move slowly out of the town, setting it on fire as they

departed. The flames and smoke bursting from the thatched houses, and the clouds of dust raised by the movement of such a multitude, and rolling over their swarthy host, which was closely followed by the Griqua horsemen, gave a wild and striking effect to the scene, not easily to be described. As soon as the Mantatees got out from among the houses, they again made an attempt to surround their pursuers, while encumbered by the huts, and half blinded by the smoke and dust. A band of their warriors had crept round among the bushes unperceived, and were coming in behind, when they were discovered, and a party of the Griquas were sent to encounter them, who drove them back to the main body. They continued to retreat slowly to the north-east with more order than could have been expected. The armed men remained in the rear and on each wing, and occasionally turned upon the Griquas, who followed them for about eight miles beyond Lattakoo. The pursuit was then given up at about half-past three o'clock, and as soon as the Griquas had left them they all sat down on the plain.

"When the two divisions of the Mantatees

were united," says Mr. Melvill, "they appeared extremely numerous. They extended in a dense crowded mass, about 500 yards broad, by 100 yards deep. If the number be computed by the space they occupied, allowing only a square yard for each individual, they will amount to 50,000 persons."

In the meanwhile the Bechuanas, who were hanging upon the neighbouring heights watching the issue of the conflict, (for only a very few had ventured to come within bow-shot of the enemy,) as soon as they perceived that the Mantatees had fairly taken to flight, came down upon the field of battle, like ferocious wolves, to plunder the dead and dying, and to glut their vengeance, by murdering the wounded and the helpless women and children.

When the enemy retreated, many of the females were left behind, who, perceiving that mercy was shown to them by the Griquas, generally sat down, and baring their bosoms, called out in their own language (which is a dialect of the Bechuana), "I am a woman! I am a woman!" to all who approached. But this touch-