

A LADY TRADER IN THE TRANSVAAL.

CHAPTER I.

ON a fine breezy morning, early in December, 1878, a number of passengers, and volunteers for the Zulu war, crowded the deck of one of the Union Company's steamships, then lying off the Port of D'Urban, or Port Natal. She had been for some days unable to land her passengers owing to the roughness of the "bar," that terrible difficulty presented by all south-east African seaports; but early on this particular morning the joyful intelligence that the tug was coming was made known, and the excitement was great in consequence.

The volunteers had all come on board at East London, a very sparsely populated and commonplace-looking seaside village on the African coast. They were more or less prepared for what lay before them, for they knew what life in South Africa is; but to the majority of the passengers the low-lying, jungly-looking shore on which the breakers were beating was like the drop-scene of an unknown opera. What lay behind it was a mystery

to all those who were then for the first time landing in South Africa—at least one half of the number assembled on deck. Most of them, no doubt, felt this; but there was one, at least, who did not. This was a young gentleman who went by the name of “Dick.” He was a strapping youngster of about eighteen, who, I am inclined to think, had been shipped to Africa because nothing could be done with him at home. The new life before him presented no difficulties to his mind; he knew exactly how he was going to manage. He would buy a horse at D’Urban, put a few things in his saddle-bags, strap his tent on his horse’s crupper, and ride to Rustenberg (his destination) with a Kaffir for his guide. There he would rapidly make his fortune, principally by trading amongst the Kaffirs, to which end he had, before leaving England, provided himself with a stock of little machines, which (if my memory serves me rightly) are labelled in shop-windows “A cup of tea in five minutes.” This invention consists of a piece of sponge covered with wire gauze and encased in a metal cover, so that the apparatus can be carried in the pocket until it is required to perform the part of a spirit-lamp. The contrivance is more complicated than I describe, and decidedly ingenious. Dick had a store of these things in perfect order, and was confident of doing a roaring trade in them amongst the Kaffirs.

Dick was now, however, troubled with a difficulty; it was this: he had two dogs, one an English bull-terrier—it had cost him 5*l.* to bring the animal from England—the other a Kaffir mongrel, for which he had paid a sovereign to the owner, who had come on board at Cape Town. The owner was a Kaffir, and had brought his dog on board without asking any questions, and probably would have

taken him off without any being asked of him ; but when Dick bought the dog, the captain and chief officer declared that he must pay the full fare for the animal, and on his indignant refusal, threatened to seize his saddle. Poor Dick was in an agony, honestly believing they meant what they said, and being much troubled in his mind as to how his new acquisition, a very large and lively dog, was to be got into the tug. The method of conveying the passengers from the steamship to the tug was certainly enough to alarm the poor mongrel, and Dick was justified in thinking it likely that he would object to it. A strongly-made basket, large enough to hold three or four persons crouching down, was being periodically hauled up to the side and swung over to the deck of the ship, filled with passengers, and then lowered away, until, amidst much laughter and shouting, its unlucky occupants were let bump down on the deck of the little tug that was bobbing about by the side of her big sister, when they were immediately and very unceremoniously tumbled out if they were men. Women and children were somewhat more gently treated. It certainly struck me that it would be very easy to break one's legs in the operation, and when my turn came I was very glad to find myself safely on board the little vessel. She was a funny-looking little craft, made expressly for crossing the disagreeable bar, and we were all cautioned to sit fast and wedge ourselves in well, or we might be swept overboard as we passed it. I expected a frightful drenching at least, but nothing at all happened ; it was the old story of the mountain and the mouse, and as such, it formed a fitting prelude to life in South Africa, where, so far as my experience goes, everything is exaggerated—dangers, difficulties, beauties, and advantages.

I believe that D'Urban is a pretty town, but it did not look pretty to me, for I was in a bad temper. I had arranged to travel with a party who were going up country to speculate, thinking that it might be difficult for a lady alone, unless blessed with large means, to travel in a country of which the languages and customs were unknown to her. It is, I think, rather trying for any one accustomed to manage for himself to submit to be managed for, unless the management be very good, which in this case it was not. I found it decidedly tried me, and when it came on to rain, and (there being a strike of the Kaffir porters on that day) my companions piled all the luggage in the middle of a tramway, seemingly unconscious of there being any unadvisability in its being so disposed of, I felt very uncharitable towards them. The result of this disposition of our joint property was, that after a while a number of Kaffirs, with that beautiful disregard of consequences which is one of the pleasing characteristics of the race, sent a line of empty railway trucks right into it. The acrobatic and athletic efforts then made to rescue individual boxes dear to the owners' hearts, were amusing to behold; but it would have been a great relief to one's feelings to have been able to vent one's wrath, if only in words, on those unpleasant Kaffirs, who looked on grinning; but it was no use abusing them, for they didn't understand English, and none of us spoke Zulu or any other Kaffir language. At last I got into an omnibus which runs between the Port and the village of D'Urban, taking "Jimmy" with me. And here, as I shall have occasion to mention Jimmy again, let me introduce him.

Jimmy was a boy of nearly sixteen, whom I had known

from the time he was very small. He belonged to the party with whom I had arranged to travel, and was the only member of it with whom I had any previous acquaintance when I went on board the Union Company's ship at Southampton. He was fresh from home and school, and not at all accustomed to roughing it, hence he was permitted to be a good deal with me, and was allowed certain little privileges not accorded to the men of the party, or even to another youngster not much older than Jimmy, but about twice his size and strength.

The omnibus set us down at the best hotel in D'Urban; but that does not say very much. The village consisted of a line of straggling cottages or small houses, some of them with things in the window for sale, a railway-station, and a rather nice-looking building where the post-office was. I say consisted, for it may be much changed since then. The hotel was a cottage standing in a garden. There was a sitting-room with a piano in it, and a *table d'hôte* in an adjoining but separate room; but there were none of the other arrangements which one connects in one's mind with an hotel. The idea it gave me was that a small farmhouse had been suddenly called upon to accommodate several people, and that the owner was doing his best. On the whole, D'Urban did not strike me as a singularly delectable spot, and I was not sorry to leave it.

We departed by the train, which took us to Pine Town, a pretty little place, in the middle of scenery that reminded me of an Indian jungle.

Here we got into an omnibus. We were packed very tight, and had little parcels of various sorts crammed into every available spot. The road was rough, and the horses went at a rattling rate. I suppose it was what some of

the people said, "miserable;" but I rather enjoyed it, for the scenery was fine. We stopped for dinner at a farmhouse, and got into Pieter-Maritzburg at sunset. The town looked very pretty with the evening light on it, lying in the middle of a circle of hills; but it is not really a very pretty place, although I believe its inhabitants think it so. Pieter-Maritzburg in reality is, or was when I saw it, only a large village.

Before I proceed, I must warn my readers, that although I shall have to tell them of rocks and valleys and wooded ravines, &c., they must not picture to themselves anything analogous to what they may have seen in Switzerland or Italy. There are such things in this part of the world, but they are commonplace. It is necessary to come here to understand what a "commonplace" wooded ravine means, but once here one understands it perfectly. I have often tried to make out in what this want of beauty, where there ought to be beauty, consisted, and I think that to a considerable extent it is caused by a want of atmosphere, to use a phrase common to artists. In this part of the world the sun rises, when the sky is cloudless, in a bright yellow halo. It is yellow—not the glorious gold of the Egyptian or Indian sunrise—and the light it throws on all around is simply a bright yellow light. There are no delicately shaded tints, as it fades into shadow, or plays over an uneven surface. The artist who would portray it need have but few colours in his paint-box. If the sky be cloudy, he need only as a rule have plenty of grey, and enough red and yellow for a streak or two. It is very seldom one sees the beautiful rose-flecked sky which made the fanciful Greeks gift Aurora with rosy-tipped fingers. And then, where will

a dweller here find the magnificent colouring of an Indian, or the ethereal blush of an Italian, sunset? The finest he will ever see here will not be equal to many that he will have seen in England.

The colouring of the scenery is monotonous. The grass when it is not yellow is a very vivid green; the trees have not much variety of hue or form; and the sky is very blue—a cobalt blue, deepening into indigo as it nears the horizon, but without a trace of the rose-pink which, when we first learn to put a brush on paper, we are so strenuously enjoined never to omit in an horizon. Even the moonlight is not so ethereal as in other countries, although it is often very bright.

So much for the scenery. Now, as to the life here, I can only compare it to a picture in which there is no central point for the eye to rest on, in which everything is equally prominent. It is moral atmosphere which is wanting, I am inclined to think. Life here is a jumble, to use an inelegant but expressive word. To me, and to many I fancy, there is much in the life which is attractive. It is, I believe, a fact, that people who have been here for some time and have longed to return to Europe, having done so, have come back to finish their days in Africa. But I doubt whether more than two or three of those persons even, could have told the characteristic charm which thus recalled them from their old homes.

CHAPTER II.

JIMMY and I left Pieter-Maritzburg on a fine afternoon, having been there about a week—the rest of the party, together with the two waggons which had been hired by the manager, having gone on in front—the men on foot, we on horseback, or rather on ponyback, for neither of our steeds was fifteen hands high. I had found it very hard to get serviceable animals at Pieter-Maritzburg, for at that time all the available, and many unavailable horses, were bought up by the volunteers. Dick had invested in a weedy-looking young mare, and he rode her to death, I heard, in about a fortnight, although he was not in the volunteers. Two of our party had left us to join the native contingent (then being raised) as volunteer officers. They spoke nothing but English, and their men nothing but a Kaffir dialect; so how they, and many others who joined like them, managed, I do not know. They had also bought miserable hacks. I cannot say much for my own two. One, which Jimmy bestrode, was a rough and ugly Basuto pony, very thin, but with good qualities. My pony was larger, fat, and handsome; he would have been very good, except for his laziness. I certainly never have seen so lazy a little horse. He would stand stock-still, unless forcibly reminded that he was wanted to

walk; and when induced to canter, he would in five minutes fall into a walk. These two animals were the means of introducing me to the common domestic insect of this part of the world, namely, the "tick," or "bush-louse," as it is called by the Boers. There were hundreds on both the ponies, and the groom of the hotel being, as Kaffir grooms generally are, a useless addition to the stable, Jimmy and I had employed hours in ridding our ponies of the parasites. I had an idea that I knew what a "tick" was, on sheep in England; but the South African tick is a wonderful creature. There are grey, brown, whitish, and striped varieties, besides one exceedingly poisonous kind, yellow-green on the back, with a white line with symmetrical streaks of red on it running round the edge of the podgy little body, and the belly grey. These insects vary in size, from almost invisibility to the bulk of a hazel-nut. They are very agile; and if you happen to be sitting on the grass, you have a good chance of seeing one walk nimbly towards you, with a hungry look pervading his small person. What the creatures live on when they don't happen to fall in with some living prey I do not know, but numbers of them certainly have their habitat in the grass.

Jimmy and I started on ponyback. With a vague idea that I was going into a wild country, and with a distinct one that Jimmy was not likely to afford me much protection, I had a revolver in a case strapped round my waist, and another in a holster on my saddle. The waggons had started in a hurry; and there having been some misunderstanding on my part as to when I was to have all my things loaded up, a good many things belonging to Jimmy and myself had been left behind, and these

were crammed into our saddle-bags, and tied on our saddles. However, we started, and having arrived at an even stretch of road halfway up the hill immediately beyond the village, Jimmy proposed a canter. It was not a particularly fast one, but the effect was disastrous. I was a little in front when I heard "Hilloa! I say, look what's happening!" and looking back, I beheld the road strewn with articles which had gradually fallen from Jimmy's various parcels. Jimmy looked disconsolate as he returned, and began to pick them up and tie them on again, while I sat on my pony and laughed. This was unfair, I must confess, for the loading up arrangement had been of my invention, not Jimmy's. Presently we came up to one of our party, sitting, hot and weary, on a big stone near to a hand-cart laden with miscellaneous articles, which had not arrived in time to be packed in the waggons. I must here observe, that the manager of our party had contracted for our being taken to Pretoria with our goods by a carrier, or what is here called a transport-rider, and the transport-rider was imperious about when he would "in and out-span," to use a South African phrase for putting the oxen into and letting them out of the yoke. I confess that, being at the time ignorant of the conditions of transport-riding, I thought our carrier unreasonable on this and many other occasions. But experience has taught me that in respect of his treatment of oxen in this one particular, he was altogether reasonable, for in travelling with an ox-waggon, even an inhuman man, and our driver was one, must consider his oxen, or else he will stick fast on the road.

The young gentleman who was sitting hot and weary on the stone, guarding the hand-cart while his com-

panions in misfortune had gone to drink somewhere, must have been a very amiable person if he did not feel something akin to hatred of Jimmy and myself as we rode up, and after a few words rode on. He did his best to look cheerful; and this was creditable to him, although it was a failure, for who could be expected to look cheerful at being harnessed two abreast to a heavy hand-cart, and having to drag it uphill for miles in a broiling sun? Everything, however, has an end. Some time after Jimmy and I reached the place where the waggons were outspanned, the cart was brought in, the articles in it placed in the waggons, and the cart itself sent back—I forget how—to Pieter-Maritzburg. When the oxen were inspanned and we started once more, we felt that we were fairly *en route*; and being so, let me describe the waggons, which were to serve us as houses until we reached Pretoria. The one was an open buck-waggon, something of the same make as our large English hay-waggons, with a tarpaulin, or what is here called “a buck-sail,” thrown over it to protect the goods. There were, I think, eighteen oxen in this waggon, which was driven principally by the Africander transport-rider, a small man, with red whiskers and moustache. The other waggon was also a buck-waggon, or waggon with railings projecting from the sides for the support of goods; but on the back half of it there was a tent, formed of canvas stretched on bent laths, so as to form a complete covering at the sides and top. The ends were furnished with canvas flaps, to be shut or opened at pleasure. With very few articles packed in a half-tent, its occupant, if there be but one, may be comfortable enough; but when, in addition to

cases, the entire paraphernalia which a company of twelve men, most of them unaccustomed to travelling, think necessary to keep handy, is tumbled into it, the conditions are altered. Of course each man had a rifle, and these weapons had to be kept exceptionally handy, although they did not get us more than two or three brace of birds during our whole trek, and not even one buck. The result of twelve men and one woman (myself) having these things "handy" in a half-tent was this. The various articles underwent a rotatory movement every time one of them was wanted, and became well mixed up. Later on I was able to make canvas bags and tie them up to the sides of the tent, and so save my property from the general confusion, but at the outstart my goods contributed to it.

Our evening outspan was on a bleak hill-top, along which a thick, damp mist was beginning to sweep. It soon enveloped us, and rendered the cooking of the evening meal difficult. In agreeing with the transport-driver, no definite understanding had been come to as to what assistance the natives under his control were to render, hence they gave us very little, and the men had to bring water, fuel, &c., and make the fire themselves. This a native will do in pouring rain, but an Englishman, as a rule, is puzzled to do it even in a drizzling mist. Presently, through the mist, up rode the two of our party who had joined the volunteers; they came to bid their companions God-speed, and then rode off, as it was already late. I don't know what became of one of them; the other was massacred as he lay ill of fever in the hospital at Rorke's Drift. In the meantime the tent for the men was pitched by them. I had a tent, but I think I only

A Lady Trader in the Transvaal. 13

persuaded them to pitch it for my benefit four times, and I forget whether this was one of those occasions. Presently supper made its appearance. The meal consisted of fried ham, bread, and coffee—without milk, be it understood. It does not sound badly, but I will describe it in the words of the man who cooked it: “Rancid tallow candle, with lots of salt in it.” He would not eat of it; but I was very hungry, and did, although I confess the description was accurate.

CHAPTER III.

I SHALL not give a lengthened description of a journey in or with an ox-waggon, through a country whose leading feature is an utter absence of any objects of interest, except to the eye of a speculative farmer, and even he could not but be disagreeably impressed by the want of water. I will sum it up by saying, that we travelled over many miles of undulating country, starting early in the morning, outspanning in the middle of the day, and travelling again in the evening, during which time we were not particularly comfortable. The men generally walked; Jimmy and I rode. It was very rough, although after our first evening the food improved; but the want of milk was trying. Then, too, it is unpleasant when the weather is very hot not to be able to get a good wash, or to change one's linen often; and these were impossibilities for me, owing to my not being able to induce the men to pitch my tent. The waggon-tent was too much cumbered for even an active person, not to say one who is lame, as I am, to perform satisfactory ablutions in; and the absence of trees made an impromptu dressing-room a thing not to be thought of. Sometimes we came to a little shanty called an hotel, and then I eagerly seized the opportunity for a

wash; but these accommodations were very few, and far between.

One duty which devolved on me, many would, I dare say, consider a hardship, but I did not mind it; this was cleaning my horse. I was a new hand at grooming a horse then, having previously only had the brush and comb in my hands *en amateur*, and it is one thing to rub down a well-groomed horse for amusement, and another to clean a very dirty and hot one under a broiling sun; but I cannot say that I disliked this hardship, although I used to wish that our outspanning times were such as to allow of my grooming operations being carried on at some hour when the sun was low. At best, however, a mid-day outspan in a treeless country is objectionable; it is pleasanter to be moving than stationary during the process of being broiled. It is true that under the waggon there is a little shade, but in this case it was not available for me, being fully occupied by the tired men. It is, however, absolutely necessary for oxen to rest in the heat of the day if they are to work well; and, as I said before, our conductor in this respect was a good manager.

The first place that made an impression on my mind was Kar-Kloof. It is approached by a road that winds round a hill-side, and then one is almost startled by the abruptness and length of the ascent in front. It seems almost impossible for oxen to drag a loaded waggon up so long and steep a hill. It is a picturesque place (for Africa), with deep gullies at the side of the rugged road, and with even a sprinkling of trees. On the top of this tremendous hill is a tiny iron house—an inn, and very glad I was that such a thing existed; for hardly were we

at the top when a most terrific storm broke over us. There was even a stable, or what served the purpose of one, and in it, to my great relief, I was able to get shelter for the horses. The landlady, a most garrulous and inquisitive old person, was very kind to me; although she apparently regarded my companions as undesirable characters, and came down on them very sharp whenever she could. The storm ended in a thick mist, through which one of the men thought he saw a buck, and incontinently set forth, rifle in hand. The buck disappeared, and so did its would-be persecutor; the disappearance of the former being for good, and of the latter for the whole night, which he spent in forlornly wandering in continual dread of losing his footing amongst the rocks and gullies as completely as he had lost his way.

Then there was Estcourt, a place that looked pretty by moonlight, but not so well by daylight; and then there was the Drachensberg, or Dragon Mountain. I had heard much of this terrible mountain, and dreadful accounts of what happened to waggons whilst attempting to cross it; I therefore approached it with a certain amount of respect.

The Drachensberg is not a single mountain, but a very long chain, as any one can see by looking at it on the map. At its foot the road coming from Natal divides into two, one branch leading across the mountain into the Free State, the other going to Newcastle. We were to go by the former, and I now learned that we were to go to Pretoria *viâ* Heilbronn and Heidelberg. My knowledge of the geography of the country was not up to the mark, but it was sufficient to render this announcement startling to me, the taking Heilbronn *en route* to Heidelberg

bringing me some sixty or seventy miles out of my way ; however, the conductor said he had to go, and that was considered to be conclusive. I believe the reason he gave was, that having lost many of his oxen on the road, and thinking it likely he should lose more, he had to go to Heilbronn, where his home was, for fresh oxen ; in reality, he went to pick up his wife, who wanted to pay a visit to Heidelberg. But whatever was the reason, he said he must go by Heilbronn ; and we, having no previous contract as to the road by which he was to travel, had to obey. We left the hospitable little inn at the foot of the mountain in the afternoon. The preamble of our starting was as follows :—

My horse's withers having been touched by the saddle, and Jimmy's pony being also touched on the back, I said I would go in the waggon.

"If that be so," said the conductor, "your young friend had best go with you."

"Why?" I inquired.

"Because very likely the waggon may be upset," quoth the conductor.

What benefit I was to derive from Jimmy's presence in such a case I did not pause to inquire, but, as speedily as I could, descended from my destined conveyance—just in time to see a wretched sheep in its dying agonies, having been killed for our supper by one of the men, alongside of the waggon, to which it was speedily hung.

The innkeeper now provided a light carriage called a "spider," drawn by four oxen, for my benefit, in which I started some time after the waggons had done so.

The ascent of the Dragon Mountain is certainly picturesque, although the lack of trees is very much felt,

but the effect of it was greatly marred by a thick mist which came on as evening drew in. Presently we came to our waggons, stuck in the mud amongst a lot of others all in the same predicament. It was a nice pleasant look-out! The spider deposited me in the mud; the men pitched their tent in the mud; and presently up came Jimmy leading the two ponies, all very muddy. The supper was what might be expected under the circumstances. I got Jimmy into the waggon with me, tied the horses to the back of it, and fed them from my hand—for the mud made it impossible to feed them on the ground, and I had no nose-bag for them—and then prepared to go to sleep. My remembrance of that night is, that it was a perpetual struggle to avoid slipping out at the back; for as there was no mattress, but only a blanket or two thrown on a mixed assortment of articles, prominent amongst which were the rifles of the party, and the waggon stood on a steep incline, not only oneself, but all one was lying on had a downward tendency.

Towards morning I heard dismal sounds from a member of our party who had attempted to sleep on the waggon, outside the tent but under the buck-sail, and then a clank which told me that his head must have come in collision with a certain tin box of mine.

“I can’t stand this any longer,” he groaned; and I heard him descend to where, under the waggon, some of his companions had been sleeping in the mud. This woke them, and they began making comparisons between the relative coldness of their backs, which so amused me that I completely woke up, to find the dawn breaking very sullenly. I found the poor ponies warm under their blankets, but slipping in the mud, which was by this

time over their pasterns, and got them something to eat. Then with difficulty I woke Jimmy—who solemnly assured me he had not slept a wink all night—and suggested to him the advisability of saddling, and trying to push on to an inn on the Willow River, which I heard was about twelve miles distant. This we did, passing a waggon, all broken to pieces in its fall, a little way ahead of our waggons, which, with the rest of the party, did not get to our harbour of refuge by the Willow River for two days, having fearful weather on the mountains.

We were now in the Orange Free State, and during my stay at the little hostelry I heard much political talk, adverse to the English, from an old Free-Stater somewhat addicted to the bottle. I also had a conversation with a gentleman of a very inventive turn of mind, who told me some wonderful stories, to which I listened gravely. Whenever something suggested to him that my wonderment was getting too strong, he would appeal in a most artless manner to the memory of a friend of his who was there, and the friend always remembered. These two were dwellers in the Transvaal, but both, with delightful *naïveté*, cautioned me not to trust any Transvaalists, as they were all fearfully acute and untrustworthy.

On the morning after the arrival of our party at the Willow River, Jimmy and I started for Harrismith, the others, with the waggons having gone on before. We found them having breakfast, and stopped for a few minutes with them.

Harrismith looked like a dismal little attempt at a town. I was fresh from European and Indian cities and towns then. Now, after a little more than two years in

the Transvaal, I have become sufficiently savage to think Harrismith, whenever I may next see it, quite a respectable attempt at one. There are two inns in the place; the one to which we went was fairly comfortable—at least the sitting-room, dining-room, and my bedroom adjoining the sitting-room, were very good. I could see that the bedroom was the show bedroom, and I don't know what the others were. The stable was large, and crammed with horses—just tied to the manger, without any division between them, and so closely packed that it was difficult to get between them so as to clean one's own horse. And the dirt! The Augean stable must have been a trifle to it!

From Harrismith we were to trek to Heilbronn, and when our party came up it was proposed that I should go there in the post-cart, leaving Jimmy in charge of my horse and his own. I was rather loath to trust my horse to the tender mercies of either Jimmy or any of the men; but I had two reasons for acceding to the proposal—first, that the horse's withers were touched by the saddle; secondly, that my companions were evidently looking forward with delight to the idea of getting rid of me, and I felt it would be ungenerous to disappoint them. So it was arranged that they were to start on the morning of, I think, Thursday, and I was to start on Friday in the post-cart.

Just as they were starting, I bethought me that it might be as well not to carry money with me during my solitary drive with the Kaffir post-boy, and keeping only enough for roadside expenses, I sent the rest of my possessions on in the waggon; and, bidding Jimmy and my pony farewell, I prepared to employ the remainder of

the day as best I could. There were a few books on the round table in the sitting-room, none of them worth reading but one, Dickens's "Great Expectations." With this to enjoy, I lay down on the sofa, and had a thorough rest.

The next morning I remained in bed until my coffee was brought to the door by a Kaffir; and I was dressing leisurely, when I was startled by hearing a voice I was sure was Jimmy's. I hurried out, and there, in good truth, was Jimmy, looking very tired. In answer to my astonished inquiry how he came to be there, he recounted the following story, which he believes in implicitly to the present day, but to which no one else has ever attached any credit.

He had ridden in front of the waggons, leaving my pony in charge of the men, and although believing himself to be on the right road, virtually lost his way. Being, I fancy, rather glad to ride his pony just as he liked, instead of under my inspection, he rode and dismounted, rode and dismounted, until evening began to creep up, when it occurred to him as odd that the waggons were not coming up into sight. Just about this time he was close to a small stony hill or coppie, down which he saw three Kaffirs, armed with assegais, coming. He looked at them with some suspicion, and rode on, looking behind every now and then, when he observed that they were following him. He then cantered, upon which they ran; then, according to his account, he caused his pony to gallop—a feat I don't think the pony was capable of; anyhow, he attained to a pace which appeared a very fast one to the rider, when one of the Kaffirs threw an assegai after him, which overshot him, and stuck quivering in the ground. Thereupon Jimmy struck across the veldt, and

cantered or galloped along till night stopped him. He then dismounted and led the pony, feeding himself and his little steed with some gingerbread and other biscuits he had in his pocket; but as he had no idea where he was, it was not much use walking about leading a pony. However, he presently saw a light in the distance, and making for it, found it to proceed from the fire of a friendly waggoner, who told him he was some twenty miles from Harrismith, but far off the waggon-road to Heilbronn, and who advised him to go with him to Harrismith, whither he was bound, and to find me out. He then gave him some supper and a blanket, and tied the pony behind the waggon, so that Jimmy need not stir when the waggon started.

All I can say about the assegai story is, that the Free State was far from the seat of war, in a condition of profound peace, and that I was informed that it is unlawful in the Free State for Kaffirs to carry assegais. One thing was evident, Jimmy was there, and so was the pony. Jimmy was tired; the pony completely knocked up. The question was, what could I do? I had my ticket for the post-cart, which was to start at ten o'clock, and a few shillings over what my hotel bill would amount to—and the price of a place in the post-cart was four sovereigns! It was evident that money must be raised, and so I raised it by selling the pony; and then Jimmy and I awaited the arrival of the post-cart, which was supposed to take us to Heilbronn in two days. Its advent was heralded by very loud talking. A gentleman on horseback was alongside of it, who in excited tones drew the attention of another individual to the state of the hulking Kaffir driver of the vehicle.

"I can't think of allowing a lady to go with the drunken brute," he exclaimed. "We *must* get another driver."

Whereupon he jumped off his horse.

"I'll give you a jolly hiding, and send you to prison, you rascal. You stand there, and take that—and that—and that—and that," and he struck the Kaffir across the head, arms, and breast, with his heavy stinging ox-hide whip.

The fellow barely stirred a muscle. I could hardly at the time think that he felt much, but Kaffirs will sometimes bear a beating that *does* hurt in that way. There was a twitch of the mouth each time the whip fell—that was all.

"Now you take him away," quoth the excited man; "and you here, you must drive."

You here was a diminutive Hottentot.

"I can't drive," said the Hottentot.

"Oh, never mind that," said the excited gentleman, who probably knew this was not the case; "jump up!"

"And I don't know the road."

"Then you'll have to find it out. You drove the cart some time ago—you must know it; jump up!" and up the Hottentot jumped.

The vehicle into which he jumped, and into which I proceeded to scramble, had once been a dog-cart, but was now a ruin; the system of pieces of leather and cord, ingeniously twisted together, which attached it to the horses, had, I suppose, once been a set of harness; the horses once had certainly been very good, but now they were a pair of vicious, jibbing rips. How they did jib! and when the united efforts of the little Hottentot (who soon proved that he could drive) and some four or five

other men had got them to move, how they did rush away with the little cart !

They were just sobering down to a reasonable pace at the outskirts of the village when my driver said, "Will you hold the reins ? That's my house ; I must say good-bye to my wife, and get my blanket." The small man could talk English. Upon his return from taking a fond adieu of Mrs. Hottentot, the horses steadily refused to move. Jimmy had to push the wheels, and there was a great to-do before, with a plunge, they got away again ; but alas ! there was a spruit, or small ravine with a brook running through it, before us !

The Hottentot in the meanwhile opened his heart to me. "It is very hard pressing me like this," he said. "I don't remember the road ; and my ribs were broken the other day, and they are hardly well." I don't know whether the effect was that of the broken ribs or not, but as he spoke the little man foamed at the mouth like a champing horse, which was unpleasant when one was to leeward of him, as I was : I therefore discouraged conversation. A few minutes after brought us to the spruit, where the operations of coaxing, whipping, and pushing the jibbing horses, had to be resorted to. The road was very uneven, and this had to be repeated at every little hitch, we therefore got along rapidly. I was looking forward with anxiety to the change, but it only brought us even worse horses. Then the harness took to breaking, and was mended with little strips of leather and pieces of twine, produced out of his pocket by the little driver. Each change seemed to bring us worse horses. At last a pair of almost unbroken colts were put in. It was a terrible battle to get them to start at all, and then they

went at a furious rate, but stopped at the first hitch, and plunged the harness nearly off, breaking it hopelessly in one place. The Hottentot's resources were exhausted; but fortunately I had a little hunting-crop with me, and its lash did excellent service.

"We must be 'near the house where I ought to leave some letter," said the Hottentot at one place; "but I don't know the road."

"Dear me," said I, with my European conscientiousness about letters still unimpaired. "What *can* you do?"

"Oh, I shall just go on," said the little man. "It isn't my fault. I told him I didn't know the road."

Presently it began to get dusk and chilly. "I can't get to the right place for outspanning for the night," said the driver. "We must stop at the next house."

A Dutch farmhouse is very different from an English one. It is merely, as a rule, a wretched hovel, stuck down in the middle of a waste of grass.

The Free State farmhouses are particularly desolate-looking, owing to the Free State being unfit for agriculture, and given over to pasturing cattle, sheep, and horses. The cottage where we stopped, however, was rather a good specimen, and the people—a young man and a pretty woman, his wife—were very hospitable, and gave us a good supper, cleanly served, and, to me at least, a clean bed. There was a nice basin and jug, with a clean towel neatly folded over it, in my room; but they never thought of the water!

I cannot describe the country we travelled through, for there is nothing in it to describe; it is simply a wide expanse of grass, with spruits running through it at

intervals—spruits with quantities of stones, but sometimes only a trickle of water in them. The flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle and horses, are striking features of the scene.

Through this scenery, if scenery it could be called, we took our way once more on Saturday morning. Our hosts would accept of no payment, only thanks. They gave us a cup of black coffee before we started, without either sugar or milk—I suppose the cows were not yet milked—and we were off once more.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER a long drive we got to a small house, into whose one room a large and very dirty family were crowded. Here the woman gave us a bottle of milk, and a little farther on we got some bread—the man who gave it to us asking for payment, but not getting any, because I had only gold and he had no silver. The horses in the meantime were becoming from bad to worse, Jimmy and our charioteer having frequently to get out to push the wheels, the reins being delivered over to me; and many a laugh I had, although frightened, at the frantic rush these two would make after the cart when the horses at last bolted off, I doing my best to hold them in, so as to allow the little Hottentot (who in spite of his broken ribs was an active fellow) to jump in, and then extending a hand backwards to Jimmy, who had to take flying leaps up to the back seat.

The broken ribs of our driver occasioned him, much to his sorrow, to transgress the regulation laid down that, when approaching any dwelling, the driver of a post-cart is to blow a horn. A Hottentot delights in any row on a thing supposed to be a musical instrument, and our Jehu so greatly deplored his inability to perform his duty, that I, not at that time appreciating the true cause of his grief,

offered to endeavour to extract sounds from the old brass horn. My endeavours were, however, not crowned with success, nor were Jimmy's. We achieved a great puffing out of our cheeks and a peculiar snorting noise, but nothing more. By nightfall we arrived at a house, which impressed me as the most squalid I had ever seen—I do not mean the combination of poverty and dirt to be seen in London, but squalor in the midst of plenty. This is a common sight amongst the Boers, but it was a new one then to me; and it remains stamped on my memory. We approached this dwelling by a road which was invisible to me; indeed I had long ceased to wonder at our driver having, as he said at starting, forgotten the "road," for often when he seemed undecided as to which he should take, I could discern none whatever over the bare, dried grass. It was a raw evening with a mist coming on, and the long low-roofed cabin stuck down in the middle of the veldt, with three stunted trees near it, looked cheerless in the extreme. Our advent was heralded by a barking chorus from a number of gaunt dogs; this brought out seven men and boys. The little Hottentot whispered "You must shake hands with every one;" and I descended and instantly commenced operations. The oldest of the men led us into the house, where we shook hands with a woman and a number of girls, big and little, terminating with a small baby. All the hands were very dirty.

I leaned against the half-door and looked out at the three trees, wishing very much that I could speak to these people, and turning, saw Jimmy sitting disconsolately near me, whilst ranged round the room on benches, sat the family, regarding us gravely. It was absolutely

necessary to say or do something, so I made a desperate effort to form some sounds resembling Dutch out of a combination of German and English. One of the little girls was a pretty curly-headed little creature with large serious eyes. I thought I would make her the subject of my remarks. I daresay that the expression of my face was more intelligible than my words, for the woman looked pleased, and the eldest of the men said something to the effect that she was his daughter.

The Hottentot now appeared, and squatted on the step of the half-door, and he was able to act as interpreter. The family consisted of a man and his wife and their children. It seemed wonderful, for there really appeared to be less than ten years difference between the two eldest men: presently more gawky boys came in and shook hands, until the whole family being assembled, I discovered that there were, I think, fourteen children. They were rich in flocks and herds, and yet all but the father, mother, and two eldest sons were barefooted; none had stockings; none appeared to be possessed of a brush and comb, or of soap!

"I wonder if they are going to give us anything to eat," whispered Jimmy. "Ask them."

I did not like to do so, not knowing whether it might be considered a liberty, as I did not know whether payment for food would be accepted; but I wondered too, for I was very hungry, having eaten nothing but a little bread since morning.

Presently the eldest girl brought me a basin, with a small quantity of water in it, and a not over-clean-looking cloth. I had my own soap and towel, and washed; the same basin and water was presented to Jimmy, who washed; it then

passed to the father, who threw the water on his face and hands and wiped them with the cloth, and from him it passed in regular order down to the youngest boy, a lad of about eleven! The girls did not wash. A cloth was now laid on the table, and plates with bowls on them placed on it, a big basin full of milk, and a dish full of a sort of hard, crisp bread, peculiar to this country and very nice, was placed near it. Jimmy, the father, and I had knives, forks, and spoons, the rest had spoons only. It was dark now, and a tallow candle illumined the scene. The father said a long grace in Dutch, and then the mother helped all to milk and biscuits—the hard bread is called Boer biscuit here—whilst the eldest girl brought in a very small piece of boiled mutton. This the father cut into three pieces, giving one to Jimmy, one to me, and reserving one for himself. I enjoyed my supper, and ended my meat before my host had finished his. Seeing this, I saw him eye me thoughtfully for a minute or so with uplifted knife and fork, then he pushed his own plate over to me. I smiled, thanked him in German, and shook my head, whereupon he drew it back again with a look of relief, and ate the meat that remained on it. And this man had hundreds of fat wethers, and full-flanked oxen grazing on his farm!

I think grace was said when all was done, and shortly after various sheep and goat-skins were spread on the floor, and on a bench by the side of the room; and then the mother signed to me to follow her, and led me into a dark little closet, in which was a big very dirty-looking bed, a number of little delft bowls on a shelf, and absolutely nothing else. On the bare rafters various articles, including rags of apparel, were hung. Here she left me,

without a candle, the only light I received being from the candle in the sitting-room, which showed over the top of the door. There was a window, or rather a small opening in the wall, with a shutter to it; this was open when I went in, and to it I trusted for light and air; but hardly had the woman left me, ere I heard it being barricaded, in some very secure manner judging from the noise, on the outside; then the candle went out in the sitting-room, and I heard sounds of people lying down. I lay down dressed, and for a long time listened to such a chorus of snoring that I felt convinced the whole family were sleeping in the sitting-room; and, such was indeed the case, as I learnt next morning from Jimmy. He slept with one of the sons on the bench. None of the party undressed. Boers never do when they go to bed, not even in case of illness; indeed, they think it the height of impropriety to do so—so much so that a Boer who travelled in the waggon of an English Africander, an acquaintance of mine, afterwards said to the wife of the latter,—

“I shall never travel in William’s waggon again with him; it is so dreadful of him to take his trousers off when he goes to bed.”

My bed was the domicile of innumerable insects.

We had coffee and a wash in the basin, and started early. The horses were of the usual description, the scenery of the usual description, and the delivery of letters of the usual description; and this reminds me that I have not described the operation. On arriving at a place where horses had to be changed, the little Hottentot would request me to stand up, and, opening the top of the seat he and I occupied, would take out a lot of rags

and pieces of leather, which seemed to be considered as valuables to be kept, and then pull out the letters, parcels, and papers, and make them over to me to decipher their addresses. The addresses were generally badly written, the names Dutch, and the places unknown to me; hence I think it probable that a great many letters went astray. I know my audience, namely, the driver and a Boer or two, more than once said they did not know the name of the individual I read out. However, the little Hottentot settled the matter somehow, and I suppose there were no more letters left wrongly on this occasion than on any other. It has sometimes occurred to me to wonder how letters get to their destination at all in the Orange Free State, judging from my experience of the post-cart, and from the fact that I heard from several persons at Heilbronn that the usual driver of the post-cart, namely, the Kaffir with whom my excitable friend in Harrismith had dealt so summarily, lived in a constant state of intoxication, frequently lying for hours on the ground by the side of the post-cart, whilst the wretched horses grazed, glad enough to be rid of their tormentor, who, when he was in his seat, always drove at a gallop, flogging them without intermission.

I forget whether it was on this day, or on the previous one that we came to a small river with very steep banks, and that the small Hottentot informed us that we had better get out of the vehicle, as he felt sure it would be upset. I concurred in this opinion, although getting out meant fording the river on foot; and indeed, if there had been any weight behind them the horses would certainly have upset the concern; as it was, they jibbed and plunged on the sharp descent, and then bolted

through the river and up the other side. How the cart held together during the frantic leaps it had to take over the big stones that strewed the bottom of the river, and the road beyond it, I don't know—the more so as one wheel had been shaky from the time we started. Jimmy and I waded through the river, which came up nearly to my knees, and had to climb into the cart as quickly as we could, and off we went again. It was Sunday now, and we ought to have been in Heilbronn on Saturday evening. We were to have two more changes of horses, and were to pass through the small town of Frankfurt before reaching our destination.

Our last change but one brought us a pair of very fine horses, if they had been in good condition; but they were very thin, their chests raw from the pressure of the chest-strap (collars are not used here), and they looked very vicious. It was hard work harnessing them, and then there was a pitched battle before they would start. It was no wonder, for it must have been dreadful pain to throw their raw chests against the band; the blood was running from them before the poor brutes chose *that* pain instead of the pain of the flogging they were getting from three men besides the driver. It really was dangerous work driving these horses, for they were very strong, hard-mouthed, and added kicking to the accomplishments of the animals we had before had; in fact, not far from our starting-point one of them sent his hoof through the splash-board in unpleasant proximity to my knee. It was early in the afternoon when we reached Frankfurt. I was told there was a village there; but all I saw was a small white house, the post-office; another small white house of a shape that suggested to

me that it was a church, and which I learnt was one; and I think three little cottages with gardens, in a row at a little distance. There were some children and girls in their best dresses lounging near the post-office, one of whom I particularly remember, owing to the strange incongruity of her attire with both her appearance and her surroundings. She was a podgy young lady of about sixteen, and was arrayed in a white skirt, over which a pink polonaise of some miserable sort of stuff was put on, and a hat with bad imitation flowers in it.

The postmaster, or some one who I supposed was he, came out and received letters; told me also in answer to my inquiries that Heilbronn was not very far, but that we had a very ugly spruit to cross. I asked if we could not have other horses; but he said that was impossible—and we started again. We got the horses off well, and were bowling down a grassy decline towards the three cottages before named, when the little Hottentot discovered a letter by his side which he had not left. He pulled up the horses, and the postmaster and another man—a little short man, with black hair and whiskers, a black coat, and a white collar—came running up. Now the question was to start the horses again. They evidently thought that having started once they had done their duty; they had no idea of doing it for a second time, and proceeded to display all their accomplishments.

In the meantime the little black man, who had a very goodnatured broad face, favoured us with descriptions of the spruit in front of us.

“The cart is generally upset there,” he said cheerfully.

“Very often, at least,” said the postmaster; “it was upset last time.”

“ I really think you are bound to find me other horses,” I said then. “ The persons who have the management of this post-cart are certainly responsible for any damage a passenger may receive, when such horses as you see these to be are kept in it. There must be some other horses here, and you are in duty bound to take these out.”

The two men looked somewhat convinced.

“ I would ask Mr. — to lend his horses,” said the postmaster, “ but they are in the veldt, and would have to be sent for, and there would be great delay ; you are a day behind time already.”

I very nearly laughed.

“ Well,” I said, “ not so much delay as if we are upset and the cart broken in the spruit ; and you must see that is what will probably take place with these horses.”

My listeners seemed suddenly convinced ; the effect of my words was magical ! It was instantly agreed that the horses should be sent for to the veldt, and my cheerful-looking little friend in black requested me to descend and accept of his hospitality. He offered his arm, and asked abruptly whether I was a member of the Established Church ? My reply in the negative completely stunned him, or completely satisfied him ; he made no further remark, but led me to one of the three white cottages. This reminded me of an English farmhouse, and was a very pleasant relief. Some neighbours, who all talked English, dropped in, and we had tea and bread and butter.

Poor Jimmy had not been asked in, and I felt very sorry for him whilst eating my bread and butter, for I knew he must be very hungry. It was getting some-

what late in the afternoon when we started once more, the owner of the horses which had replaced the vicious pair using his own harness and driving himself, whilst the Hottentot drove his steeds walking behind them. The spruit was a very ugly one, but we got over it all right, thanks to this kind Frankfurtian, whose name I forget. He left us at the house where we got our last change. The horses were good, and we got into Heilbronn by dark without farther adventure.

CHAPTER V.

WHATEVER it may be now I do not know, but then Heilbronn consisted of a square of fifteen small houses, and a few outstanding ones, stuck on a slope in the middle of a perfectly bare country. If you walked to the upper side of the village, you could look along a grassy expanse to where it touched the horizon, whichever way you turned your head. The hotel was a long low cottage. The entrance door led you straight into the sitting-room, from whence a step led you into the dining-room at the back. Two doors at each side of the sitting-room, each led you into a small bedroom. That is the plan of pretty nearly all Boer houses that have any pretensions—the architects of the nation can conceive nothing grander. The size may vary, but the plan remains. There were other tiny bedrooms built at the back, to get to which one had to go from the dining-room into the yard. Two of these were appropriated to Jimmy's and my use.

The people of the inn—a man and wife with a large family—were good sort of people, I think, and wished to make us as comfortable as they could. They had two other boarders, unmarried men who had some employment in the village, and a good many men came there to dine. It was a strange gathering at meals, and the con-

versation was amusing. Very odd, too, it appeared to me, to hear shopkeepers in this funny little town looked upon as magnates in the land. Of course everybody knew everybody, and was free and easy with everybody, and of course Heilbronn delighted in gossip; what small place does not?

We arrived two days before Christmas Day, and on Christmas-eve mine hosts gave a dance in the public sitting-room. Amongst the guests were the judge of the place, and the magistrate, or landroost, a shopkeeper or two, some of their assistants, and a dressmaker. During the pauses of dancing a musical box played—the dance music itself was performed on a fiddle—and there were some songs. But oh, the dancing! Whilst it was going on, I sat a spectator in the dining-room. They all danced with great gravity and ponderosity, if I may use such a word; but some clung to each other as they hopped heavily round and round to a waltz tune; others charged round savagely with outstretched arms, to the imminent danger of their neighbours; others held their arms stretched down so tightly that they looked as if they were mutually desirous of dislocating each other's shoulders; whilst one couple, a chubby little man and woman, regardless of the time of either the music or the dancing of the others, with a stolid smile on each fat little face, turned slowly round and round as on a pivot. I cannot say how they managed it; their progression was very slow, and they seemed quite regardless of the collisions they came in for. I saw them get a thump from one of the chargers which would have knocked a less steady couple down, but only caused them to totter; but the comicality of their appearance at last tickled me

so much that I felt I must laugh if I stayed, and so I took myself off to bed.

The entire town of Heilbronn was going out on a picnic (a combined picnic) on Christmas Day. Great had been the preparations, and hence great was the woe when Christmas Day broke with a drizzling rain. The great question, to go or not to go? was discussed until ten o'clock, when there being a slight diminution of the drizzle, it was unanimously decided that it was going to clear up, and the whole white population of Heilbronn went off in waggons and carts. Of course there had been great discussion as to who was to go in who's waggon, and who's cart was to take up whom; and the arrangements had been slightly complicated at the last moment by two young gentlemen having brought their cart and horses up to the door of the hotel, and there upset it and broken it—leading one to the conclusion that the festivities of the previous night had been too much for them. However, everything was at last arranged, and Heilbronn was deserted for the nonce by its inhabitants. The landlady informed me that she had killed two fowls, picked a dish of peas, and made a plum-pudding, for the benefit of Jimmy and myself, and had given her Hottentot girl strict injunctions to make us comfortable. This was her parting blessing, and we were left alone.

There was nothing very amusing to be done. There was the musical box, and it seemed to afford some entertainment to Jimmy, for he kept it playing nearly all day, driving me almost to insanity thereby; and there were some children's stories of good and bad children, and a mutilated copy of "Ivanhoe." The rain came down heavily after the picnic party had started, and appeared

likely to continue coming down. Presently we had dinner, minus the peas, which I suppose the Hottentot girl kept for herself.

In the afternoon, rather late, the weather cleared, and Jimmy and I walked a little outside the village, and I gave him his first lesson in pistol-shooting. As we were returning I was accosted by a man, who asked me if I were not the lady that was going up country with a party of gentlemen who were expected in Heilbronn daily. I answered in the affirmative; and he then told me that he was the proprietor of one of the spans of oxen our conductor had. (I think he was in some sort a partner of his.) He said he heard that many of them were dead of red-water, and that our conductor flogged them cruelly, and had beaten a Kaffir who was with him severely. I said it was all true. It was this man who told me the real reason of our conductor bringing us to Heilbronn. He asked us to go to his cottage, which stood a little apart from the village; and we went, and found his wife (a pretty young woman) and his baby there. The man was an Englishman with a pleasant English face. He was, as he looked and spoke, of the small farmer class. His wife was colonial born. They were very kind and hospitable, and gave us a very nice tea.

On our return to the hotel we found the party had returned in very bad humour. I should not think picnicking under a tarpaulin stretched between two waggons in a thick drizzling rain on a dead flat likely to conduce to good temper; and then there were all the little jealousies and envyings sure to arise on such occasions—Mr. So-and-so had done this and said that, and so on. The picnic had set the whole little town by the ears!

A day or two after, our party arrived bringing my pony with them. I had heard that the horse-sickness was likely to be bad as soon as we crossed the Vaal, so I sold him at Heilbronn to my pleasant-looking English acquaintance, and resolved to travel thenceforth in the waggon. A good many things belonging to the conductor were taken out of it at Heilbronn, and it was made much more comfortable in consequence.

The evening that we were to start, I went to take tea with the purchaser of my pony, and I have a vivid recollection of the excellent pancakes I was eating, when one of our party tapped at the door and said the waggon was waiting for me. Certainly a kind welcome given to a stranger travelling alone in a wild country, is one of the things the angel who records good actions ought always to make a note of.

I missed my pony very much. To jolt hour after hour in an ox-waggon along a dead flat under a broiling sun is objectionable; and being now always with the waggon, the spectacle of the brutality of our conductor to his oxen, and the fearful language used by him, were very hard to bear.

We crossed the Vaal on New Year's eve, and I shall never forget his wanton cruelty on the occasion. The river separated us, or, powerless as I was, I should have felt called upon to interfere, as no one else seemed disposed to do so.

We were now in the Transvaal, and a day more took us to Heidelberg. We arrived there rather late at night, and I proceeded with Jimmy to the hotel. The waggon was outspanned a little outside the small town, but I was told that I could easily find the hotel by the moonlight,

and that it would be open. I followed the instructions given me for finding it, but when I arrived at the house I took to be the hotel, it seemed shut up for the night. It was a nice-looking cottage, standing in a pretty garden. Seeing no light in front, I walked to the back, where I saw a glimmer from a candle through the window shutters. This encouraged me, and I knocked at the door with my whip. After a pause, a very frightened female voice cried, "Who is it?" from within. "A traveller," cried I; "is not this the hotel?" Whereupon the door opened, and I saw a very pretty frightened face, with loose hair hanging about it, and a little figure robed in white. "Oh, how you frightened me!" it said; "my husband is not at home. No, this is not the hotel." Of course I expressed the deepest contrition, and the frightened little lady told me where to go to.

Little Heidelberg, sleeping in the moonlight, with the hills around showing brown against the clear sky, looked refreshing after the dreary Free State. We got to the hotel presently. It was shut up, but I was emboldened to knock by two considerations; the first, that I could not go back to the waggon, because the men I knew would already be asleep in it; the second, that I had met the proprietor of the hotel at the Willow River, and he had told me to be sure to come to his house. I knocked, and knocked, until Jimmy said, "How can you go on knocking like that? Well, I never thought you could do such a thing." At last a man's voice from within asked, "What do you want? Who are you?"

"A traveller," I cried in return. "Can't I have a bed?"

The door was unbolted, and I saw my roadside ac-

quaintance, who had evidently just got out of bed. "I can't give you a bed," he said; "we're full."

"Oh, Mr. Dubois," said I, "don't you remember telling me that I must come here? Do, please, let me in. I can't go back to the waggon, the men will all be asleep in it." Mr. Dubois was mollified. He let me into the room, where I saw a rough-looking man sitting up between the blankets on a sofa-bedstead.

"Here," said Mr. Dubois, "you must put your boots on, and you can sleep in there," pointing to a back-room, "and let the lady have your place." So the rough-looking man tumbled out; and Jimmy said good-night, and had to go back to the waggon; Mr. Dubois brought me a piece of candle, and I tumbled into bed, and went very fast asleep in a minute.

Nothing particular occurred during our trek from Heidelberg to Pretoria, until we were quite close to the latter place. I think it was at our last outspan that a man, who, in spite of a rakish look, was more like a gentleman than any one I had seen during my travels, rode up to the waggon, and dismounting, entered into conversation. His manners and address confirmed what his appearance had suggested to me. Long after, I heard something of this individual's story, which still farther confirmed my first impression; the end of it is worth telling, as illustrative of habits and customs out here. It is an odd thing that Boers, although adverse to the English, are very proud if they can induce Englishmen to marry into their families. Our roadside acquaintance, who had earned for himself the sobriquet of "mad" amongst his intimates, was sane enough to make use of this little peculiarity. Being very completely on his beam-

ends for about the hundredth time, he wooed and won a young Boeress, whose father was prepared to give a handsome portion. Having used all his fascinations so as completely to infatuate his wife and make her think herself the happiest of women, he suddenly decamped, and had got to the Vaal River, on his way into the Free State, when his father-in-law overtook him. The old gentleman was in an agony of rage and anxiety for his daughter, who of course was doing what old women call "taking on" pretty considerably; the husband was quite cool. He told the story of himself.

"What's your figure?" he asked of his infuriated relative. "Make it high enough, and I'll go back, otherwise I'm off!"

"Will five hundred sheep do?" gasped the old gentleman. The younger shook his head.

"No," he said, "not enough; just consider how dreadfully I shall be bored. Make it a thousand, and I'll say done." And the old fellow made it a thousand.

This individual told us that he was out in command of volunteers, as it was thought that the Boers might break out next day, when they said they meant to come armed into Pretoria. Of course they did not come into Pretoria. Personally I, writing this in the besieged camp of Pretoria, don't believe they ever will do so; but it made one feel a pleasant sort of excitement to think that they might, and that we should be just in time to see them do it.

We came into Pretoria through a Poort, or opening between the hills, called, I think, Bobian Poort, literally Baboon Entrance. There are no baboons on the hills now, but I suppose there were not long ago. Little Pretoria, with its blue gums and willow-trees, and its

surrounding hills, looked very pretty in the light of the fast-setting sun. It was nearly dark by the time we had outspanned on a common at the upper end of the town. I asked the manager if he had inquired which hotel was the best for a lady to lodge at. He said he had; that the "European" was the one recommended; and I started off with Jimmy. I had to ask my way from a gentleman I saw sitting under his verandah on the outskirts of the town, and then to walk down a longish road, with rose hedges at each side, and with a sound of running water to be heard, which, although it was too dark to see them, told me that there must be rivulets at both sides too. The cottages, standing back in their gardens, with lights in the windows, looked pleasant and home-like, and I was almost sorry when the pretty road ended in the market-square, with an ugly white church in the middle of it. There were lights in two buildings forming one of the corners of this square—low long cottages, and I rightly guessed them both to be hotels. Neither of these appeared to be suited for a lady's lodging—the bar being the leading feature in both, and a number of loud-talking men, in broad hats, short coats, and riding-boots, lounging in front of them. I asked a passer-by which was the "European," and he showed me the one which had a verandah, and appeared the fuller of the two. I could see that it had a public dining-room, which seemed crammed, but the only entrance was through the bar; so, taking heart of grace, into the bar I walked. It was as full as it could be of men of the kind who frequent bars; but, luckily for me, behind the bar itself stood a man who was a gentleman—the then proprietor of the "European," since dead (he was killed by lightning, together

with the horses he was driving). I asked this gentleman whether I could obtain a lodging at his hotel, telling him at the same time how I had just arrived, a stranger, in Pretoria, and had been told that the "European" was the best hotel for a lady to go to. "Well," he said courteously, "you have been misinformed; it is completely a man's hotel. In fact it is not an hotel, but simply a restaurant." I bowed, and asked if he could tell me where to go, as I could not return to the waggon. "If you step into my private room," he said, "I will send you some supper, and I will send round to the "Edinburgh" and "Royal" to know if they have a room to spare." I was only too glad of the offer. Jimmy went back to the waggons, and I had a nice little supper whilst I waited. But alas! there was not a room at either hotel; all were full. Mr. Carter (in this instance I give the real name of the individual) then said that all he could propose was this: there was a small room at a little distance from the hotel, whose usual occupant was absent. Mr. Carter had the key, and I could use it for that night. I forthwith started, with a coolie servant for a guide, and was taken to a small room in a stable-yard behind a public-house. There was a stable at one side, and I could hear men's voices in the room at the other side. It was a comfortable little room, and I observed a woman's dress hanging on a peg. Here my guide left me after he had lighted a candle. I proceeded to investigate the fastenings of the door and window. The former I could lock, but there was no way of fastening the other. It was not very pleasant, for the little I had seen of Pretoria that night had made me acquainted with the fact, which farther acquaintance only confirmed, that it is a very rowdy little village, and that a

woman might better walk about late in London or Paris than in that place. I began to wish I had brought my pistol with me; however, there was no use wishing, and so I put a chair on the table that stood under the little window, so as to be sure of hearing if any one attempted to get in, and then turned into bed, and found it very comfortable.

The next morning I had nothing to do but to go to breakfast at the "European." The eating-room was full of men, but Mr. Carter took me into it himself, and seated me at a little table; this he did at each meal as long as I stayed there, for which I am still grateful to him. That whole day I passed looking for a lodging, but could find none, and had to sleep once more in my little room. The next day was the same. In the morning a gentleman spoke to me as I was standing under the verandah of the "European." "You are looking for a lodging, I believe?" he said. I replied in the affirmative. "So am I," quoth he; "let us go together;" so off we started. Life is very free and easy out here, as will be observed, not only on this occasion but on various others throughout my story. The gentleman told me how he came to be in Pretoria—he was travelling to see the country; and I told him something of how I came to be in Pretoria. We walked about and called at various houses, but fruitlessly; at last, as we were walking along a grassy rose-hedged lane, which in Pretoria is called a street, we saw two fashionably dressed ladies standing under the verandah of a cottage with a strip of garden in front. "Let us ask them if they let lodgings," said my companion. "I don't think it would do," responded I; but he evidently thought it would, for he went up and

asked, and I thought I might as well go up too, under the circumstances. The ladies were very kind; they did not let lodgings, but they asked us in; my acquaintance soon left us to go in quest of some abode, but I was tired both of walking and of looking for a room, and I stayed and chatted, and had a cup of coffee.

In the afternoon, whilst standing under the "European" verandah, I was accosted by the volunteer officer we had met on the road, and shortly afterwards by the gentleman who had on the night of my arrival told me the way to the hotel. In conversation with them I mentioned my difficulties about finding a room, and also the fact that I had two letters of introduction to ladies in Pretoria, but that I was loath to present them so long as presenting them was tantamount to asking them to put me up. I mentioned the names of the ladies, and one of the gentlemen said he knew them; and with that he walked off, and presently reappeared bringing with him a gentleman, whom he introduced to me as Mr. Farquarson, the husband of one of the ladies, and the son-in-law of the other. Mr. Farquarson took me to see Mrs. Parker, whose house was not far from the hotel; but on the way he heard from some one that she was not at home, and hence I simply gave him my letters of introduction and returned to the hotel; but not immediately, for I took a solitary walk first on the outskirts of the village, and thereby missed seeing the two ladies, who called at the "European" whilst I was out.

Early the next morning I heard a knocking at the door, and the coolie's voice outside, saying I must get up at once and clear out, that the Newcastle post-cart had just come in, and brought the rightful owner of the room

I was in. As may be supposed, I turned out pretty quickly. But my difficulties were to cease that day, for Mr. Farquarson came in the morning and carried me off to his cottage at the upper end of the town. Oh, how nice it did seem, with its carpets, and sofas, and nice little nicknacks, and, best of all, its pretty mistress, after travelling so long with rough men !

I went afterwards to Mrs. Parker's cottage, smaller but prettier ; a very gem of a little cottage, with a small brilliant garden in front, and a well-filled kitchen-garden and orchard behind, and a verandah all overhung with beautiful creepers, and with ferns in pots, and easy-chairs, under it, with graceful young trees standing all round it ; and with a pretty setter who gave her paw, and a little spring-bok, and a cross little prairie-dog, or meer-cat as it is called here, as its inhabitants, without counting the mistress of all these nice things ; mistress also of two of the smallest maid-servants I ever saw—two little Hottentot, or rather Bushman, sisters. They were mere children, but they looked like two pretty little baby monkeys, tripping about noiselessly with their little bare feet, and dressed in their clean little print frocks. The old lady was a relation of old friends of mine in England, and her house and that of her adopted daughter, Mrs. Farquarson, seemed veritable harbours of refuge to me.