

thousands of springboks, with small herds of wildebeest scattered amongst them; and I fired two or three very long shots without success. Strydom, however, was more fortunate; he fired into a herd of about a hundred bucks at three hundred yards, and hit one fine old buck right in the middle of the forehead, the ball passing clean through his skull. We hid him in a hole in the ground, and covered him with bushes, and then rode on to our Hottentots, whom we found waiting beside a small fountain in a pass formed by a wide gap in a low range of hills, situated between two extensive plains, thickly covered with game. I took up my position in some rushes in the middle of the pass, and remained there for upwards of eight hours, during which our boys were supposed to be endeavouring to drive the game towards us.

The Boer took up the best pass about a quarter of a mile to my right. Before we had been an hour at our passes, the boys drove up four beautiful ostriches, which came and stood within fifty yards of Strydom, but, alas! he was asleep. About this time I was busy trying to remember and practise a childish amusement which once delighted me as much as rifle-shooting—namely, making a cap of rushes—when, on suddenly lifting up my eyes, I saw standing within eighty yards of me about a dozen springboks, which were coming up to the pass behind me. I snatched up my rifle, and, lying flat on my breast, sent a bullet through the best buck in the troop, smashing his shoulder; he ran about fifty yards, and fell dead. I unfortunately left him lying exposed in the pass the consequence of which was that three other troops or springboks, which were coming up as he had come, were turned to the right-about by his carcass.

It was amusing to see the birds and beasts of prey assembling to dispute the carcass with me. First came the common black and white carrion-crow, then the vultures; the jackals knew the cry of the vultures, and they too came sneaking from their hiding-places in the rocks and holes of the ant-bear in the plains, to share in the feast, whilst I was obliged to remain a quiet spectator, not daring to move, as the game was now in herds on every side of me, and I expected to see

ostriches every moment. Presently a herd of wildebeest came thundering down upon me, and passed within shot; I put a bullet into one of these, too far behind the shoulder, which, as is always the case with deer and antelopes, did not seem to affect him in the slightest degree. In the afternoon we altered our positions, and sent the boys to drive the plain near which I had been sitting all day. The number of bucks now before our eyes beat all computation; the plain extended, without a break, until the eye could not discern any object smaller than a castle, and throughout the whole of this extent were herds of thousands and tens of thousands of springboks, interspersed with troops of wildebeest. The boys sent us one herd of about three hundred springboks, into which Strydom let fly at about three hundred yards, and turned them and all the rest.

It was now late in the day, so we made for home, taking up the buck which he had shot in the morning. As we cantered along the flats, Hendrick, tempted by a herd of springboks, which were drawn up together in a compact body, jumped off his horse, and, giving his ivory sight an elevation of several feet, let drive at them, the distance being about five hundred yards. As the troop bounded away, we could distinguish a light-coloured object lying in the short heath, which he pronounced to be a springbok, and on going up we found one fine old doe lying dead, shot through the spine. On this, and every day since I arrived at these flats, I was astonished at the number of skeletons and well-bleached skulls with which the plains were covered. Thousands of skulls of springbok and wildebeest were strewed around wherever the hunter turned his eye. The sun was extremely powerful all day, but, being intent on the sport, I did not feel it until I found my legs burnt; my dress as usual was the kilt, with a grey stalking cap. On reaching home the following day, a large party of natives, belonging to the chief Moshesh, arrived at the farm; these poor men were travelling in quest of employment. Numbers of natives annually visit the colony, and work for the Boers, making stone enclosures for their cattle, and large dams or embankments across little streams in the mouths of valleys, for the purpose of collecting

water in the rainy season, to supply their flocks and herds during the protracted droughts of summer—they are paid for their labour with young cows or she-goats. The recent rains having washed away the embankment of a dam situated in a distant range of hills, on the borders of the farm, Strydom engaged these men to repair it. The vicinity of the dam being a favourite haunt for quaggas, and it being necessary that Strydom should go there on the morrow, we resolved to hunt in the neighbouring district, in which were situated some high and rugged hills; accordingly, next day we sallied forth, and I ascended to one of the highest pinnacles, where I managed to shoot a rhode-raebok. Joining Strydom shortly afterwards, we hunted over another range of the same hills, where we fell in with three quaggas and other game. Night was now fast setting in, so we descended, and made for home; cantering along, we observed what we took to be a herd of quaggas and a bull wildebeest standing in front of us, upon which we jumped off our horses, and, bending our bodies, approached them to fire.

It being now quite dark, it was hard to tell what sort of game we were going to fire at; Strydom, however, whispered to me they were quaggas, and they certainly appeared to be such. His gun snapped three times at the wildebeest, upon which they all set off at a gallop; he was riding my stallion, and let go his bridle when he ran in to fire, taking advantage of which the horse set off after them. I then mounted "The Cow," and after riding hard for about a mile came up to them. They were now standing still, and the stallion in the middle of them. I made him out by his saddle, and, jumping off my horse in a state of intense excitement, ran forward, fired both barrels of my two-grooved rifle into the quaggas, and heard the bullets tell loudly. They then started off, but the stallion was soon once more fighting in the middle of them; I was astonished and delighted to remark how my horse was able to take up their attention, so that they appeared heedless of the reports of my rifle.

In haste I commenced loading, but to my dismay found that I had left my loading-rod with Hendrick. Mounting "The Cow," I rode nearer to the quaggas, and was delighted

to find that they allowed my horse to come within easy shot. It was now very dark, but I set off in the hope to fall in with Hendrick on the wide plain, and galloped along shouting with all my might, but in vain. I then rode across the plain for the hill, to try to find some bush large enough to make a ramrod; in this, by the greatest chance, I succeeded, and, being provided with a knife, I cut a good ramrod, loaded my rifle, and rode off to seek the quaggas once more. I soon fell in with them, and, coming within shot, fired at them right and left, and heard both bullets tell, upon which they galloped across the plain with the stallion still after them. One of them, however, was very hard hit, and soon dropped astern—the stallion remained to keep him company.

About this time the moon shone forth faintly. I galloped on after the troop, and, soon coming up with them, rode on one side, when, dismounting and dropping on my knee, I sent a bullet through the shoulder of the last quagga; he staggered forward, fell to the ground with a heavy crash, and expired. The rest of the troop charged wildly around him, snorting and prancing like the wild horses in Mazeppa, and then set off at full speed across the plain; I did not wait to bleed the quagga, but, mounting my horse, galloped on after the troop, nevertheless I could not overtake them. Returning, I endeavoured to find the quagga that I had last shot, but owing to the darkness, and my having no mark to guide me on the plain, I failed to find him. I then set off to try for the quagga which had dropped astern with the stallion; having searched some time in vain, I dismounted, and, laying my head on the ground, made out two dark objects which turned out to be what I sought. On my approaching, the quagga tried to make off, when I sent a ball through his shoulder, which laid him low. Going up to him in the full expectation of inspecting for the first time one of these animals, what was my disappointment and vexation to find a fine brown gelding, with two white stars on his forehead! The truth now flashed upon me; Strydom and I had both been mistaken; instead of quaggas, the waggon-team of a neighbouring Dutchman had afforded me my evening's shooting!

I caught my stallion and rode home, intending to pay for

the horses which I had killed and wounded; but on telling my story to Hendrick, with which he seemed extremely amused, he told me not to say a word about it, as the owners of the horses were very avaricious, and would make me pay treble their value, and that if I kept quiet it would be supposed they had been killed either by lions or wild Bushmen. We continued hunting springboks till the 17th, during which time we enjoyed a constant run of good luck, and so fascinating was the sport that I felt as though I never could tire of it; it was, indeed, a country where a person who loved rifle-shooting ought to have been content. Every morning, on opening my eyes, the first thing which I saw, without raising my head from the pillow, were herds of hundreds of springboks grazing before me on the plains. On the 17th an old friend of Strydom's, a Boer from Magalisberg, outspanned on the farm. He had been to Grahamstown with a load of ivory, and was returning home with supplies of tea, coffee, clothing, &c., sufficient for two years' consumption. The new comer was accompanied by his wife, two tall gawky-looking daughters, and half a dozen noisy geese which were secured in a cage on the trap of the waggon. This Boer informed me that I could get all the rarer animals, which I wished to shoot, in his vicinity, namely, sable antelope, roan antelope, eland, waterbuck, koodoo, pallah, elephant, black and white rhinoceros, hippopotamus, giraffe, buffalo, lion, &c, and told me he had shot elephants there with tusks weighing 100 lbs. each, and upwards of seven feet in length. He advised me not to visit that country before the end of April, as my horses would assuredly die of a never-failing distemper which prevails in the interior, within a certain latitude, during the summer months.

Being now anxious to devote my attention more particularly to black wildebeests, of which I had not yet secured a specimen, I resolved to proceed to the plains beyond the Thebus Mountain, where the Boer informed me they abounded. Accordingly, having presented my friend Hendrick with a coffee-mill and some crockery to which his frau had taken a fancy, and also with a supply of coarse gunpowder, which is to a Boer a most acceptable gift, I inspanned and took leave

of him about 9 P.M. We held for the Thebus Mountain, steering across the open plains and following no track, with springboks and wildebeests whistling and bellowing on every side of us. About midnight we halted by a fountain near the pass where a few days before I had lain in ambush for eight hours, and, as it was probable that the oxen would wander during the night, we secured them on the yokes. Two of my team and both my horses were reported missing when we left the farm, and I had left Cobtus to seek for them.

In the afternoon of the next day my two servants joined me, bringing with them the lost oxen, but having failed to find the steeds. At night I took up a position in an old shooting-hole beside the vley, to watch for wildebeests; several jackals, wildebeests, quaggas, and hyænas came to drink during the night, but, not being able to see the sight of my rifle, I did not fire. Here I remained until the bright star of morning had risen far above the horizon, and day was just beginning to dawn when, gently raising my head and looking round, I saw, on one side of me, four wildebeests, and on the other ten. They were coming to drink, and slowly and suspiciously approached the water, but, having convinced themselves that all was right, they trotted boldly up and commenced drinking; selecting the finest bull, I fired, and sent a bullet through his shoulder, when, splashing through the water, he bounded madly forward, and, having run about a hundred yards, rolled over in the dewy grass. I did not show myself, other game being in sight, but lay still in my hole. In about an hour an old springbok fed up to within three hundred yards of me, and continued browsing there for a considerable time; as no more wildebeests seemed to be approaching, and I was very hungry, I put up my sight, took a cool, calculating aim at him, and sent the ball through the middle of his shoulder. I then left my hole, and, having inspected the wildebeest bull, which was a noble specimen, walked up to my waggon and sent the boys to cut up the venison and preserve the head carefully.

On the following morning I woke as day dawned, and held for my hole beside the vley, but had not gone two hundred yards round the hillock when I saw an old springbok feeding,

which I stalked, and broke his foreleg. He went off towards the waggor, when the boys slipped Gauger (one of my greyhounds), who at once ran into him and pulled him down. Having lain about an hour at the vley, two old wildebeests approached up wind, and, suspecting the ground, described a wide semicircle, as the red-deer do in the Highlands. I wounded one of them, but he did not drop; I managed, however, to send a ball through the shoulder of the other, when he ran several hundred yards, whisking his long white tail as if all right, and suddenly rolled over in full career. His skin had a delicious smell of the grass and wild herbs on which these animals lie and feed. On proceeding to my waggon, I found all my men asleep. Having gralloched the wildebeest, we bore him bodily to the waggon on the "lechteruit," which is a bar of hard wood used in greasing the waggon-wheels, when I immediately set about curing the head, it being a very fine one.

Cobus returned the following morning, having found my two horses. While taking my breakfast I observed a gentleman approaching on horseback; this was Mr. Paterson, an officer of the 91st, a detachment of which was then quartered at Colesberg. Lieutenant Borrow, a brother-officer of mine, had intrusted me with the care of a rifle for Mr. Paterson, and, as I had been a long time on the road, he had now come to look after it. He was a keen sportsman, and I had much pleasure in meeting so agreeable a person in the wilderness; having joined me in my rough breakfast with a true hunter's appetite, we rode forth together to look for a wildebeest I had wounded in the morning, expecting to find him dead. On reaching the ground we found five small herds of wildebeests charging about the plain, and for a long time could not discover the wounded one; at length I perceived an old bull with his head drooping, which I at once pronounced to be my friend, and, dismounting, we watched him for a short time—the others inclined to make off, but seemed unwilling to leave him. Being now convinced that this was the wildebeest we sought, we determined to give him chase, and try to ride into him; but, just as we had come to this resolution, he fell violently to the ground, raising a cloud of dust, and riding up to him we found him dead.

Paterson and I then made for the vley, and we had not proceeded two hundred yards when, on looking back, I saw about thirty large vultures standing on the wildebeest, which in a very short space of time they no doubt devoured. Paterson left me on the morrow, and rode back to Colesberg, having first extracted a promise that I would follow him within three days; I accordingly hunted until that time had expired, when I reluctantly inspanned and marched upon Colesberg. Three long marches brought us to the farm of a Boer named Penar, who had been recommended to me as having a good stamp of horse, and being reasonable in his prices. I was however disappointed with his stud, and, finding him exorbitant in his demands, no business was transacted. The country continued much the same; wide Karroo plains bounded by abrupt rocky mountains; one more long march brought us within five miles of our destination, where I halted for the night.

Having taken an early breakfast on the 27th, we trekked into Colesberg, where, having chosen a position for my camp, I outspanned, and took up my quarters with Paterson. Colesberg is so called from a conspicuous, lofty table-mountain in its immediate vicinity, which takes its name from a former governor of the colony; the town is situated in a confined hollow, surrounded on all sides by low rocky hills. The formation of these rocks is igneous, and the way in which they are distributed very remarkable. Large and shapeless masses are heaped together and piled one above another, as if by the hand of some mighty giant of the olden time. Colesberg is well supplied with water from a strong fountain which bursts from the base of one of these rocky hillocks above the level of the town, and by which the small gardens adjoining the houses are irrigated; abundance of water is the only advantage the situation can boast of. Here are several large stores, from which the Boers can obtain every necessary article in their domestic economy. Numbers of these farmers attend the market weekly with their waggons, bringing in the produce of their farms and gardens; and at the Nachmal, which is administered four times every year, the town is inundated with Boers, who bring in their families in horse-waggons. Owing to the unsettled state of the country, troops were then

stationed at Colesberg. The garrison consisted of about two hundred men of the 91st, under command of my cousin, Colonel Campbell, and one company of the Cape mounted Rifles, commanded by Captain Donovan. Colesberg was in those days a pleasant quarter, as there was not much pipeclay, and very good shooting could be obtained within a few hours of the cantonment.

In the forenoon we had some rifle practice at a large granite stone above the town, which the privates of the 91st were wont to pepper on ball-practice days. On this occasion I saw some very good shooting by Campbell, Yarborough, Bailey, and Paterson, all officers of the 91st, and about the four best shots on the frontier. These four Nimrods had a short time previously boldly challenged any four Dutchmen of the Graaf Reinet or Colesberg districts to shoot against them; the challenge was accepted by four Dutchmen, who of course got "jolly well licked."

After spending a few days very pleasantly with the garrison, I resolved to hunt on and about the frontiers until the end of March, at which time the horse-distemper begins to subside. In Colesberg I purchased, at the recommendation of Captain Donovan, a second waggon of the cap-tent kind, which turned out to be an unusually good one; its price was 50*l*. I also purchased an excellent span of black and white oxen from a Dutch blacksmith in the town, and from Donovan a dark-brown horse, which I named Colesberg; his price was 300 dollars, and he was well worth double that sum, for a better steed I never crossed. I also bought from a Boer in the town another horse, well known to the garrison by the sobriquet of the "Immense Brute." This animal was once the property of Captain Christie of the 91st; and on one occasion having wandered, an advertisement appeared in one of the frontier papers relative to an "immense brute" in the shape of a tall bay horse, the property of Captain Christie, &c. &c., in consequence of which he was distinguished by this elegant appellation. I exchanged my brown stallion with Colonel Campbell for an active grey, which I considered better adapted to my work. Glass was at this time at a premium in Colesberg, every window in the town having been smashed by a recent hailstorm.

I loaded up my new waggon with barley, oats, and forage for my horses, they having very hard work before them—hunting the oryx, upon which I was more immediately bent, being more trying to horses than any other sport in South Africa.

My intention was to revisit Colesberg in four or five months, and refit preparatory to starting for the far interior. I left the skulls and specimens of natural history which I had already collected in the charge of my friend Mr. Dickson, a merchant in Colesberg. During my stay there my men were in a constant state of beastly intoxication, and gave me much trouble, and my oxen and horses were constantly reported in the “skit-kraal.” I engaged one more Hottentot, named John Stofolus, as driver to the new waggon; he was an active stout little man, and very neat-handed at stuffing the heads of game, preserving specimens, or any other little job I might give him to do. He was, however, extremely fond of fighting his comrades, and ever boasting of his own prowess; but when his courage was put to the proof in assisting me to hunt the more dangerous animals, he proved himself woefully deficient.

## CHAPTER V.

## FROM COLESBERG ACROSS THE DESERT—BUSHMEN

ON the evening of the 2nd of December, with considerable difficulty I collected my drunken servants, my oxen and horses, and, taking leave of my kind entertainers, trekked out of Colesberg, steering west for the vast Karroo plains, where the gemsbok were said to be still abundant. It was agreed that Campbell should follow me on the second day to hunt springbok and black wildebeest in a district through which I was to travel; and Paterson had applied for a fortnight's leave, with the intention of joining me in the gemsbok country, and enjoying along with me, for a few days, the exciting sport of jaging that antelope. I did not proceed very far on the evening of my departure, my men being intoxicated, and having several times very nearly capsized the waggons; I halted shortly after sundown, when, all the work with the oxen and horses falling upon me, and no fuel being at hand, I was obliged to content myself with dining on a handful of raw meal and a glass of gin-and-water. The following day we performed two long marches, crossing the Sea-Cow River, and halted as it grew dark on a Boer's farm, where the plains were covered with springbok. Here Campbell had instructed me to await his arrival, and next morning he was seen approaching the waggons, mounted on the Immense Brute, and leading two others.

Having breakfasted, we started on horseback to jag springbok and wildebeest, ordering the waggons to proceed to a vley about four miles to the westward. We galloped about the plains, loading and firing for about six hours; the game was very wild—I wounded three springboks and one wildebeest, but lost them all. Campbell shot two springboks. The first

was entirely eaten by the vultures (notwithstanding the bushes with which we had covered him), and skinned as neatly as if done by the hand of man; the second had its leg broken, and was making off, when a jackal suddenly appeared on the bare plain, and, giving him chase, after a good course ran into him. This is a very remarkable but not unfrequent occurrence; it often happens when a springbok is thus wounded, one or more jackals suddenly appear and assist the hunter in capturing his quarry. In the more distant hunting-lands of the interior it sometimes occurs that the lion assists the sportsman in a similar manner with the larger animals; and though this may appear like a traveller's story, it is nevertheless true, and instances of the kind happened both to myself and to Mr. Oswell of the H.E.I.C.S., a dashing sportsman, and one of the best hunters I ever met, who performed two hunting expeditions into the interior. Mr. Oswell and a companion were one day galloping along the shady banks of the Limpopo, in full pursuit of a wounded buffalo, when they were suddenly joined by three lions, who seemed determined to dispute the chase with them; the buffalo held stoutly on, followed by the three lions, Oswell and his companion bringing up the rear; and it was not long before the lions sprang upon the mighty bull and dragged him to the ground, when the most terrific scuffle ensued. Mr. Oswell and his friend then approached and opened their fire upon the royal family, and, as each ball struck the lions, they seemed to consider it was a poke from the horns of the buffalo, and redoubled their attentions to him. At length the sportsmen succeeded in bowling over two of the lions, upon which the third, finding the ground too hot for him, made off.

Next morning, having bathed and breakfasted, Campbell and I parted; he for Colesberg and I for the Karroo. I trekked on all day, and, having performed a march of twenty-five miles, halted at sundown on the farm of old Wessel, whom I found very drunk—my road lay through vast plains, intersected with ridges of stony hills. On these plains I found the game in herds exceeding anything I had yet seen—springbok in troops of at least ten thousand; also large bodies of quaggas, wildebeest, blesbok, and several ostriches. I had

hoped to purchase some horses from Wessel, but he was too drunk to transact any business, informing me that he was a Boer, and could not endure the sight of Englishmen, at the same time shoving me out of the house, much to the annoyance of his wife and daughters, who seemed rather nice people.

Two more days of hard marching, under a burning sun, brought me to the farm of Mynheer Stinkum, which I reached late on the evening of the 7th. He informed me that about fifteen miles to the west of his farm I should fall in with a Boer of the wandering tribe, who would direct me to a remote vley in the Karroo, a good many miles beyond his encampment, to which he advised me at once to proceed and hunt in its vicinity. He represented that district as not having been recently disturbed by hunters, and doubted not but I should find gemsbok and other varieties of game abundant.

It being now summer, flies swarmed in fearful numbers in the abodes of the Boers, attracted thither by the smell of meat and milk; on entering Stinkum's house, I found the walls of his large sitting-room actually black with these disgusting insects. They are a cruel plague to the settlers in Southern Africa, and it often requires considerable ingenuity to eat one's dinner or drink a cup of coffee without swallowing some of them. When food is served up, two or three Hottentots or Bush-girls are always in attendance with fans made of ostrich-feathers, which they keep continually waving over the food till the repast is finished.

This morning I purchased a handsome chestnut pony of a Boer named Duprey, a field-cornet, from whom I obtained an egg of the largest species of bustard, oology being a subject in which for many years of my life I had taken great interest, having in my possession one of the finest collections in Great Britain, which I had made with much toil and danger. I have descended most of the loftiest precipices in the central Highlands of Scotland, and along the sea-shore, with a rope round my waist, in quest of the eggs of the various eagles and falcons which have their eyries in those almost inaccessible situations. Amongst Stinkum's stud was a handsome brown gelding to which I took a great fancy; after consulting for

some time with his wife, he made up his mind to part with him, and the lowest price was to be 18*l.* After a good deal of bargaining, however, I persuaded him to part with him for 12*l.* in cash, 15 lb. of coffee, and 20 lb. of gunpowder. I christened this horse "Sunday," in honour of the day on which I obtained him. This bargain being concluded, I inspanned and trekked to the wandering Boer, whom I reached about an hour after sundown.

This man's name was Gous; he lived in a small canvas tent pitched between his two waggons, round which his vast flocks of sheep assembled every evening, his cattle and horses running day and night over a neighbouring range of grassy hills: his wife was one of the best-looking women I met among the Boers; she informed me that she was of French extraction. On the following morning I breakfasted with Gous in his tent; he had lots of flesh, milk, and wild honey, which last article was reported abundant that season. He offered to sell me a brown horse of good appearance; his price was too high, but at a subsequent period we came to terms, and I bought him. After breakfast I inspanned, and having proceeded a few miles across a burning plain, on which I counted fourteen tall ostriches stalking amid large herds of other game, I reached a periodical stream, where I outspanned, the sun being intensely powerful. Here I found another Boer, named Sweirs, encamped with his flocks and herds, having been obliged to leave his farms, situated far in the depths of the Karroo, by the want of water. Sweirs was an elderly man, but had been a keen sportsman, and entertained me with many interesting anecdotes relative to the habits of the game and of his hunting adventures in his early days. He informed me that he remembered lions extremely abundant in those districts, and that a few were still to be met with. He related to me instances where he had seen the gemsbok beat off the lion, and he had also come upon the carcasses of both rotting on the plain, the body of the lion being transfixed by the long sharp horns of the powerful gemsbok so that he could not extract them, and thus both had perished together: he also mentioned that, notwithstanding the agility of the

springbok, he had often known the lion dash to the ground two, three, and four of a troop in quick succession.

Four of my oxen being footsore and unable to move, I left them in charge of old Sweirs, and in the cool of the evening inspanned; having proceeded about five miles through an extremely wild and desolate-looking country, on clearing a neck in a range of low rocky hills, I came full in view of the vley or pool of water beside which I had been directed to encamp. The breadth of this vley was about three hundred yards. One side of it was grassy, and patronized by several flocks of Egyptian wild geese, a species of barnacle, wild ducks, egrets, and cranes; the other side was bare; here the game drank, and the margin of the water was trampled by the feet of wild animals like an English horsepond. There being no trees beside which to form our camp, we drew up the waggons among some low bushes, about four hundred yards from the vley. When the sun went down I selected the three horses which were to carry me and two after-riders in the chace of the unicorn on the following morning, and directed my boys to give them a liberal supply of forage for the night. The oryx, or gemsbok, to which I was now about to direct my attention more particularly, is about the most beautiful and remarkable of all the antelope tribe; it is the animal which is supposed to have given rise to the fable of the unicorn, from its long straight horns, when seen, *en profile*, so exactly covering one another as to give it the appearance of having but one. It possesses the erect mane, long sweeping black tail, and general appearance of the horse, with the head and hoofs of an antelope. It is robust in its form, squarely and compactly built, and very noble in its bearing; its height is about that of an ass, and in colour it slightly resembles that animal. The beautiful black bands which eccentrically adorn its head, giving it the appearance of wearing a stall-collar, together with the manner in which the rump and thighs are painted, impart to it a character peculiar to itself. The adult male measures 3 feet 10 inches in height at the shoulder.

The gemsbok was destined by nature to enliven the parched

karroos and arid deserts of South Africa, for which description of country it is admirably adapted. It thrives and attains high condition in barren regions where it might be imagined that a locust would not find subsistence, and, burning as is the climate, it is perfectly independent of water, which, from my own observation, and the repeated reports both of the Boers and aborigines, I am convinced it never by any chance tastes. Its flesh is deservedly esteemed, and ranks next to the eland. At certain seasons of the year the gemsbok carries a great quantity of fat, at which time it can be more easily ridden into. Owing to the even nature of the ground which the oryx frequents, its shy and suspicious disposition, and the extreme distances from water to which it must be followed, it is never stalked or driven to an ambush like other antelopes, but is hunted on horseback, and ridden down by a long, severe, tail-on-end chase. Of the several game animals which are hunted in this manner, and may be ridden into by a horse, the oryx is by far the swiftest and most enduring; it is widely diffused throughout the centre and western parts of Southern Africa.

On the 10th of December, everything having been made ready overnight, I saddled up, and started an hour before day-dawn, accompanied by Cobus and Jacob as after-riders leading a spare horse with my packsaddle. We held a south-westerly course, and at length reached the base of a little hillock slightly elevated above the surrounding scenery; here I dismounted, and having ascended to the summit examined the country all round minutely with my spy-glass, but could not see anything like an oryx. I was in the act of putting up my glass again, when to my intense delight I perceived, feeding within four hundred yards, in a hollow between two hillocks, a glorious herd of about five-and-twenty of the long-wished-for gemsbok, with a fine old bull feeding at a little distance by himself, their long sharp horns glancing in the morning sun like the cheese-toasters of a troop of dragoons. I scarcely allowed myself a moment to feast my eyes on the thrilling sight before me, when I returned to my boys and with them concerted a plan to circumvent the herd. At this time I was very much in the dark as to the speed of the

gemsbok, having been led by a friend to believe that a person even of my weight, fourteen stone, if tolerably mounted, could invariably, after a long chace, ride right into them. This, however, is not the case; my friend was deceived in the opinion which he had formed. The fact of the matter was, that he had been a long way to windward of a party who were hunting on the same plain, and several of the gemsboks which he had killed had previously been severely chased by the other party. In the whole course of my adventures with gemsbok I only remember four occasions, when mounted on the pick of my stud (which I nearly sacrificed in the attempt), that alone and unassisted I succeeded in riding the oryx to a stand-still. The plan which I adopted, and which is generally used by the Boers, was to mount my light Hottentots or Bushmen on horses of great endurance, and thus, as it were, convert them into greyhounds, with which I coursed the gemsbok as we do stags in Scotland with our rough deer-hounds. A "tail-on-end" chace is sometimes saved, in parts where the sportsman, from a previous knowledge of the country, knows the course which the gemsbok will take; when, having first discovered the herd, the after-rider is directed to remain quiet until the hunter shall have proceeded by a wide semicircular course some miles to windward of the animals, which being accomplished, the Hottentot gives the troop a tremendous burst towards his master, who, by riding hard for their line, generally manages to get within easy shot as the panting herd strains past him.

We had agreed that Jacob and I should endeavour to ride by a circuitous course a long way to windward of the herd, and that Cobus should then give chace and drive them towards us: the wind was westerly, but the district to which this herd seemed to belong unfortunately lay to the northward. Jacob and I rode steadily on, occasionally looking behind us, and, presently taking up a commanding position, strained our eyes in the direction of the gemsboks, in the full expectation of seeing them flying towards us. After waiting a considerable time and nothing appearing, I felt convinced that we were wrong, and in this conjecture I judged well. A slight inequality in the plain had concealed from our view the retreat

ing herd, which had started on a northerly course. Cobus had long since dashed into them, and was at that moment flying across the country, I knew not in what direction. while I, after galloping athwart the boundless plains in a state bordering on distraction, gave it up, and, accompanied by Jacob, returned to the waggons in anything but a placid frame of mind.

About two hours after, Cobus reached the waggon, having ridden the bull to a stand-still. The old fellow had lain down repeatedly towards the end of the chace, and at length could proceed no farther, when Cobus, after waiting some time and seeing no signs of his master, reluctantly left him. In the height of the day the sun was intensely powerful. I felt much disgusted at this want of luck in my first attempt, and, burning with anxiety for another trial, resolved to take the field again in the afternoon, more especially as we had not a pound of flesh in camp. Between three and four P.M. I again sallied forth with the same after-riders leading a spare horse. We cantered across plains to the north-east, and soon fell in with ostriches and quaggas, and after riding a few miles through rather bushy ground a large herd of hartebeest cantered across our path, and these were presently joined by two or three herds of quaggas and wildebeests, which kept retreating as we advanced, their course being marked by clouds of red dust: at length I perceived a herd of ash-coloured bucks stealing right away ahead of the other game, and, as I at once knew them to be gemsbok, I gave chace at a hard canter. I gradually gained upon them, and, after riding hard for about two miles, ordered Cobus to go ahead and endeavour to close with them. At this moment we had reached the border of a slight depression on the plain, down which the herd led, affording me a perfect view of the exciting scene. The gemsbok now increased their pace, but Cobus's horse, which was a good one with a very light weight, neared them at every stride, and, before they had reached the opposite side of the plain, he was in the middle of the foaming herd, and had singled out a beautiful cow with a pair of uncommonly long horns. In one minute he dexterously turned her in my direction, and, heading her, I obtained a fine

chance, and rolled her over with two bullets in her shoulder. My thirst was intense, and, the gemsbok having a fine breast of milk, I milked her into my mouth, and obtained a drink of the sweetest beverage I ever tasted.

While I was thus engaged, Cobus was shifting his saddle from the Immense Brute to the grey, and, this being done, I ordered him to renew the chase, and try to ride down the old bull for me. We fastened the Immense Brute to a bush beside the dead gemsbok, and then, mounting the horse which Jacob had been riding, I followed on as best I might. On gaining the first ridge, I perceived the troop of oryx about two miles ahead of me ascending another ridge at the extremity of the plain, and Cobus riding hard for them about a mile astern, but rapidly gaining on them; oryx and boy soon disappeared over the distant ridge, the boy still far behind. The country here changed from grass and bushes to extreme sterility, the whole being undermined with the holes of colonies of meercat or mouse-hunts. This burrowed ground, which is common throughout these parts, was extremely distressing to our horses, the soil giving way at every step, and my steed soon began to flag. On gaining the distant ridge a wide plain lay before me. I looked in every direction, straining my eyes to catch a glimpse of Cobus and the oryx, but they were nowhere to be seen; at length, after riding about two miles farther in the direction which he seemed to hold when I had last viewed him, I detected his white shirt on a ridge a long way to my right, and on coming up to him found he had ridden the bull to a stand-still, and that the animal was actually lying panting beside a green bush. I thought him one of the most lovely creatures I had ever beheld, and could have gazed for hours at him, but I was now many miles from my waggons, without a chance of water and dying of thirst, so I speedily finished the poor oryx, and having carefully cut off the head commenced skinning him.

It was now late—too late to take home the cow oryx that night, and as for the bull, it was much too far from my camp to think of saving any part of the flesh. I therefore sent off Cobus to the waggons to fetch water and bread, desiring him to meet me at the spot where the cow gemsbok was lying,

where I resolved to sleep, to protect her from hyænas and jackals; but before Jacob and I had accomplished the skinning, and secured the skin and the head upon the horse, night had set in. My thirst was now fearful, and I would have given anything I possessed for a bottle of water. In the hope of meeting Cobus, Jacob and I rode slowly forward, and endeavoured to find out the place; but darkness coming on, and there being no feature in the desert to guide me, I lost my way entirely; after wandering for several hours in the dark, and firing blank shots at intervals, we lay down in the open plain to sleep till morning, having tied our horses to a thorny bush beside where we lay. I felt very cold all night, but my thirst continued raging; my clothes consisted of a shirt and a pair of knee-breeches; and my bed was the bull's hide laid over a thorny bush, which imparted to my tough mattress the elasticity of a feather-bed. Having slept about two hours, I awoke and found that our horses had absconded, after which I slept little; at day-dawn I rose, and on looking about neither Jacob nor I had the most remote idea where we were, nor of the position of our waggons.

Within a few hundred yards of us was a small hill, which we ascended and looked about, but could not in the least recognise the ground. I however ascertained the points of the compass and the position of my camp by placing my left hand towards the rising sun. I was returning to the spot where I had slept, when I suddenly perceived, standing within three hundred yards of me, the horse which I had fastened beside the cow oryx on the preceding evening, and on going up found both all right. I immediately saddled the horse, and rode hard for camp, ordering Jacob to commence skinning the cow, and promising to send him water and bread as soon as I reached the waggons.

On my way thither I met Cobus on horseback, bearing bread and a bottle of water, wandering he knew not whither, having entirely lost his reckoning; my thirst had by this time departed, so I did not touch the water, but allowed him to take it on to Jacob. He informed me that John Stofolus was coming on with the baggage-waggon, to take up the vension; and before riding far I fell in with him, having,

with a Hottentot's usual good sense, come away without water in the casks. Having shown him how to steer, I rode on to camp, which I was right glad to reach, and felt much refreshed with a good bowl of tea. I was actively employed during the rest of this day in preserving the two oryx-heads for my collection. In the evening, a horseman on a jaded steed was seen approaching the waggons, accompanied by an after-rider leading a spare horse; this was my friend Pater-son, who had succeeded in obtaining a fortnight's leave of absence, and with whom that evening, over a gemsbok stew, I "fought my battles o'er again." Our respective studs being considerably done up and in need of rest, the following day was devoted to "dulce otium," washing our rifles, and writing up the log.

On the 14th we went out on foot after a troop of ostriches, one of which we wounded, and came home much exhausted; the very ground was as hot as the side of a stove. The following day we were visited by a party of Boers from the neighbouring encampments, who had come to see how we were getting on; finding our brandy good, they made themselves very agreeable, and sat for many hours conversing with us. The leading subject of conversation was gemsbok and lion shooting, and the slaying and capturing of whole tribes of marauding Bushmen in bygone days. The Boers informed us that, when they first occupied these districts, the game was far more abundant, and eland and koodoos plentiful, and that their herds of cattle were constantly attacked and plundered by the vindictive wild Bushmen. Unlike the Kaffir tribes, who lift cattle for the purpose of preserving them and breeding from them, the sole object of the Bushmen is to drive them to their secluded habitations in the desert, where they massacre them indiscriminately, and continue feasting and gorging themselves until the flesh becomes putrid. When a Kaffir has lifted cattle, and finds himself so hotly pursued by the owners that he cannot escape with his booty, he betakes himself to flight, and leaves the cattle unscathed; but the spiteful Bushmen have a most provoking and cruel system of horribly mutilating the poor animals when they find that they are likely to fall into the hands of their rightful owners, by

discharging their poisoned arrows at them, hamstringing them, and cutting lumps of flesh off their living carcases. At this the proprietors are so incensed, that they never show the Bushmen any quarter, but shoot them down right and left, sparing only the children, whom they tame and convert into servants. The people who suffer from these depredations are Boers, Griquas, and Bechuanas, all of whom are possessed of large herds of cattle; the massacres of the Bushmen, arising from these raids, are endless. The Boers informed us that, in a country to the south-west of the colony, a tribe of these natives were for many years in the habit of practising this art with impunity upon the herds of the farmers in the Raw-feldt, in which they were much facilitated by the vast and impracticable desert that intervened between their country and the more fertile pastoral districts. They seemed to prefer extremely dry seasons for these incursions, their object in this being that their pursuers, who of course followed on horseback while they were always on foot, should not obtain water for the horses; their own wants in this respect they provided for in the following curious manner. They had regular stages at long intervals in a direct line across the desert, where, assisted by their wives, they concealed water in ostrich-eggs, which they brought from amazing distances; and these spots, being marked by some slight inequality in the ground, they could discover either by day or night, from their perfect knowledge of the country. They were thus enabled fearlessly to drive off a herd of cattle, whose sufferings from thirst gave them little concern, and to travel day and night, while their mounted pursuers, requiring light to hold the spoor, could necessarily only follow by day, and were soon obliged to give up the pursuit on account of their horses being without water.

## CHAPTER VI.

## HUNTING IN THE DESERT.

At an early hour on the morning of the 16th, Paterson and I again took the field, accompanied by our three after-riders, and, having ridden several miles in a northerly direction, we started an oryx, to which Paterson and his after-rider gave immediate chace. I then rode in an easterly direction, and shortly fell in with a fine old cow oryx, which we instantly charged. She stole away at a killing pace, her black tail streaming in the wind, and her long, sharp horns laid well back over her shoulders; aware of her danger, and anxious to gain the desert, she put forth her utmost speed, and, straining across the bushy plain, gave us a tearing chace of upwards of five miles in a northerly course, Cobus sticking well into her, and I falling far behind. After a sharp burst of about three miles, Cobus and the grey disappeared over a ridge about half a mile ahead of me. Here I mounted a fresh horse, which had been led by Jacob, and, on gaining the ridge, perceived the grey disappearing over another a fearfully long way ahead. When I reached this point I commanded an extremely extensive prospect, but no living object was visible on the wide plain. Whilst deliberating in what direction to ride, I suddenly heard a pistol-shot some distance to my left, which I knew to be Cobus's signal that the oryx was at bay; and having ridden half a mile, I discovered my servant dismounted in a hollow, but no oryx in view; he had succeeded in riding the quarry to a stand, but, I not immediately appearing, he very injudiciously had at once lost sight of the buck and left it. Having upbraided him in no measured terms for his stupidity, I sought to retrieve the fortunes of the day by riding in the direction in which he had left the oryx; the ground here was uneven and interspersed with low hillocks.

We extended our front and rode on up wind, and, having crossed two or three ridges, I discovered a troop of bucks a long way ahead, which turned out to be hartebeests. At this moment I perceived three magnificent oryx a short distance on my left. Observing us, they cantered along the ridge towards a fourth oryx, which I at once saw was "embossed with foam and dark with soil," and, knowing her to be the antelope I was in search of, we once more charged her. Our horses had now considerably recovered their wind, but the poor oryx was much distressed; and after a chace of half a mile I jumped off my horse and sent a bullet through her ribs, which brought her up, when I finished her with the other barrel. She proved a fine old cow with very handsome horns; the spot on which she fell being so sterile that we could not even obtain the smallest bushes with which to conceal her from the vultures, we covered her with my after-rider's saddle-cloth; the head, on which I placed great value, we cut off and bore along with us.

On my way home I came across Paterson's after-rider, jaging a troop of seven gemsbok, but fearfully to leeward, his illustrious master being nowhere in sight. An hour after I reached the camp Paterson came in, in a towering rage, having had an unlucky day. I despatched one of my waggons to bring home the oryx, and it returned about twelve o'clock that night, carrying the skin of my gemsbok and also a magnificent old blue wildebeest (the brindled gnoo), which the Hottentots had obtained in an extraordinary manner; he was found with one of his fore-legs caught over his horn, so that he could not run, when they hamstrung him and cut his throat; he had probably managed to get himself into this awkward attitude while fighting with some of his fellows. The vultures had consumed all the flesh of the gemsbok, and likewise torn the blanket with which I had covered her.

The following day, all our steeds being very much done up, Paterson and I visited the neighbouring Boers, to endeavour to buy and hire some horses. I bought one clipper of Mynheer Gous for 25*l.*, and called him "Grouse;" Paterson succeeded in hiring one, and with these, on the following day, we continued our campaign against the gemsboks. My

friend's after-rider not being well up to his work, I lent him Cobus, and on this occasion his perseverance was rewarded by a noble gemsbok, which he rode down and slew, and also a fine bull blue wildebeest, which last animal is rather rare in these parts. We had one more day together, after which, much to my regret, Paterson was obliged to depart for Colesberg, his leave of absence having expired. One of his horses being footsore, I purchased him in the hope of his soon recovering, which after a few days' rest he did: I called him "Paterson," after his old master. My stud now consisted of eight horses, but three of them were missing, and I despatched Jacob in quest of them, who returned on the third day, bringing them with him, having followed the spoor upwards of fifty miles.

In the evening two of the Hottentots walked in to camp, bending under a burden of ostrich-eggs, having discovered a nest containing five-and-thirty. Their manner of carrying them amused me. Having divested themselves of their leather "crackers," which in colonial phrase means trousers, they had secured the ankles with rheimpys, and, having thus converted them into bags, had crammed them with as many ostrich-eggs as they would contain; the remainder they left concealed in the sand, for which they returned on the following morning. While encamped at this place we fell in with several nests of ostriches, and here I first ascertained a singular propensity peculiar to these birds. If a person discovers a nest, and does not at once remove the eggs, on returning he will probably find them all smashed; the old birds almost invariably destroy them, even when the intruder has not handled the eggs or so much as ridden within five yards of them. The nest of the ostrich is merely a hollow scooped in the sandy soil, generally amongst heath or other low bushes, and in diameter about seven feet; it is believed that two hens often lay in one nest—the hatching of the eggs is not left, as is generally believed, to the heat of the sun, but, on the contrary, the cock relieves the hen in the incubation. These eggs form a considerable item in the Bushman's cuisine, and the shells are converted into water-flasks, cups, and dishes. I have often seen Bush-girls and Bakalahari women, who

belong to the wandering Bechuana tribes of the Kalahari desert, come down to the fountains from their remote habitations, each carrying on her back a kaross or network containing from twelve to fifteen ostrich-egg shells, which had been emptied by a small aperture at one end: these they fill with water and cork up the hole with grass.

A favourite method adopted by the wild Bushman for approaching the ostrich and other varieties of game is to clothe himself in the skin of one of these birds, in which, taking advantage of the wind, he stalks about the plain, cunningly imitating the gait and motions of the ostrich until within range, when, with a well-directed poisoned arrow from his tiny bow, he can generally seal the fate of any of the ordinary varieties of game. These insignificant-looking weapons are about two feet six inches in length; they consist of a slender reed, with a sharp bone head, thoroughly poisoned with a composition of which the principal ingredients are obtained sometimes from a succulent herb, having thick leaves, which yield a poisonous milky juice, and sometimes from the jaws of snakes. The bow barely exceeds three feet in length; its string is of twisted sinews. When a Bushman finds an ostrich's nest he ensconces himself in it, and there awaits the return of the old birds, by which means he generally secures the pair. It is by means of these little arrows that the majority of the fine plumes are obtained which on state occasions grace the heads of the fair throughout the civilized world.

It was now the height of summer; in the day the heat of the sun was terrific, but there was generally a breeze of wind, and the nights were cool; our vley was daily decreasing, and I saw that, unless we were visited by rains, it would soon be no more. On the morning of the 22nd I had an adventure with a porcupine, which I killed with the thick end of my jambok, this animal, like the seal, being easily despatched with a blow on the nose.

After this we rode on, and shortly came upon an immense, compact herd of several thousand "trekking" springboks, which were exceedingly tame, and in the middle of them stood two oryx. These we managed for the first time to drive in a southerly direction, being that in which the camp lay;

and, after a sharp and rather circular burst, I bowled one of them over. She proved to be a young cow, about three years old. Having prepared her for the packsaddle with a *couveau-de-chasse*, by splitting the brisket, passing the knife along the gristly bones on one side of it, and breaking the back by a dexterous touch of the knife, where certain ribs well known to the hunter join the vertebræ, by which means the animal can more easily be balanced on the packsaddle, we succeeded with great difficulty in placing her on "Sunday," and rode slowly to the spot where we had left the porcupine. This we placed on the oryx, but had not proceeded far when it slipped, and, some of the quills running into the horse, he became perfectly frantic. The gemsbok's head also unfortunately got adrift, and, the sharp horns striking his belly at every spring, he broke loose from Jacob, and set off across the country at a terrific pace, eventually smashing the packsaddle, the only one I had in camp, and was not secured until he had been much lacerated about the haunches.

Next day Cobus and I fell in with the finest bull oryx I had yet met, which, after a severe chase, we rode into and slew. For some evenings previous a large bright comet had appeared in the south-west, having a tearing, fiery tail, which strange meteor, to the best of my recollection, shone brightly in the clear firmament for five or six weeks. We lived well, but lonely. My camp abounded with every delicacy—tongues, brains, marrow-bones, kidneys, rich soup, with the most delicious venison in the world, &c. &c., and a constant supply of ostrich-eggs. The 25th was cool and cloudy, being the first day that the sky had been overcast since I left the Thebus Flats.

In the afternoon I resolved to ride far into the oryx country, sleep under a bush, and hunt them on the following morning; I accordingly left my waggons about three P.M., with my two after-riders and a spare horse, and rode northward about fifteen miles and secured our horses to a bush, to leeward of which we slept. On my way thither, I dismounted on an arid plain to breathe our steeds and dig up some bulbs of the water-root for immediate consumption, my thirst being very severe. This invaluable root, which has doubtless saved

many a man from dying of thirst, is met with throughout the most parched plains of the Karroo. It is a large oval bulb, varying from six to ten inches in diameter, extremely juicy, and of rather an insipid flavour; it is protected by a thin brown skin, easily removed with the back of a knife. The leaves are small and narrow, with little black dots on them, not easily detected by an inexperienced eye, and the ground round it is generally so baked with the sun, that it must be dug out with a knife. The top of this bulb is discovered about eight or nine inches from the surface of the ground. A knowledge of this plant is indispensable to him whose avocations lead him into these desolate regions. Throughout the whole extent of the great Kalahari desert, and the vast tracts of country adjoining thereto, an immense variety of bulbs and roots of this juicy description succeed each other monthly; there is, therefore, hardly a season in the year at which the poor Bakalahari, provided with a sharp-pointed stick hardened in the fire, cannot obtain a meal, being intimately acquainted with each and all the herbs and roots which a bountiful hand has provided for his sustenance. There are also several succulent plants, having thick juicy leaves, which in like manner answer the purpose of food and drink.

Above all, a species of bitter water-melon is thickly scattered over the entire surface of the known parts of the great Kalahari desert, which often supply the place of food as well as water to the wild inhabitants of those remote regions, and it is stated by the Bakalahari that these melons are found of a finer flavour as they penetrate farther to the west. Most of these roots are much eaten by the gemsboks, which are led by instinct to root them out; the elephants, apprised of their position by their acute sense of smell, also feed upon them, and whole tracts may be seen ploughed up by the tusks of these sagacious animals, in quest of them.

On the 26th I raised my head from my saddle about one o'clock A.M., imagining the day was dawning, and, having roused my after-riders, we proceeded to saddle our horses; but I soon perceived that the bright moon, across which a bank of clouds was at that moment passing, had deceived me, and accordingly we off-saddled, and in a few minutes I was

once more asleep. Towards morning a smart shower of rain suddenly falling on my face broke in abruptly on my slumbers, when we once more arose, and, when day dawned, saddled up, and held a northerly course. We found the fresh tracks of hyænas not more than fifteen yards from our horses, and within a hundred yards of our bush discovered the spoor of an old bull gemsbok which had fed past us during the night. We had gone but a short distance when we perceived a herd of seven noble oryx within a quarter of a mile of us, and I had proceeded scarcely a mile in chase when we were joined by another fine herd of twenty-two, nearly all full-grown, and carrying superb horns. On we swept at a thrilling pace, and, after riding upwards of another mile, I pulled up to have a shot, but "Grouse" being very restless, the herd got a long way ahead before I could fire; however, I wounded one fine old cow and resumed the pursuit. Observing that the finest bull of the first herd seemed distressed, I endeavoured to cut him off from the herd, which I succeeded in doing, and, in the excitement of the moment, determined to follow him as long as my horse could go. Away and away we wildly flew—my game leading me a cruel long chase due north, tail-on-end, from my waggons, over a very heavy country entirely undermined by the endless burrows of the mouse-hunts. At length my poor steed completely knocked up, while the oryx seemed to gain fresh speed, and increase the distance between us; one chance alone remained; I pulled up, and, vaulting from my panting steed, with trembling hand and beating heart cocked my rifle and let fly my last barrel at the round stern of the retreating antelope; the ball raised the dust about fifty yards in advance of him, and I had the mortification of watching his lessening form as he retreated across the boundless waste. Faint and disappointed, and beyond measure vexed at the issue of this long chase, my lips cracking, and my tongue and throat parched with raging thirst, I threw my bridle on my arm and led my weary steed homewards, inwardly regretting that nature had not formed me of more Lilliputian dimensions. I was now a fearful long way from camp; hills that in the morning were blue before me were now equally blue far far behind me;

"Grouse" could scarcely walk, nor did he ever recover that morning's work.

Upon my return I observed Jacob making for me, leading a fresh horse, of which I stood no little in need; he told me he had seen an oryx at a distance on the plain, seemingly wounded, and on overhauling her with my spyglass I saw plainly she was badly hit. Cantering up to her, she ran but a short distance, and, facing about, stood at bay. I foolishly approached her without firing, and very nearly paid dearly for my folly, for, lowering her sharp horns, she made a desperate rush towards me, and would inevitably have run me through had not her strength at this moment failed her, when she staggered forward and fell to the ground.

The following day the waters of my vley disappeared; the water for some days past had become "brack," making myself and my people very unwell.

On the 28th I had the satisfaction of beholding, for the first time, what I had often heard the Boers speak of, viz. a "trek-bokken," or grand migration of springboks. This was, I think, the most extraordinary and striking scene, as connected with beasts of the chase, I ever beheld. For about two hours before dawn I had been lying awake in my waggon, listening to the grunting of the bucks within two hundred yards of me, imagining that some large herd of springboks was feeding beside my camp; but rising when it was light, and looking about me, I beheld the ground to the northward of my camp actually covered with a dense living mass of springboks, marching slowly and steadily along; they extended from an opening in a long range of hills on the west, through which they continued pouring, like the flood of some great river, to a ridge about a mile to the north-east, over which they disappeared—the breadth of ground they covered might have been somewhere about half a mile. I stood upon the fore-chest of my waggon for nearly two hours, lost in astonishment at the novel and wonderful scene before me, and had some difficulty in convincing myself that it was a reality which I beheld, and not the wild and exaggerated picture of a hunter's dream. During this time these vast legions continued streaming through the neck in the hills in one unbroken

compact phalanx. At length I saddled up, and, riding into the middle of them with my rifle and after-riders, fired into their ranks until fourteen had fallen, when I cried "Enough." We then retraced our steps to secure from the ever-voracious vultures the venison which lay strewed along my track; having collected the springboks at different bushes, and concealed them with brushwood, we returned to camp.

A person anxious to kill many springboks might have bagged thirty or forty that morning. I never, in all my subsequent career, fell in with so dense a herd as I did this day, nor found them allow me to ride so near them. Having inspanned, we proceeded with the waggons to take up the fallen game, and held for the small periodical stream beside which the wandering Boers were encamped, that point being in my line of march for Beer Vley. Vast and surprising as was the herd of springboks which I had that morning witnessed, it was infinitely surpassed by what I saw on the march from my vley to old Sweirs's camp, for, on our clearing the low range of hills through which the springboks had been pouring, I beheld the plains, and even the hill-sides which stretched away on every side of me, thickly covered, not with herds, but with one vast mass of springboks; as far as the eye could strain the landscape was alive with them, until they softened down into a dim red mass of living creatures.

To endeavour to form any idea of the amount of antelopes which I that day beheld were vain; but I have, nevertheless, no hesitation in stating that some hundreds of thousands were within the compass of my vision. On reaching the encampment of the Boers I outspanned, and set about cutting up and salting my venison; the Boers had likewise been out with their roers, and shot as many springboks as they could carry home. Old Sweirs acknowledged that it was a very fair "trek-bokken," but observed that it was not many when compared with what he had seen. "You this morning," he remarked, "behold only one flat covered with springboks, but I give you my word that I have ridden a long day's journey over a succession of flats covered with them as far as I could see, and as thick as sheep in a fold." I spent the following two days with the Boers. Each morning and evening we rode out

and hunted the springboks, killing as many as we could bring home. The vast armies of these animals, however, did not tarry long in that neighbourhood; having quickly consumed every green herb, they passed away to give other districts a benefit, thus leaving the Boers no alternative but to strike their tents, and remove with their flocks and herds to lands where they might find pasture.

On the morning of the 31st I left this periodical stream, called "Rhinoceros Pool," and held on for Beer Vley, which I reached in about eight hours. Our march was a very hot one, across a desolate barren country, destitute of water; but, though barren, it was not without game: I saw several herds of springboks, of from 500 to 2000 in each; also troops of gigantic ostriches, and abundance of bustard and Namaqua partridges. Beer Vley, at the southern end of which I had now encamped, is a very extensive, low-lying, level plain; its length might be somewhat about twenty miles, and its breadth averaging from one to two. Through the entire length of this grassy vley runs, in the rainy season, a deep stream of water, which meanders in a very serpentine course along the centre of the plain, and, overflowing its banks, irrigates and enriches the surrounding pastures; at that season, however, this channel was perfectly dry, and the plain was covered with rich green grass. The country surrounding Beer Vley is extremely desolate and sterile, consisting of low rocky hills and undulating sandy plains, barely covered with dwarfish scrubby shrubs and small karroo bushes.

On the morrow I removed my encampment about eight or nine miles farther down, being obliged, from the broken and uneven nature of the ground, to march in a semicircular course, holding along the outside of the vley, and drew up my waggons on the plain close to the bank of a dry channel, with a large pool of running water in my vicinity. This was the finest place that can be imagined to shoot springboks, and also to select extraordinary specimens on account of their horns, which I was anxious to do; the country, on every side, was covered with immense herds of these antelopes, and they all seemed to have an inclination to

come and feed close to the watercourse beside which we lay. This channel being about ten feet deep, and extending throughout the entire length of the plain, I had only to study the wind, and could then walk up within easy shot of any herd, and select what buck I pleased.

Here I remained for several days enjoying brilliant sport, daily securing fine specimens of oryx, springboks, and other game, and also shot my first ostrich, a fine old cock. It was a very long shot; I gave my rifle several feet of elevation, yet nevertheless the ball struck him on the leg, breaking it below the knee, when he fell and was unable to rise. The power possessed by an ostrich in his leg can hardly be imagined; the thigh is very muscular, and resembles that of a horse more than of a bird—in the act of dying, he lashed out and caught me a severe blow on my leg, which laid me prostrate.

## CHAPTER VII.

BEER VLEY—GREAT ORANGE RIVER—STINK VONTEYN—GRIQUAS AND  
BASTARDS.

ON the 9th I considered I had sufficiently enjoyed the sweets of Beer Vley; and accordingly, the waggons being properly packed, I inspanned in the afternoon, and trekked south; the following morning we inspanned at dawn of day, and retraced our steps to the Rhinoceros Pool. The heat continued most oppressive, the wind still northerly. We were infested with myriads of common flies, which proved a constant annoyance, filling tent and waggons to such a degree that it was impossible to sit in them. I rode out in the morning of the 11th, accompanied by an after-rider, and shot two spring-boks, which we bore to camp secured on our horses behind our saddles by passing the buckles of the girths on each side through the fore and hind legs of the antelopes, having first performed an incision between the bone and the sinews with the *couteau-de-chasse*, according to colonial usage.

The Boers had informed me of a small fountain one march in advance, where they recommended me to hunt for a short time, and this place I intended should be my next encampment. On the morrow we inspanned at earliest dawn, trekked about ten miles in a north-easterly course across a barren extensive plain, steering parallel with the country frequented by the oryx, and drew up our waggons at a place where some Boers had been encamped during the winter months. Here we found a well with nothing but mud in it, so I set to work with the spade and cleaned it out, and presently had good water for myself and people. I despatched one of my Hottentots on horseback to seek for water in advance for the horses and oxen. He shortly returned, and reported another deserted Boer encampment about a mile ahead, at which there was a stronger fountain, but considerably choked with mud; having break

fasted, I removed my waggons to it, and encamped. This fountain will be ever memorable to me in the annals of my African campaign, since on the following day I was there joined by an unique and interesting specimen of a Bushman, who afterwards faithfully followed my fortunes through every peril and hardship by sea and land, and alone stood by me when all my followers had forsaken me in the far interior.

In the afternoon I hunted and killed an old bull oryx; at night his neck was my pillow, and the jackal sang his coronach. On the 13th, nearing my encampment, I discovered two different vleys containing water, and on reaching it found a funny little fellow in the shape of the Bushboy before alluded to, awaiting my arrival. My Hottentots had detected his black woolly head protruding from the reeds adjoining the fountain, and had captured him; I presented him with a suit of new clothes and a glass of spirits, and we immediately became and continued ever after the best of friends. He informed me that, when a child, he was taken by a party of Dutch Boers at a massacre of his countrymen, and from them he had subsequently absconded on account of their cruel treatment; they had named him "Ruyter," probably after the Dutch admiral.

In the afternoon I rode to one of the vleys, accompanied by two of my men, bearing pickaxes and spades and my bedding, and dug a shooting-hole on the usual principle, about three feet deep and eight in diameter, on the lee side of the largest pool. In this hole I took my station every night—the jackals and hyænas growling round me—and waited the coming of the dawn for a sight of the game that came to drink. In this way I enjoyed excellent sport among the wildebeests and quaggas until the 17th, when, through want of water, I was compelled to march for the Great Orange River, distant upwards of thirty miles. We inspanned in the afternoon, and before midnight had with one halt trekked twenty-four miles. The country here assumed a less sterile appearance than that which I had seen during the last five weeks, being ornamented with a few ancient trees, bearing a leaf resembling that of the willow, and called by the Dutch "clean-wood;" there were also a few dwarfish thorny trees of a species of mimosa.

On the 18th we inspanned at daybreak, and after a march

of about four hours through a wild and uninhabited country suddenly found ourselves on the magnificent Orange River. This queen of African rivers, in length, I believe, somewhere about a thousand miles, forms a leading feature in the geography of Southern Africa. It rises in the east, in the Vitbergen mountain-range, a little to the northward of the latitude of Port Natal, and, flowing westward, is joined by the Vaal River about fifty miles below the spot where I had now arrived; thence it continues its course westward, and falls into the South Atlantic about five hundred miles north of the Cape of Good Hope. We made the river at a place called Davinar's Drift or ford, near which was a comfortable Dutch farm; the owner was a young Boer from the Cape district, and had obtained his present enviable position by marrying a fat old widow. Their chief riches consisted of enormous flocks of sheep and goats, which were in very fine condition, the country being suitable for pasturing these animals. Large herds of trekking springboks were feeding in sight of the homestead.

The Boers, contrary to my expectation, reported the river fordable. Before venturing, however, to cross we were occupied for upwards of an hour in raising the goods liable to be damaged by water, by means of green willow boughs, laid on the bottom of the waggons, and replacing the cargo. The descent to the river was very steep, and we found it necessary to secure, by means of the drag-chains, both hind wheels of each waggon; the drift was extremely rough, and jolted them about sadly, but we got safely through, and, having proceeded about half a mile up the opposite bank, encamped. No person who has not contemplated a magnificent river under similar circumstances can form an idea of the pleasure I felt in reaching this oasis of the desert. For many weeks past our lot had been cast in the arid plains of the parched karroo, where there had often been barely sufficient water for our cattle to drink, with cloudless skies and an intense burning sun over our heads, and no tree nor bush of any description whose friendly shade might shelter us from the power of its rays. Here, "o' the sudden," a majestic river rolled before our delighted eyes, whose fertile banks were adorned with

groves clad in everlasting verdure. At the spot at which we crossed, the river reminded me of certain parts of the Spey in summer during a "spate." The breadth of the Orange River, however, is in general about three hundred yards; the banks are ornamented with a rich fringe of weeping willows, whose branches dip into the stream, and also by many other trees and bushes whose blossoms and pleasing foliage yield the most delicious balmy perfume. Numerous flocks of the feathered tribe by their beautiful plumage and melodious notes increased the charm of this lovely scene; the entomologist could likewise have found abundance of interesting objects in his department, the ground and trees swarming with curious, if not gaudy, insects. My first move after halting was to enjoy a delightful bathe; after which, having donned my best apparel, I recrossed the river on horseback to visit the happy couple just mentioned.

I found them civil and communicative, and obtained a supply of vegetables, which to me were most acceptable, having tasted nothing of that sort for many weeks. They informed me there was a saltpan about fifteen miles in a northerly direction, in the vicinity of which I might find koodoos and sassaybys, in addition to the varieties of game I had already hunted. I walked through their garden, which, besides vegetables in great variety, contained several kinds of fruit-trees, such as peaches, apricots, &c.; the branches were laden with abundance of fruit. On the forenoon of the 19th, having twice enjoyed the luxury of bathing, I saddled up, and rode north to an extensive range of rocky hills to seek for koodoos. Crossing an extensive plain which intervened, I came upon an ostrich's nest containing two eggs; the cock was sitting on the nest, and, imagining that we would pass without observing him, allowed us to ride within sixty yards before he started. I found the hills so stony and rocky that it was impossible to ride through them; they had, however, a goodly coating of rank grass of various kinds, and the hollows contained a few dwarfish bushes. Leaving my steed in charge of my after-rider, I traversed with my rifle several of these rocky ranges, but failed to find any traces of koodoos. It was the sort of country exactly suited for the ræbok, to

which I have already alluded, and of these antelopes I discovered three small herds. Ascending to the summit of the highest hill in my vicinity, I commanded a grand panoramic view of the surrounding scenery; an endless succession of bold mountains, of considerable height, extended as far as I could see in a northerly and easterly direction: some of them were tabular, but others of conical and pyramidal shapes towered above their fellows, their abrupt forms standing forth in grand relief above the surrounding country—throughout all these mountain-ranges plains of considerable extent, more or less undulating, intervened.

At 1 P.M. on the following day I inspanned and trekked north to the saltpan, which we reached in the dark. The general character of the country became richer after crossing the Orange River; the plains were adorned with more luxuriant grass, and the small karroo bushes were replaced by others of fairer growth, and of a different variety. Most of these yielded a strong aromatic perfume, but more particularly when the ground had been refreshed by a shower of rain, on which occasions the African wilderness diffuses a perfume so exquisite and balmy, that no person who has not experienced its delights can form any idea of it. Our march lay through an extensive undulating country; we passed several troops of hartebeests and springboks, and saw for the first time a sassaby, a large antelope allied to the hartebeest, and of a purple colour. Mountain ranges bounded the view on every side, and I could discover by means of my spyglass that strips of forests of mimosa stretched along their bases.

The saltpan at which we had arrived was of an oval shape, and about a quarter of a mile in diameter—a low basin whose sides sloped gently down, but the middle was a dead level of fine sand. Upon this sand, throughout the greater part of the pan, lay a thick layer of good coarse salt, varying from one to four inches in depth; heavy rains fill the pan or basin with water, and, the dry season succeeding, the water disappears, and large deposits of salt are found—these pans or salt-licks are met with in several parts of South Africa. Those which mainly supply the colony with good salt are situated between Utenage and Algoa Bay; they are of considerable

extent, and yield a surprising quantity. Ostriches and almost every variety of antelope frequent these pans for the purpose of licking the brack or salt ground, to which they are very partial. The pan which we had reached was formerly visited by Boers and Griquas for the purpose of obtaining salt, but had of late years been abandoned for others which yield it of a better quality; the country around was consequently undisturbed, and, being utterly uninhabited, lonely and still as the grave.

On the morning of the 21st I left my waggons encamped beside the saltpan, and, having proceeded about half a mile in a northerly direction along a waggon-track seldom trodden, I discovered a fountain of excellent water, but very strongly impregnated with saltpetre. This fountain I afterwards learnt is called by the Boers "Gruit Vonteyn," or Powder Fountain, its waters resembling the washings of a gun-barrel; but the Griquas more elegantly call it "Stink Vonteyn." At breakfast-time I was joined by a party of these ruffianly people, who were proceeding with a dilapidated-looking waggon to hunt hartebeests and blue wildebeests in the vicinity of a small fountain to the north-east where game was reported abundant. They were accompanied by several wild-looking, naked Bushmen attendants, captured when young and domesticated, who drove their shooting-horses loose behind the waggon, which grazed as they went along. I also observed a couple of milch-cows among their loose oxen, a healthy luxury without which that race of people seldom proceed on a journey. The country occupied by the Griquas extends from Rhama, a village on the Orange River, about thirty miles to the east of my present position, to Griquastadt, their capital, a village situated about a hundred miles to the northward of the junction of the Vaal with the Orange River; they are governed by a chief, whose name is Waterboer. These men are of Hottentot origin, and in general possess the distinguishing features of that race, such as broad, flat noses, high cheek-bones, small, elephant eyes, thick lips, woolly hair, and other physical peculiarities which, in the present enlightened state of society, it were superfluous to enumerate. They are, however, so mixed up with crosses of other tribes, that every ramification of breed

between Boers, Bechuanas, Mozambiques, Corannas, Namaqua Hottentots, Bushmen, &c., may be found located within their territory. All of these intermarry. Some of them have long black hair, while the craniums of others, such as the Bushmen, are adorned with detached tufts of sickly-looking crisp wool, and the issue of such unions exhibit locks singularly varied.

Another tribe in every way similar to these Griquas inhabits an extensive and fertile country immediately to the east of their territory; these men term themselves Bastards. Their chief's name is Adam Kok, and the name of their capital Philipolis, a small village about thirty miles to the north of Colesberg. Their country is bounded on the south by the Great Orange River, and is about the most desirable district in South Africa for farming purposes, there being numerous fountains throughout its whole extent capable of being led out to irrigate the land: without this no gardens can be formed, nor wheat grown. Rich pasture is abundant; cattle and sheep thrive and breed remarkably well; goats also, an animal valuable to the South African settler, but for which only certain districts are suitable, are here very prolific. The goat in many districts is subject to a disease called by the Boers "brunt sickta," or burnt sickness, owing to the animals afflicted with it exhibiting the appearance of having been burnt; it is incurable, and, if those infected are not speedily killed or separated from the rest, the contagion spreads rapidly, when it is not uncommon for a farmer to lose his entire flock. This sad distemper also extends itself to the *feræ naturæ*. I have shot hartebeests, black wildebeests, blesboks, and springboks, with their bodies covered with this disease, and I have known seasons when the three latter animals were so generally affected by it, that the vast plains throughout which they are found were covered with hundreds of their skulls and skeletons. One of the chief recommendations of the Bastards' country is its admirable suitability for breeding horses; large herds of these may be seen throughout their country pasturing high on the mountain sides, or scattered in troops over its grassy plains. The deadly distemper so prevalent along the frontiers of the colony is here of comparatively rare occurrence; in the far interior, however, it is so

virulent during five or six months of the year, that it is often impossible to save a single horse, and through its ravages I annually lost the greater part of my stud.

The chiefs of the Griquas and Bastards are in close alliance with the English government, which protects them from the attacks of the rebel Dutch Boers, who, well aware of the excellent qualities of the Bastards' country, are possessed with a strong desire to appropriate it; the language spoken by both these tribes is Dutch. They have in general embraced the Christian religion, and several worthy missionaries have, for several years past, devoted their lives to the improvement of their temporal and eternal condition. The dress worn by the men consists of a home-made leathern jacket, waistcoat, and trousers, feldtschoens, or home-made shoes, a Malay handkerchief tied round the head, and on Sundays and other great occasions a shirt and a neckcloth. The females wear a close-fitting corset reaching to the small of the waist, below which they sport a petticoat like the women of other countries; these petticoats are sometimes made of stuffs of British manufacture, and at others of soft leather prepared by themselves. Their head-dress consists of two handkerchiefs, one of black silk, the other of striped red and green; they are very fond of beads of every size and colour, which they hang in strings round their necks. One description of bead is peculiar to themselves and to the tribes extending along the banks of the Great Orange River to its junction with the sea; it is formed of the root of a bush found near the mouth of the Orange River, and possesses a sweet and peculiar perfume. Every Griqua girl wears at least one of these; and no traveller who has once learnt to prize this perfume can inhale it again without its inadvertently recalling to his memory the fine dark eyes and fair forms of the semi-civilised nymphs frequenting the northern bank of the Orange River.

Their houses somewhat resemble a bee-hive or ant-hill, and consist of boughs of trees stuck into the ground in a circular form, lashed down across one another over head so as to form a framework, on which they spread large mats formed of reeds; these are also used instead of waggon-sails, and are very effectual in resisting both sun and rain—the diameter of the

Griqua huts varies from ten to fifteen feet. When they change their quarters in search of pasture, they have therefore little difficulty in removing their house along with them. I have seen a pack-ox carrying not only its master's house on its back, but also a complete set of dairy utensils, all manufactured of wood, a couple of skin bags containing thick milk, various cooking utensils, and, surmounting all, the gude-wife, with one or two of her children. The Griquas are all possessed of flocks and herds of goats, sheep, and cattle. A description of the houses and manner of living of these people may serve to convey an idea of all the tribes that border on the Vaal and Orange rivers in their course to the sea. They are, without exception, of an indolent disposition, and averse to hard work of any description; much of their time is spent in hunting, and large parties annually leave their homes and proceed with their waggons, oxen, and horses on hunting expeditions into the far interior, absenting themselves for three to four months at a time. They are remarkable for their disregard for truth, a weakness which I regret to state I found very prevalent in South Africa; they are also great beggars, generally commencing by soliciting "trexels," a trexel being a pound of tea or coffee. Knowing the gallantry of our nation, they pretend that they are asking it for a wife or daughter, whom they represent as being poorly; if this is granted they continue their importunities, successively fancying your hat, neckcloth, or coat; and I have known them on several occasions coolly ask me to exchange my trousers for their leathern inexpressibles, which they had probably worn for at least a couple of summers.

When this party of sorry-looking Griquas came up to me, being anxious to see as much as possible of the natives of the districts through which I traversed, I invited them to halt and drink coffee with me, an invitation which none of their tribe was ever known to decline. They informed me that, in the mountain-ranges to the north-east, koodoo were to be met with, and invited me to accompany them on their *chasse*. When breakfast was finished they sent their waggon in advance, with instructions to wait for their arrival at the fountain, where they intended to pitch their camp; and,

having saddled up, we all set forward east to hunt koodoos and hartebeests, or any other game we might fall in with. After riding three or four miles, and approaching the base of the hills, we entered an ancient forest of mimosas, every tree a study for an artist; there was also a considerable undercover of various sweet-smelling shrubs and bushes—here steinbok and duyker were abundant. This venerable forest extended all around the bases of various ranges of rocky hills which stretched in different directions through the plains. Close in, at the foot of one of the hills, we discovered a Bushman residence, consisting of three small huts, each about four feet high, and eight in diameter, formed of boughs of trees, and thatched over with rank grass drawn up by the roots; the natives, as usual, had fled on our approach, and no living creature was to be seen. I entered each of the huts and found lots of well "braid," or dressed skins of the wild beasts of these parts. All their dishes were made either of ostrich-eggs or of the shells of land tortoises, and these were ranged round the floor on one side of the hut; most of the ostrich-eggshells contained water.

We crossed the hills by a stony neck; and having proceeded some distance through several well-wooded glades and hollows in the table-land of the hills, came suddenly upon a noble prospect. A wide grassy plain, covered with picturesque mimosas and detached clumps of evergreen bushes, stretched away from the bases of the hills on which we stood; beyond, the landscape was shut in by the bold and abrupt forms of rugged mountain ranges, coloured with a softened blue tint; having descended into this fine picturesque plain, we held north, riding parallel with the hilly chain. Presently, my comrades adopting a course which did not strike me as the most likely to fall in with game, I chose a line of march for myself, and, following under the mountain chain, soon lost sight of them; on this occasion I had taken the field without any after-rider. Having ridden about a mile farther, I came suddenly upon a troop of koodoos; amongst them were two bucks, which carried magnificent, widely-set, long, spiral horns, and these at once made, as koodoos invariably do, for the adjacent rocky hills: their pace was a succession

of long bounds over the thorny bushes, that sadly distressed my poor steed. I nevertheless gained on them, and should assuredly have secured one, had they not reached a stony barrier of sharp, hard rocks, over which they disappeared, and where my horse could not follow. I was much struck with the noble appearance of these two buck koodoos, and felt very chagrined at having lost them.

Turning my face to the south, I rode along the skirts of the forest, when I suddenly perceived a gallant herd of nine old oryxes cantering towards me, all of them carrying horns of immense length and beauty, surpassing anything I had hitherto seen; they were preceded by four beautifully striped zebras, the first I had met with, and followed by two brilliant red hartebeests. In half a minute I was flying along within sixty yards of the troop, anxious to ascertain which had the finest horns, and deploring my folly in having taken the field without my after-riders; I nevertheless entertained hopes of success, as these antelopes had evidently been followed by the Griquas from whom I had parted; and singling out an old bull, to whose flank I stuck for several miles, I at length came to within fifteen yards of his handsome stern; his tongue was hanging from his mouth, and long wreaths of foam streamed back on his sides. Suddenly, on rounding a thorny bush, he pulled up, and, facing about, stood at bay; I sprang breathless and exhausted from my panting steed, and with a shaking hand sent a bullet through his shoulder, which terminated his career—this noble oryx carried the finest horns I had met with, and was the finest in the herd.

Having off-saddled and knee-haltered my horse, I removed the head of the oryx, which I accomplished with some trouble, the skin at the neck being an inch in thickness; and covering the carcass with the thorny branches from a neighbouring mimosa, to protect it from the vultures, I returned to camp, carrying the head on the pommel of the saddle before me, and my rifle over my shoulder.

On the following morning I discovered the skeleton of an old doe koodoo, which a pack of thirty wild dogs had run into and consumed. My Hottentots hastily took possession of the marrow of the thigh-bones, esteemed by them a great

delicacy, and greedily devoured their raw contents. Having ascertained from personal observation that blue wildebeests would come and drink at Stink Vonteyn, I walked to the fountain in the evening, with four of my followers, bearing spades, a pickaxe, and my bedding; and having constructed a shooting-hole, I took up my position for the night, which was mild and lovely, with good moonlight. About midnight I peeped from my hole, and saw a herd of about twenty shaggy blue wildebeests, or brindled gnoos, preceded by a patriarchal old bull, cautiously advancing to the water. I fired at him, and heard the ball tell upon his shoulder, upon which he and the whole troop galloped off in a northerly direction, enveloped in a cloud of red dust.

On the 23rd, at dawn of day, I took up the spoor of the herd, and after proceeding a short distance perceived the head of the old bull, with its strangely hooked, fair-set horns, gazing at me from the long grass some hundred yards in advance. I held as though I intended to go past him; but before I neared him he sprang to his feet, and endeavoured to make off. Poor old bull! He was very faint from loss of blood; one fore leg was broken in the shoulder, and after a tottering run of about a hundred yards, he lay down, when I walked up to within eighty yards of him and sent a bullet through his heart. He afforded us a welcome supply of excellent flesh, being in fine condition. I breakfasted on an ostrich-egg, Kleinboy having found a nest the preceding day; he had, however, unfortunately taken only eight of the eggs, foolishly leaving the other twelve, which on his return he found smashed by the old birds according to their usual custom.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## STINK VONTEYN TO THE VAAL RIVER AND BACK—WILD DOGS.

ON the evening of the 24th we inspanned, and, leaving "Stink Vonteyn," marched upon the Vaal River, distant about twenty-five miles, which we reached about two on the following morning; our road lay through soft sand, making the draught very severe for the oxen. Having sent mounted men through the stream to ascertain its depth, and finding a passage practicable, I resolved at once to cross it—a rule generally adopted by all experienced travellers in this country, among whom a general maxim prevails never to defer the passage of a river if at all fordable when they reach it. Endless are the stories related by South African travellers, who, by failing to adopt this plan, have been compelled to remain for weeks, and even months, on the banks of its various rivers. The current being very powerful, I mounted the leaders of one of my teams, and in a few minutes the long double line of oxen were stoutly stemming the rapid stream, which came half way up their sides; the water just reached the bottom of my cargoes, but did not damage anything. The bank on the farther side was extremely steep and stony, and required every ox to exert himself to the utmost. The river here is very beautiful; broad and rapid reaches are succeeded by long, deep, and tranquil pools, termed by the natives "zekoe ychots," signifying sea-cow or hippopotamus holes, for these vast and wondrous amphibious animals, not many years since, were plentiful along the entire length of the Vaal River. But the hippopotamus, like the elephant, is of a very shy and secluded disposition, and rapidly disappears before the approach of civilization. The margin of the Vaal, as well as the Orange River, is richly clad with dense groves of various evergreen trees, among which drooping willows predominate,

whose long waving fringes dip gracefully into the limpid waters as they glide along in their seaward course; the banks of both these rivers are strewn with huge trunks of trees, which have been borne thither by the mighty floods to which they are annually subject. At a short distance above my encampment on the northern side was a beautiful island, adorned with trees of the richest verdure.

About three P.M. I rode north-east to look for roan-antelopes, which, next to the eland, are the largest in the world, and, being incapable of great speed, may at times be galloped into with a good horse; I was accompanied by Cobus and Jacob. We found the country covered with bushes, the majority of which were covered with thorns on the fish-hook principle. This variety of mimosa is waggishly termed by the Boers "vyacht um bige," or wait-a-bit thorns, as they continually solicit the passing traveller not to be in a hurry, and, if he disregards the request, the probability is that he will leave a part of his shirt or trousers in their possession. Here and there were hills covered with sharp adamantine rocks, throughout which, however, there was abundance of excellent grass and fine green bushes; in short, it was just the country to suit the taste of the rock-loving koodoos, and we soon came upon an old buck, which, when seen standing broadside on, is decidedly one of the grandest-looking antelopes in the world. The ground this day was the most terrific for horses that can be imagined, but "The Cow," having in his youth led an unrestrained life, as most Cape horses do, in the rugged mountains of the Hantam, bounded along the hill side in a style worthy of a klipspringer, and after a severe run, and taking a short cut like a greyhound running cunning, I got within range, and with a single ball rolled over the finest specimen of a koodoo that I had yet shot in Africa; he was a first-rate old buck, and carried a pair of ponderous, long, wide-set, spiral horns.

Owing to the nature of the ground which the koodoos frequent, it is a very difficult matter to ride them down; they are more usually obtained by stealing upon them: when, however, the hunter discovers a heavy old buck koodoo on level ground, there is no great difficulty to ride into him, his speed

and endurance being very inferior to that of the oryx. The skin of the koodoo, though thin, is extremely tough, and much prized by the colonists for "foreslocks," or lashes for ox-waggon whips. A koodoo-skin was my mattress this night, a saddle my pillow; and supperless I lay down to rest, without any covering save an old shirt and a pair of leather crackers. The excitement of the thrilling sport I had enjoyed prevented my sleeping until a late hour; I dreamt we were surrounded by a troop of lions, and, awaking with a loud cry, startled my men and horses from their slumbers.

On the morning of the 30th I inspanned, and trekked some miles farther up the northern bank of the Vaal, encamping opposite where the Riet or Reed River joins it. The stream here, about a hundred and fifty yards in breadth, is extremely beautiful, with sloping banks richly adorned with shady evergreen groves, and fringed with lofty reeds, which are always infested with a virulent species of mosquito. This day I made a fine off-hand shot at an old cock bustard at a hundred and fifty yards, and returning to my waggon, where I expected to find my breakfast waiting me, discovered my two worthies, Jacob and Cobus, whose duty it was to prepare it, quietly reclining under the shade of a mimosa, enjoying the soothing influence of their short clay pipes. Thinking a little wholesome correction might prove beneficial, I accordingly administered it, which so disgusted these high-minded youths, that they embraced the opportunity of my bathing to abscond from my service.

The 31st was a charming cool day, the sky beautifully overcast, and, having enjoyed a good swim in the waters of the Vaal, I saddled up, and rode north to seek for roan antelope. I was accompanied by Carollus, the native of Mozambique, who was much too heavy to act as after-rider, and by my little Bushboy Ruyter, who, although he had learnt to ride among the Boers, had an indifferent seat on horseback, and would never push his horse to overtake any antelope if the ground were at all rough.

Having explored the country to a considerable distance without any result, I resolved to make for home, as the

darkening sky and distant thunder threatened a heavy storm, and in less than half an hour the rain descended in torrents, and the wind blew extremely cold. Peals of thunder, the loudest I think I had ever heard, now broke over us, and the forked lightning played above and around with such vividness as to pain my eyes. Shifting my saddle from "Sunday" to "The Cow," we pricked along at a smart pace, and were entering a thicket of thorny bushes, when a very large grey-looking antelope stood up under one of them. I could not see his head, but I at once knew that it was the long-sought-for roan antelope, or bastard gemsbok. Carrollus quietly handed me my little Moore rifle, which lay well secured from the pelting storm in one of Mr. Hugh Snowie's patent waterproof covers. The noble buck now bounded forth, a superb old male, carrying a pair of grand scimitar-shaped horns, and standing nearly five feet high at the shoulder. "The Cow" knew well what he had to do, and set off after him with right good will over a succession of masses of rock and stone, and dense thorny bushes. In a few minutes my legs below the knee were a mass of blood, and my shirt, my only covering, was flying in streamers from my waist. The old buck at first got a little ahead, but, the ground improving, I gained upon him, and after a sharp burst of about two miles we came to a slight acclivity, when he suddenly faced about and stood at bay, gazing on me with glowing eyes, and a look of defiance. This was to me a joyful moment; the buck I had for many years heard of and longed to meet was now within forty yards of me; dismounting, I sent a bullet through his shoulder, when he endeavoured to charge, but his strength failed him, and I then gave him a second shot in the neck, just where I always cut off the head. This was his *coup-de-grace*. he rolled over, and, stretching his limbs, closed his eyes upon the storm, which all this time had raged with increasing severity.

Feeling extremely cold, for I had lost my shirt in the chase, and all that was left me was my shoes and leather knee-breeches, I nevertheless took some time to inspect the beautiful and rare antelope which I had been fortunate enough to capture. He proved to be a first-rate specimen: his horns were

extremely rough and finely knotted. I now proceeded to cut off his head and "gralloched" him, all of which I accomplished before my followers came up. They stumbled on me by chance, having lost sight of me in the storm. Having shifted my saddle from "The Cow" to "Colesberg," I ordered them to follow, and rode hard for camp, which was distant many miles.

My meal-bag was now almost empty; and this being a dangerous country for the horse-sickness, a distemper which rages during February, March, and April, I resolved to recross the Vaal River, and bend my course for the land of blesboks, a large and beautiful violet-coloured antelope, which is found, together with black wildebeests and springboks, in countless multitudes on the vast green plains of short sour grass situated about a hundred and fifty miles to the eastward of my position. My purpose was to amuse myself hunting in these parts, and after that revisit Colesberg, where I intended to store the specimens of natural history I had already accumulated. Before removing from my present encampment I fell in with a troop of twelve young ostriches, not much larger than guinea-fowls; I was amused to see the mother endeavour to lead us away exactly like a wild duck, spreading out and drooping her wings, and throwing herself down on the ground before us as if wounded, while the cock bird cunningly led the brood away in an opposite direction.

In the afternoon of the 3rd of February we inspanned, and retraced our steps to the drift, which we reached in the dark: I crossed the river however and encamped on the opposite bank. On the following day I marched through a sandy country adorned in parts with very ancient-looking, picturesque trees of the "cameel-dorn" species to a small kraal of Griquas, where I hoped to obtain some corn, and from this village I had a distant view of both the Vaal and the Orange River. Here I purchased eight "emirs" or measures of wheat from one of the Griquas, with a couple of goats for slaughter, and subsequently returned to Stink Vonteyn. Namaqua partridges mustered in great force here. I met with three varieties; they are abundant wherever extensive open sandy dis-