

EIGHT MONTHS IN AN OX-WAGGON.

CHAPTER I.

From London to Cape Town—The rival Routes—Disembarking
—The Masonic Hotel—The inhabitants—Cape Town by
night—Mosquitoes and their victims.

ALL sea voyages bear such a close resemblance to each other, and their details are so familiar, that I shall not describe my very commonplace passage in the Walmer Castle from the London Docks to Cape Town.

The average time of the passage is now three weeks from either Dartmouth or Southampton. This we exceeded by three days, but were more than recompensed for the delay by staying long enough at Madeira and St. Helena to enable us to see all that is worth seeing on both islands.

Before Mr. Donald Currie started an opposition line of steamers, the Union Company had a complete monopoly of the Cape traffic. Thirty to thirty-five days were then considered an excellent passage, and the fare was 60*l.*; it is now only 30*l.*, and taking into account the length of time spent on board, and the accommodation given, it is without any exception the cheapest rate of any lines in the world.

Each of the rival companies has its staunch adherents, who will recognize no short-comings in their favourite, and see no good thing in the opposition; but taking the newest and best ships of both lines in comparison, they are all so well found that there is no reason to give either one or other the precedence in comfort or speed.

The fastest time on record made by either company is eighteen days nineteen hours, but this again has been greatly shortened by the splendid ships of the Orient Line, which now stop at the Cape to coal on their road to Australia.

Early on the morning of March 6th, 1878, Table Mount was sighted, and when we came up for the usual stroll before breakfast, it stood out bold and clear ahead of us, although still forty miles distant. At the close of a long voyage there is a feeling almost of regret that it is over, particularly amongst those coming *from* home, whether it is pleasure or necessity that has brought them away. The constant monotonous life has in itself a certain charm after a time, and ships' regulations, although disagreeable at first, are hardly regarded as an inconvenience after the first few days of settling down are over. Then on board there is such an utter absence of the necessity for thought as to one's personal comfort. Everything is done for one, there is no settling hours or ordering meals, or even thinking about what there is to do or be done, because it is exactly the same day after day.

During the last few hours of the voyage these feelings beset every one more or less, and in spite of eager longings for land again, and to begin the new

life, it needs a struggle to rouse up to the necessity of again trusting to oneself for everything, and to make all arrangements for the disembarkation.

Nothing would awaken one sooner, however, from such lazy, dreamy feelings than the surroundings a stranger is suddenly thrown amongst, when the ship at last makes fast to the wharf at Cape Town.

In an instant the decks are crowded by a rush of people who combine every colour, race, occupation, and business under the sun. Friends and relations, to meet those who are returning home. Loafers, some come down on the chance of meeting acquaintances, but more because they have nothing better to do, and will get the first news from home. Touts of every class for the different hotels, from the man who, dressed most fashionably, begins the conversation by giving news of the war, but soon turns to the excellent accommodation afforded by his particular hotel, to the man who, addressing himself chiefly to the steerage passenger, offers to carry off the luggage on his own back to the inn he recommends. Large black men, yellow men, brown men, red men, and mixed colour men frantically offering to bear away luggage, with small black, yellow, brown, and red boys running in and out between their or our legs, with papers and fruit for sale, or only on the chance of annexing to themselves any small article of passengers' luggage unperceived in the general confusion. Hansom drivers who are all half-castes, parsees, or niggers, yelling their readiness to be hired, fruit-vendors and men with drinking-carts calling attention to their wares, sailors and porters hustling and

halloaing their way through the crowd, passengers vainly trying to keep their luggage together and within sight, make such a Babel of voices and noise that one might easily imagine the world's lunatic asylum had suddenly broken loose and was rushing on board.

However, at last, with the assistance—for I was then an invalid—of my friend and cabin-mate, a stalwart Highlander, who scattered the crowd of coolies and kaffirs right and left, together with a few coloured porters specially retained, we deposited ourselves with all our goods and chattels in a couple of Hansoms, and were soon on our way to the Masonic Hotel. The custom-house officials let us pass without opening our luggage, on our assuring them that we had no guns, pistols, wine, jewellery, or tobacco in our possession, and it was with no small sense of relief that we presently found ourselves located in large airy, clean rooms in the front of the hotel, and looking out upon the market-place with the sea visible beyond.

The town is utterly unlike anything to be seen in Europe. No two houses are alike, from one end to the other. Next to a large warehouse two or three stories high, built of bricks or stone, comes a small canteen of galvanized iron, then a jeweller's shop with plate-glass windows, and a show inside which would not disgrace Bond-street, between which and perhaps, a handsomely-built bank or fine office lies a small greengrocer's or tumble-down tobacconist's. But far more strikingly novel to a stranger's eye are the men, women, and children who throng the streets.

First there passes us a well-built kaffir, with no covering to his head but its native wool, clad in an old pair of 78th Highlander trews, and wearing, as a coat, a sack with slits cut for the arms and head. Behind him come two celestials, hand in hand, and wearing the invariable blue smock-frocks and straw hats; their pigtails carefully coiled up under their hats to avoid the too particular attention of the kaffirs, who find the dangling pigtail almost irresistible. Jostling the Chinamen are a couple of Boer farmers who have probably brought their waggons loaded with fruit, corn, and vegetables, to the Cape Town market. They are tall lanky fellows, their faces sallow and much sun-burnt, and they have long, sandy-coloured hair reaching down their necks. As they slouch past, dressed in brown velveteen trousers and coats, with broad-brimmed soft felt hats on their heads, and pipes in their mouths, we catch a few words of a guttural language which sounds much like German. Close behind follow their "vraws," dressed entirely in black, with thick black veils and large black poke bonnets which quite prevent our seeing what their faces are like. As their arms are full of paper parcels, we presume that they have been shopping, and investing their goodmen's market-money in town delicacies and new fashions for their homes far up in the country. Next come a couple of decidedly well-to-do-looking merchants in long grey silk coats and white hats, who stop to speak to a small group of officers, dressed in the ordinary tweed shooting-clothes, but with helmets on their heads. Two Parsee washerwomen

with large bundles of clothes, a few soldiers in their red coats and helmets, here and there a sailor ashore from one of the men-of-war in harbour, are the more striking figures among a crowd of people who all seem to think it is too hot for much exertion, and do not hurry themselves as they walk along the shady sides of the streets.

Hansoms are the chief means of conveyance, or else two-horse broughams. The horses are remarkably good ones for their work. Looking down a long line, I did not notice a single broken-down screw, such as one passes a dozen of during a stroll of 100 yards along any street in London. Most of them are barbs, about fourteen hands in height or even under, but showing a good deal of breeding. We had not much time to inspect the town, as dinner was at 6.30, and we returned to our hotel with capital appetites for the very good dinner which was served up to us at the table-d'hôte. Thick soup, fried snook, cutlets with tomatoes, a haunch of bok, dignified by the name of venison, saddle of mutton, chickens, ducks, stewed pears, tarts, rice pudding, and, for desert, a large assortment of water-melons, grapes, peaches, and nuts, was the menu. The snook is a large fish rather resembling a pike in appearance but far superior to it in flavour; it takes the place of our sole in Cape Town, as it is always in season, and is equally good for breakfast, luncheon, and dinner.

After dinner most of those who had come from on board ship went off to the theatre. I preferred sitting outside on the stoop of the hotel, and enjoying a quiet cigar and a cup of excellent coffee, and

found plenty of amusement in watching the strange and novel figures passing by, or occasionally stopping in groups to chat and gossip, as by degrees the various shops and warehouses put out their lights leaving only the street-lamps, which were few and far between, to illuminate the town.

When we landed in the afternoon the thermometer registered 98° in the shade of the house, but after dinner the mercury went down to 50° , which enabled us to obtain a refreshing sleep before the heat of another day began. On turning in I luckily did not neglect the precaution of sprinkling insect-powder over the sheets and bed-clothes, and smearing my hands, neck, feet, and face with a mixture of rosemary and turpentine. In consequence I was the only one of the new arrivals who appeared next morning at the breakfast-table unharmed by the attacks of various flying, hopping, and crawling insects which constitute one of the most serious annoyances consequent upon living in a hot climate. After a continued residence in a country infested by mosquitoes, a man's whole system gets so inoculated with the poison that their sting has no painful effect whatsoever, and scarcely leaves any mark. The fact that after a few years the sting does not, as a rule, cause any annoyance is sometimes put down to the blood of a resident in tropical climates becoming naturally so thin, that the mosquito can suck it out without inserting any of the poison it uses to thin the thick blood of a new arrival, and enable it to make a meal. The new comer, on the other hand, has all the advantage on

his side in being able to withstand the intense heat, and in bearing up against its enervating effect. Over and over again I have seen residents, and even natives, almost prostrate in the middle of the day, when a new arrival was quite bright and energetic. But after a few months the effect becomes apparent, all energy seems gradually to be sucked out of a man, and he succumbs by degrees to the general listlessness which at first has, so much surprised him, and he himself joins in the chorus, which always greets the new comer's energetic action and indifference to heat, of "Wait till you have been out here as long as I have, and see how you will like it then."

CHAPTER II.

Wynberg—Rathfelder's Hotel—The Suburbs of Cape Town—
Jacobus—An afternoon ride—Constantia—Vineyards and
wines—History of a loaf of bread—Servants.

THE first advice a stranger receives on reaching Cape Town is to quit it as soon as possible; and alarming are the stories he hears on all sides of hot nights, when sleep is out of the question, of sou'-westers during which the very paving stones perform aërial flights, and the atmosphere is thick with pebbles, sand, and red dust; the latter, he is informed, likely to cause numberless lung complaints to a man even in strong health, and out of the question for an invalid to withstand. But even more deadly and dangerous than hot nights and sou'-westers are the pestilential vapours which steal over the town during the nights, caused by the very insufficient sanitary arrangements.

Very few of the residents who can afford to do otherwise live in Cape Town itself, except professional men, who are obliged to be near at hand, and in the midst of their business or practice. The whole road between Wynberg and Cape Town is lined with pretty and comfortable little villas with from one to thirty acres of land laid out in plantations and ornamental gardens round about them. The railway runs through them, and there are stations every one or two miles. Here

reside nearly all the upper ten of Cape Town society, and a very pleasant society it is.

Following the advice of numerous friends, therefore, I moved my quarters to Wynberg, some six miles out of the town, and with train communication every hour of the day.

There were three hotels at Wynberg, two close to the station, which was full when I was there, and another two miles further on, by name Rathfelder's, not such a large house as the other two, but with a far prettier view, and more open situation.

Rathfelder's Hotel, kept by Bauser, is regarded, and I think justly, as situated in the most healthy spot anywhere about Cape Town. It is just on the skirt of the pine-woods which completely shut in the other two hotels, and always has a current of fresh, cool sea-air blown to it through a pass in the hills opposite the house. Behind the hotel is a plantation of seventy acres, and behind that the veldt stretches away for miles, radiant with every sort of brilliant-coloured heath and tinted grasses, with here and there a small clump of sugar-bushes.

This hotel also has the advantage of a very large and well-stocked fruit-garden, abounding in figs, peaches, apricots, grapes, apples, pears, tomatoes, and loquots, in which the visitors of the hotel are welcome to wander and pick as much fruit as they please; a permission which very few fail to avail themselves of. The only objection to Rathfelder's, and I dare say it applies greatly to all other hotels in the neighbourhood, is that flies, in almost incredible numbers, swarm through the building. The doors,

walls, tables, and ornaments are literally black with them, and Hans Andersen's, tailor, who killed "nine at a blow," might, if he came to Wynberg, change the boast on his shield by the addition of an 0. But it is an ill wind that blows nobody good, and the house-flies clear the premises of blow-flies and mosquitoes, which are even a worse pest. At Rathfelder's there were not any of the usual occupants of one's bed-clothes, and the application of insect-powder was therefore quite superfluous.

It is worth a visit to Rathfelder's to make the acquaintance of the old waiter there, by name Jacobus, the most extraordinary character I have ever met with. Half Hottentot, half Dutch, he has in ugliness retained the most characteristic features of the two races, but, on the other hand, has twice the intelligence of either one or other of his own station. He is a strict conservative, but still utterly independent of all authority, and refuses to break through any of what he considers the established custom of the house on any consideration, and does not even willingly obey the proprietor himself.

His constant lament is the good old days of the Anglo-Indians, now, alas! long gone. Then the Cape was worth living in, the best of everything was in abundance, and every one had plenty of money to pay for it. He takes every opportunity of airing his views on politics and affairs in general, and has no hesitation in keeping the whole table-d'hôte waiting for their pudding while he sets them right in their opinions, or gives them information on the relation

between the Government and the various races of South Africa, or how best to manage a frontier defence.

He also has a grievance to air in the shape of an unsuccessful lawsuit, and most openly avows his intention of shooting the iniquitous (?) judge who decided against him, just because (he says) he is a poor old black-man.

The cuisine at Rathfelder's is not as extensive as it might be, and consists in roast leg of mutton and hot custard pudding for dinner one day, and boiled leg of mutton and cold custard pudding the next; that at least was the principal change I observed while staying there.

As the proprietor had informed me that he always kept excellent horses on hire for the benefit of his guests, I determined to ride up the hills opposite, which looked very lovely, glistening in the sun, with thickets of silver-trees growing up their sides, and from there get a view of the surrounding country. After lunch, my steed—known as "The Blue," from a very extraordinary tinge of that colour which distinguished it from an iron grey—was brought up, and I set off on my ride, not paying much attention where I wandered, as I was assured the horse had been ridden from time immemorial over the whole neighbourhood, and that he knew his way home again even after dark. I made my way by degrees up the sides of the hills, picking, as I rode along, some of the leaves of the silver-trees lining my path, and which, dried, make very tasteful book-markers. On the top I dismounted and sauntered

about for some time, plucking heaths and flowers, which there grew in abundance, before I started off again. On the side of the hill a well-beaten track marked out the road, but, when once on the level, the track disappeared altogether, and I rode on in the direction I knew the hotel to be, until I found myself in rather a fix, for straight ahead of me was a long line of thick and high sugar-bushes which had quite recently been fired, and, as far as I could see, there was no path through them. However, remembering the advice I had been given about the "Blue," I threw the reins on his neck, and left him to follow his own route home. Straightway he plunged into the charred brushwood, and presently I found myself in a most unpleasant condition, for the black came off the burnt twigs like tar, and the further I proceeded the thicker the bush grew. However, it was of no use going back, so I forced my way ahead, and after a good deal of rather painful and very dirty buffeting, found myself on the other side, black from head to foot, torn, scratched, and bruised, but very far out of the direction of the hotel. However, I was now able to see about me again, and following well-known land-marks, was soon back in the direct road, so it did not make much difference, and my cerulean steed had to pay for his stupidity by an extra quick gallop, most unwillingly performed, to get me back in time for a bath and dinner.

I resolved most firmly never again to trust to the sagacity of an African horse, and I never did, so perhaps the early lesson was worth the little discomfort I paid as the price of it.

Rathfelder's hotel is connected with the owners of one of the Constantia vineyards, so has a better quality of colonial wines than I ever met with in any but a private house elsewhere. The wine known by the name of Constantia is too sweet and strong for anything but a liqueur and in that capacity, it is very pleasant to the taste, and far less injurious than the ordinary curaçao or chartreuse. The best known Cape wine is Pontac, resembling in taste and colour a rough-edged, strong port wine. The finest qualities of this wine are excellent, but the price is very high, and the cheaper qualities are very inferior.

There are other wines known as, Burgundy, Sherry, Hermitage, and Hock, but, except in colour, they have nothing in common with the wines they are named after. I believe that one great reason of the little success of Cape wines lies in their names, for the buyer of Sherry or Hock naturally expects a close imitation in flavour, and instead, finds that the Hocks are as strong as Spanish Sherries, and the Sherry is a sweet and fiery liqueur, so he is at once disappointed in the wine, and condemns them wholesale.

There are no manufactories of any importance anywhere in South Africa, every article of consumption is imported from England or America: latterly the Americans have taken a very large share of the trade, as their waggons, carriages, and machinery are found to stand the rough roads and dry atmosphere better than the British, and their tinned provisions and soft goods are equal in quality, and at the same time are brought to market at a cheaper rate.

Very large quantities of Australian flour are used, and there is a well-established trade between the two colonies, sugar and coffee being given in exchange for grain. America has even supplied mealies, as Indian corn is called all over Africa, in very large quantities the last few years.

A loaf of bread in Cape Town has a curious history, and rather an instructive one.

Imported seed is sown in land prepared by foreign-made ploughs, drawn by oxen with foreign-made chains. When ripe, the corn is cut with imported sickles, and threshed with imported engines, which are worked by imported coal. The grain is taken to market in imported sacks, and perhaps carried in an American waggon. The machinery for bread-making is imported and worked by imported labour, and then the bread is very probably and very naturally undersold in the market by an article decidedly superior in look and taste, though not as wholesome, made from the directly imported Australian flour.

The prices of everything, from a common ready-made shirt at 15s. to a bottle of beer at 2s. 6d., strike a stranger as most exorbitant. The traders, however, put it all down to heavy customs-duties and bad debts; the losses from the latter are so heavy, that they often far more than counterbalance the seemingly enormous profits. I was charged fourteen shillings for 100 visiting cards, and that did not entitle me to the plate. An ordinary box of biscuits costs 2s. 6d.; a pot of pickles the same price. Medicine in a stoppered bottle costs an extra 9d., to

defray the customs-duties on glass and extra risk in carriage.

However, these exorbitant charges served as some slight preparation for those we afterwards had to pay up country, and prevented our feeling as horror-struck as we should otherwise have felt at some of the demands made upon us during the next eight months' wanderings.

But in spite of high prices, hot weather, and dearth of servants, I think no one can help being charmed with Cape Town, its environs, and its society. Large entertainments are almost out of the question from the absolute impossibility of obtaining servants; but they make up for it by innumerable small gatherings, which are productive of far more pleasure and amusement. Hardly a white man as an indoor servant is to be met with, and good servants are at a premium; cooks, however plain, receive their 50*l.* a year. It is very little use either bringing servants out from England. If a man comes, he will use the very first money he receives as wages to pay his way to the Diamond Fields, which are the El-Dorado of South Africa; or he will stay until he can collect a small capital, and will then set up for himself as a publican, small store-keeper, or winkler.* If it is a maid who comes, she is sure to leave her mistress, and be married; and if she be good-looking, will very likely go before she has

* A winkler is generally a man who sells the goods of others on commission, and either keeps a small up-country store, or hawks them about from farmstead to farmstead with a waggon and oxen.

been out three months. There is now a law which makes it possible for a master or mistress to bind down a servant for three years, provided a contract is re-signed as soon as the servant disembarks ; but in practice it does not put the masters in a much better position, for a man can so very easily get away from the consequences of breaking his agreement in a country where there is little telegraph and less railway. The woman is still better off, for if she marries, the husband is not liable for his wife's debts, and the woman cannot be imprisoned for her own breach of contract.

Coolies and Chinese form the staple element from which the domestic servants are drawn ; and, indeed, as cooks they far surpass the ordinary white woman, who has probably never cooked anything but her husband's dinner till she advertises as "good plain cook" in the Cape Town *Daily News*.

CHAPTER III.

Plans for the Journey—The Air of the Transvaal—Our Guides—Scares from the Front—Scarcity of Information—Cape Town Museum—From Cape Town to Durban—On board the “Melrose”—East London—Volunteers—The Bars—Landing at Durban.

DURING the voyage out we had passed away many an hour listening to narratives and anecdotes of sport, travel, and life in the interior, from old hunters and traders on board who were returning to the colony. At first I used to listen with feelings of intense interest and wonder; but gradually these feelings gave way to envy, and a wish to see for myself some of the strange sights, to lead the same free, wild, half-civilized life, and experience the excitements and vicissitudes of fortune which they spoke of with such enthusiasm, evidently themselves considering to be the only life worth living. My friend A. was smitten with the same indefinite sort of longing, and by degrees we began to talk it all over between ourselves, as more and more within the range of possibilities that we too might manage some sort of expedition into the interior, for time was not of great importance to either of us. Our rather wild ideas on the subject took a more practical form, when an ex-trader who was returning to the colony offered for a certain con-

sideration, to acilitate matters by procuring our waggons, oxen, horses, servants, provisions, and in fact all things necessary for such an expedition as we proposed, having sport for its chief aim and object.

As I myself had left England to recruit my health, I could not make agreement of any sort until I had, at the Cape itself, learnt fuller particulars, and had the statement of our proposed conductor and guide confirmed. I also desired professional advice as to the advisability of my attempting a journey which, under its most favourable aspects, could not be otherwise than accompanied with a very considerable amount of roughing it, hardships, and privations.

Accordingly, my first business after landing was to call on my friend Dr. Biccard, to whom I stated my circumstances. After a most searching examination, to my great delight, and I must say astonishment, he informed me that it was the very plan of all others calculated to restore my health; for the air of the Transvaal was almost a sovereign cure for any sufferer from lungs, not too far gone to be in danger of succumbing to the fatigue of such a journey as was contemplated.

Most thoroughly was his prediction borne out, for each day of the new life gave me renewed strength and vigour. When I left the Cape, I was with difficulty able to walk a mile, and looked a miserable invalid, utterly unfitted for exertion of any kind. Within six months of that time, after a stay of little over four months in the climate of the Trans-

vaal, I was able to walk from sunrise to sunset, rifle on shoulder, under a blazing sun, without feeling unduly fatigued at the end of a long day's work, and often with no more strengthening food to work on than mealie-meal pap, or other vegetable diet.

Encouraged by Dr. Biccard's advice I lost no time in seeing A. and F., and settling with them the definite plans of our campaign, and making out lists of all such things as we either thought of for ourselves, or F., from his former experience, warned us we should require. We soon found, however, that we could procure everything we should want as well in Natal as at the Cape, so put off making any purchases until we arrived there. This arrangement gave us all the more time to gather information from many different sources which might be of use. By this means also we were saved from buying many articles which would have been utterly superfluous and useless, but which our imagination, or eager storekeepers, pointed out to us as absolute necessities for our comfort or health.

F. himself started off by the very next boat to Pieter Maritzburg in Natal, for it was from thence that we determined to make our start, to buy a waggon, oxen, horses, provisions, and saddles; and also to collect together a sufficient supply of boys as servants against our arrival, which was to be three weeks later. I may here say that every coloured man, irrespective of age, be he six or sixty, is called a boy throughout the colony. Luckily, both A. and myself had brought out almost everything

necessary in the way of arms, ammunition, and clothing. Of the latter we soon found the less taken the better ; so we had not much to trouble ourselves about, except rifles and ammunition for the big game, as we were only prepared for small. A. soon after started for Port Elizabeth, promising to rejoin me there on board the boat, which would take us both on to Durban.

As yet we had decided on no definite route, for the very unsettled state of the natives throughout the whole of South Africa left us in doubt as to which part would be free for us to hunt in, and travel through, by the time we reached there. But on whichever side we ultimately decided on making our hunting-ground, we could not be wrong in going to Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal, as there we should be able to obtain the latest and most trustworthy advice both as to the locality of the game and the movements of the Kaffirs. Not a day passed without rumours and scares of fresh tribes having broken out, post-carts being fired on, and cattle being lifted ; but all of them when investigated turned out to be either totally devoid of truth, or grossly exaggerated. The explanation of a scare, however, does not come till so long after the false report, that it still leaves an uneasy impression on people's minds that there is no knowing what the next mail may bring true tidings of.

I employed the time I had to wait at the Cape, before catching a steamer direct to Durban, in collecting information from the few men there who had any practical experience of big game hunting

and travelling in the interior. Nothing is more surprising than the difficulty in obtaining any reliable information. At Cape Town almost less is known generally about the interior country of South Africa than at home in England. Almost every man I asked for information or advice said the same thing. "I mean to go and do it all some day, but have never yet been able to make a start, so cannot assist you."

The Cape Town Museum is well worth a visit, and gives a very good idea of the plants, birds, and insects to be met with; and I there was taught the best methods of skinning, stuffing, and preserving either birds, beasts, or insects. The finest feature of the Museum is a large and fine collection of South African Lepidoptera and Coleoptera, which the energetic curator, Mr. Trimmen, has himself entirely collected, and in which his chief interest seems to centre.

F. had promised to have everything ready for us, if possible, by the end of the month; and as every one agreed that we should have to be out of the shooting country by the beginning of September, and that it would take us a full two months to reach the nearest point, that we could hope for big game, in whatever direction we started, we were anxious to make a move as soon as possible.

The "Melrose" was leaving on the 23rd. I secured my passage in her, and telegraphed A. to meet me on board at Port Elizabeth. Her advertised time for sailing was one in the afternoon, but it was past eight at night before we were clear of the docks. The navigation inside the docks is managed by the harbour officials, and as the ships'

officers have the most decided objection to receive or obey orders from those they consider their inferiors, a great deal of unnecessary delay takes place through their not working together.

The boat was very over-crowded, and as there was not a sufficient number of stewards on board for even the ordinary number of passengers, the unavoidable discomforts of a small steamer in dirty weather were greatly increased by all the meals being half an hour behind their time ; and when at last served up, all the various dishes were cold and greasy. The "Melrose" had the reputation of being one of the best of all the coasting boats ; so the sufferings of those who have to travel in the other boats must be beyond description, for the sea is almost invariably rough during the whole passage of five or six or even eight days. We kept a uniform course of about four miles from the mainland during daylight, but at night steered further out to sea, in case of any sudden squalls. The land view is dismal and uninteresting in the extreme ; during the first two days' passage nothing but barren hill sides, with no sign of vegetation upon them. Along the coast several wrecked ships, not yet washed to pieces and broken up, stand out distinctly against the white sand, forsaken and disabled, and act as scarecrows to the captains of the boats, warning them not to run any risk of a similar fate by attempting to cut off corners or hug the shore too closely. We reached Algoa Bay, the nautical term for Port Elizabeth, at midnight, and A., who had been waiting for hours in the cold and wet, came on board, but had to sleep on the

transom, as all the berths were occupied. The rest of the journey to Natal is rather more interesting, as the hill sides occasionally show a few patches of green grass and wooded knolls; now and then, too, we could pick out a puff of smoke from a native krall or from burning grass, which instantly had every glass on board directed to it, and caused various suggestions that it might be the troops fighting with the Kaffirs, although there could not possibly have been any of our soldiers within several hundred miles.

At East London we stopped just long enough to drop our mails and several intending volunteers.

One young man we landed with many tin boxes, sword-cases, &c., containing his outfit for a yeomanry regiment at home, which he intended to wear against the Kaffirs. From his conversation at the dinner-table he evidently expected to be given a very high command the moment he put in an appearance. Three others had been passengers on board the "Walmer Castle." They had come out to try their hands at business; but, excited by the stories circulating in Cape Town of fabulous sums being divided as the result of cattle and horse lifting from the Kaffirs, and believing in the charms of a rough life, had spent their capital, and were now come up to join the volunteers and have a look at the Kaffir before settling down into any steady work. Better for them that they had remained quietly at home even, for in one of the first papers I saw at Maritzburg not a month afterwards, were the names of two of the three among the killed.

Until we reached East London the boat had been surrounded by thousands of sea-birds of every size and description, from the albatross to Mother Carey's chickens; but from some unaccountable cause they all deserted us there, and we never saw a feather between that place and Durban.

East London has the proud distinction of having the very worst bar, or sand-bank, crossing the entrance to the harbour, of any port in South Africa. Often ships have to stay several days outside before they can unload their cargoes, as the sea is too rough for the lighters to attempt crossing the bar, and frequently mail boats are obliged to go past altogether, and carry on with them passengers and mails intended for the port.

On Sunday afternoon we had a stiffish gale of wind, which made the captain keep out some distance to sea, and so delay us; while we were obliged to remain below in misery and wet, as the waves constantly swept the decks, and made them unsafe.

But luckily the sea went down by Monday morning, when we dropped anchor about eight o'clock outside the bar of Durban harbour; for, like all the rest of the harbours, Durban also has its bar, but for which it would be one of the finest harbours in the world, as, once inside, the largest ship afloat can lie there in perfect safety. At present no ship which draws more than twelve feet of water can ever get in at all, and those drawing under that only at high water. A tug came off from the shore for passengers and baggage, landing us at the Point,

without the usual dripping which passengers suffer crossing through the surf on the bar.

At the Point we left our fire-arms and ammunition in charge of the Customs, and then placed ourselves and our luggage in a very broken-down and de-lapidated train, which took us up to the town of Durban, situated some two miles further up the harbour.

The train took the remarkably slow time of half-an-hour for the two miles, but the carriages would probably have fallen to pieces if they had attempted a higher rate of speed.

CHAPTER IV.

Durban Railway—Kaffir Carriers—Fever—Conveyances to Maritzburg—Royal Hotel Waiters—Kaffirs—Curfew Bell—Sunday Dinner.

AT Durban station a crowd of Kaffirs were in waiting to carry up the luggage to the various hotels. A. and myself picked out a dozen of them; and as we had been told to keep a sharp look-out to prevent anything being stolen, we had rather an anxious time before we saw all our goods deposited safely at our hotel. The boys would lag behind, pretending they wanted to rest, and we were not yet sufficiently at home with them to know how to keep them in order.

We had been very strongly advised to make as short a stay in Durban as we possibly could, for it is a notoriously unhealthy place, probably arising from the combined causes of poisoned water and unwholesome sanitary arrangements in regard to the drainage. While we were there every third person was or had been ill with a sort of low fever peculiar to Durban, and less frequently Pieter Maritzburg. The patient breaks out all over with red blotches and suffers severely from depression and weakness; as a rule it only lasts ten days or a fortnight, but occasionally takes a more serious form, and in some cases has a fatal termination. Quinine is the most important remedy; and so much had been prescribed

and consumed, that not a grain was to be procured at any price whatever, as the little the chemists had left in stock they kept to use in their prescriptions from regular customers.

The good people of Durban have lately been much exercised in mind, and roused to more energetic measures to prevent a recurrence of the epidemic, by the information from high scientific authorities that this particular form of fever, sometimes called Dingle fever, is almost a sure forerunner of Yellow Jack, and that it was common in Jamaica and other places before that dreaded complaint first appeared there.

But it is not such an easy matter as one would expect to transport oneself and baggage from Durban to Pieter Maritzburg, although they are spoken of in conjunction as the Port and City of Natal. There are two conveyances running daily up and down the road—an omnibus and the post-cart. On making inquiry at the booking-offices, we found that both were full for the next week to come, and even then we were informed that we could not take our heavy luggage with us. This being the case, we endeavoured to hire a conveyance of our own, which would take both us and our baggage. For some time we were unsuccessful in coming to terms, but at last arranged with the proprietor of the Royal Hotel, where we were staying, for him to provide us a trap and four horses, to do the journey of fifty-six miles in two days; but so as to get as much as possible out of us, he declared his inability to get the horses together till the following Tuesday. With a promise to this effect we had to content

ourselves ; and as we had to obtain magistrates' permits for guns, and then clear them from the Custom-house, we could not have been ready much before, although very anxious to leave Durban and exchange the stifling heat and dust-filled atmosphere both day and night, for the cool evenings and refreshing breezes we were prepared to find in Pieter Maritzburg.

The Royal Hotel did not hold out any inducements in the way of comfort for us to remain longer than necessary. Like most colonial hotels, it consists of a two-storied stone building containing some eight or ten rooms, and adjoining this, behind is an heterogeneous mass of outbuildings, which are used for the greater part of the bed-rooms, kitchen, offices, bath-room, and stables. The whole hotel is overrun with the most enormous cockroaches, some a couple of inches long ; and our voracious landlord, without a smile on his countenance, assured me that he had seen a couple of them catch, kill, and devour, a half-grown chicken. But as he afterwards also informed us that these same cockroaches were the chief ingredient in Worcester sauce, I will not vouch for the accuracy of either statement. The cooking is also greatly below the mark, and the wines are of the same quality generally met with throughout Africa—very expensive, and not worth drinking unless iced.

I was rather struck by the ornamentation of the dinner-table. Three pots of wretched artificial flowers were stuck in the centre, though the windows were half choked up with most lovely creepers, and flowering shrubs were growing in profusion all round

the house. But the artificial ones save the trouble of refilling, and saving of trouble is the great object of a man's life in Natal.

The indoor waiters in the hotel are all St. Helena boys, and are preferable in more senses than one to the Kaffirs, who do all the outdoor and stable work ; but in up-country inns, where the St. Helena boys cannot yet be procured, people have to put up with the inconvenience of Kaffirs.

At Durban I saw the first Kaffirs who impressed me really favourably, and I never saw finer specimens of the race anywhere than are to be seen there. They are mostly refugee Zulus, who have kept to themselves, and not intermarried and become demoralized. It is there an exception to see one under six feet, and they are nearly all well-knit, finely built fellows. Both men and women are obliged by law, all through the colonies, to clothe themselves decently when they come within the precincts of a town.

The women merely wind a length of brownish calico over their shoulders, and let it hang down to their knees, leaving most symmetrical calves and ankles exposed to view. The men adorn themselves with every possible variety of left-off European costume ; but old military tunics and jackets are the most fashionable and popular, and an old porter's jacket or guard's coat is almost equally admired. Tweed shooting-coats, frock-coats, moleskins, sacks, sheets, and blankets, all come in for a share of patronage.

Both men and women wear bangles on both ankles and arms, made of twisted brass wire, and

tight-fitting circlets of the same make between the calf and the knee. They also wear bracelets and necklaces of various sizes, and coloured beads worked in many combinations and quaint designs. Every man and boy has enormous holes through the lobes of his ears, and their ear-rings would astonish an English lady. Some keep their snuff-boxes there, and others their pipes; but the dandies have large pieces of carved wood or horn, and a sheet of coloured paper in a long roll is very fashionable at times.

At seven o'clock at night the "curfew" bell tolls. After that every Kaffir found in the town, or away from his location, is put in "trunk," as the goal is denominated throughout South Africa. No Kaffirs are allowed to sleep in town unless under the roof and care of a white. To facilitate this regulation pieces of ground are set apart outside the town, on which they may either build their own kralls, or occupy a sort of barrack provided for them. These bits of land, devoted to their use, are termed the Kaffir Locations, and are to be seen on the outskirts of all colonial townships of any size.

Durban is well off for churches, but the Wesleyans have the best of them all, and the service in their church is admirably conducted. On Sunday, throughout all South Africa, there is no late dinner, in clubs, hotels, or private houses, and a very heavy hot luncheon at three o'clock takes its place. In such a warm climate the effects of a hearty meal in the middle of the day cause the greater part of the population to pass the remainder of the afternoon and evening in slumber.

CHAPTER V.

Clearing Fire-arms—The Point—Gun-room—A Gun lost—Gun-running—Hot Nights—Drive to Pinetown—Bargain for a Conveyance—Mrs. Murray's Hotel—An early Start—Railway to Maritzburg—Camperdown—Pieter Maritzburg.

ON Monday morning we proceeded to obtain possession of our fire-arms and ammunition from the Customs authorities, but it was a work of more labour and trouble and vexatious delay than we had deemed possible. On landing, all fire-arms are seized and carried off to the gun-room belonging to the Government officials, and the owners are informed that they must obtain a permit from the resident magistrates before they can regain possession of them. At the magistrate's office there was such a crowd of our fellow-passengers all waiting to receive their permits, that a couple of hours were wasted before we could obtain ours duly made out and signed, for our various fowling-pieces, rifles, and revolvers. The only formality to be gone through before obtaining these permits is to sign a declaration that the weapons are for personal defence or sport, and not for trading purposes. Having at last secured these necessary documents, for which only a trifling charge is made, we proceeded to the Point by the 'bus which regularly plies between it and the town. When we presented ourselves at the gun-

room we were told that the guns must be treated as general merchandise, and cleared by proper duplicate forms and papers, which of course we had to employ a regular landing agent to effect for us. We were now delayed another two hours, although our very obliging and courteous agent, Mr. James, did his best to get the papers all filled out as quickly as possible. At last we again repaired to the gun-room with the orders for the deliverance and stamping of the guns with the Government numbers and letters. But now a worse difficulty arose, for one of the rifles was missing. The Customs officers declared that it had never been sent ashore, while I was equally positive that it had; but to make sure, I took a boat out to the "Melrose," where the case was marked as having been duly landed on to the quay. As the officials had lost it, I felt inclined to let them have the trouble of finding it; but Mr. James assured me that if I did not find it myself in all probability I had seen the last of it. As there was no other course open I set to work, going through warehouse after warehouse until, to my joy, I at length found it amongst a lot of general luggage which had been passed as free from duty. But it was now too late to get them stamped; so after a whole day wasted we had to return to the town no nearer the possession of our guns than in the morning. Next day I was down betimes at the office, and after spending two or three hours waiting, at last saw all the guns stamped with the customs numbers and letters, and paid the exorbitant duty of 1*l.* a barrel on them, besides a percentage on their

market value. All expenses connected with them taken into account, each barrel cost not far off 30s., which is a most oppressive duty; and worst of all, does not in the least degree effect the object it was constituted for, viz. to prevent the natives and ill-affected people obtaining possession of warlike weapons. For those who trade in gun-running now have their boxes of rifles sent to Delagoa Bay, and from there can pass as many as they can dispose of into the very heart of Zululand, or into the northern interior, at a trifling charge in comparison, of 5s. a gun.

All the passenger traffic between the Point and the town is carried on by means of 'busses, which run at frequent intervals to the far end of the town and through the suburbs and back again. The railway is only used for heavy luggage and merchandise, as the carriages are very uncomfortable, and the trains are very few and far between. But better things are promised, and new rolling-stock has already come out from England.

We had been promised a trap in the afternoon to take us up to Pinetown (twelve miles) where we proposed to sleep the night. The heat, dust, and oppressively hot night—made almost unbearable by every pestilent insect of earth and air—made us anything but amiably disposed towards our host when he informed us that owing to his driver being drunk we could not start till next day, for his horses were too valuable to be trusted to a stranger. Neither persuasion nor threats could induce him to let us make a start with another driver.

As we were quite aware that we were simply

being forced by a rapacious landlord against our wills to stop in an uncomfortable hotel, and pay excessive charges for everything we ate or drank, we determined to try and hire a trap elsewhere ; but after visiting every stable in the town, we had to give it up as a bad business. However, our determination had the desired effect on our landlord ; for seeing that we had made up our minds not to be detained any longer, and fearing to lose a remunerative job, he informed us on Wednesday morning that the trap should be ready for us by after tiffin.

When our trap—a light double dog-cart—at last came round, we found that we had not been deceived as to the merits of the team, for they were without doubt a first-rate lot. At the last moment a dispute arose as to who should pay the expenses of the road ; for as we were paying a very high price, we naturally expected the proprietor to bear it. However, by sending a driver without a penny in his pocket, he obliged us to do so ourselves, and feed the man into the bargain ; but as he was a first-rate whip and a civil fellow, we did not object to the latter.

The drive to Pinetown was thoroughly enjoyable. Full twelve miles distant, we performed the journey in just an hour and a half, including a stoppage to give the horses time to wash out their mouths and the half-caste who drove us an opportunity to drink a glass of Natal rum, which he took down without winking, although it was as fiery and strong as petroleum and cayenne pepper mixed together.

Up hill, down dale, and along the level, our driver kept his team up to a swinging gallop, and we had

to hold on fast to prevent being jolted off, for the road is very stony and full of deep ruts. Each separate piece of luggage was securely lashed on, so we were relieved of anxiety as to its safety, and only had to take care of ourselves.

We pulled up at Mrs. Murray's Pinetown Hotel, just in time to get a comfortable bathe before evening tea, as, in the country, dinner is always in the middle of the day. We did ample justice to the new-laid eggs, splendid ham, and fresh bread and butter, with which we were provided.

As Pinetown is 1300 feet above Durban, the change in the atmosphere is very great, and we soon found it was too chilly for the verandah; so after finishing our cigars and drinking a delicious concoction of soda water, sugar, and fresh limes, which our hostess presented to us, we remembered an early start had to be made, and turned into the most inviting-looking beds we had anywhere come across. We were up betimes in the morning; but Mrs. Murray, always anxious for the comforts of her visitors, had some coffee and eggs all ready for us at 5.30, and by 6 we were well on our road to the Half-way House, so as to get one stage over before the heat of the sun made travelling almost overpowering to both travellers and horses. At nine o'clock we arrived at the Half-way House, kept by Mrs. Welch, who speedily had an excellent breakfast ready for us, and our morning drive had prepared us to thoroughly appreciate it.

A railway is in course of construction between Durban and Maritzburg, the proposed line of which

runs along the coach road the greater part of the way, with a very occasional tunnel here and there, where the inclination defied any attempts at zigzag cutting. Kaffir labour is almost exclusively employed in its construction, under white supervision. The Kaffirs are divided into gangs of from twelve to twenty, each division under a white overseer. Every gang then has a piece of the line allotted to it for its share, and on their allotted portion the boys build a krall, where they live until the work is finished. Thus the whole length of line is being worked upon at the same time.

After a two-hours' rest we set off again for Camperdown, the last stage before Maritzburg. This part of the road is rather more interesting, as here and there long lines of jagged, wild ravines, and wooded kloofs, break the monotony of the hard dried-up plains. We passed a great many waggons laden with wool and hides on their way down to Durban, and the drivers were complaining bitterly of the want of grass and water on the road; their oxen bore witness to the truth of their complaints, for the poor beasts were nothing but skin and bones, and appeared to have hardly strength enough to drag themselves along the hard, hilly, dusty road, much less to draw a waggon with from 4000 to 6000 lbs weight on it.

The inn at Camperdown is as uncomfortable as it can well be; and although hungry, we could not manage to eat any of the broken meat and stale bread laid out for our luncheon upon a filthy table covered with a cloth which had done duty for

the last month. Dirty plates, greasy knives and forks made the meal additionally uninviting, so we contented ourselves with some biscuits and a bottle of luke-warm beer while the horses had a feed.

After a ten-miles' drive we at last came in sight of Pieter Maritzburg, the City of Natal. Although the town is nearly 3000 feet above the level of the sea, from the height of the hills with which it is surrounded it appears to lie very low. The little town is so well planted with trees, and has so many gardens both in it and around, that the view from the hill, driving down towards it, quite unprepares a stranger for the well-built continuous streets he may presently drive through, and makes the town look far smaller than it actually is.

We took up our quarters at the Royal Hotel, a fine stone building, with large lofty bedrooms, which would put those of most English hotels to shame. There was only time to get out of our dust-covered clothes before a capital *table-d'hôte* dinner was served up at 6.30.

We were rather surprised to hear nothing either of or from F. at our hotel, but put off making inquiries in the town till the morning, and strolled about outside with our cigars, enjoying the cool evening and watching the fireflies glancing through the air, filled with the noisy chirrupings of crickets in the trees and croakings of innumerable frogs in all the sloots running along each side of the streets. The cool air was such a delightful change from the sultry atmosphere of Durban, that we were reluctant to go indoors until late at night.

CHAPTER VI.

Preparation for a Start—Permits for Guns—Obtaining Ammunition
—List of Stores—Beads—Iced Drinks—Market Prices—
Fish—Kaffir Superstition—Our Boys.

NEXT morning F., who had heard of our arrival, was waiting for us when we came down to breakfast. Rather to our disappointment his preparations for us were not quite finished, as he had been obliged to journey some distance to buy a waggon and oxen suitable for our wants. However, the waggon was in the waggon-maker's yard, having the finishing touches put to it; and the oxen, fourteen in number, of the Zulu breed, were under the charge of a neighbouring petty chief, Moheesa, who had also agreed to send three or more boys to accompany us. F. had also procured for us a couple of good serviceable horses with saddles and bridles; one of them was well known as an excellent shooting-horse, and the other had a turn of speed to recommend him. Our stores were all ordered and only waiting for the waggon to be ready to hold them, so as we were promised it early on Saturday we hoped to make a start on Monday morning. The only business left for us to transact ourselves was to procure the necessary permits from the resident magistrate for carrying our guns, and for enabling us to buy powder and caps from the Ordnance department.

Great precautions are taken to prevent either fire-arms or powder falling into the hands of the Kaffirs or Boers. No man may either buy or sell a gun without obtaining permission, and also registering the transfer at the magistrate's office. No powder is allowed to be sold by private individuals, and it is a very tiresome task to obtain any from the Ordnance department, who have the sale of it.

At the magistrate's office we had first to register the Customs-house numbers of all the guns we purposed carrying, and obtained a separate permit for each ; but the powder was a much longer business. We first had to fill up forms, signed in duplicate, to the effect that the 200 lbs. of powder we required was for the sole use and defence of our party, and not for any purpose of trading with natives within the boundaries of the colonies. Next we had to sign a bond, in conjunction with a householder, in 100% apiece, that we would hold to our declarations, and also that we would "behave orderly and cause our servants to do likewise when outside the borders of the colony."

Armed with these documents, we proceeded to the Comptroller of arms, whose consent it was necessary to obtain before applying to the magistrate for the requisite order upon the superintendent of ammunition.

The Comptroller made no difficulties when we explained our purpose, and with his permission we returned to the magistrate's office, and without having to pay any costs, rather to our surprise, obtained the warrant for the superintendent of ammunition. This function rests in an ironmonger, to whom

we paid the money for the powder and caps, receiving another order for their delivery, upon the care-taker of the magazine. The magazine is situated a couple of miles from the town, and necessitated our hiring a carriage to drive out and bring it back in. We took three sorts of powder: sharps at 1s. 7d. per lb. for the natives we had with us to use in their muzzle-loaders; No. 6, 4s. 3d., rifle grain, for our own large-bore rifles; and No. 4, 4s., for our fowling-pieces.

Cartridge-cases, wads, and shot, we required no permission to buy from a gun-smith in the town, 2 cwt. of lead, at twopence a lb.; 2 bags of loupers, as the Dutch call the A.A. shot; 3 bags of No. 5, 2 of No. 6, 1 of No. 8, and 1 of dust shot, with a large assortment of wads and empty cartridge-cases; 3000 falling block (Westley-Richard) cartridges for the carbines, 1000 for the long-range rising-block rifle, and some hundreds of ball cartridges for each of the large-bore rifles, and 1000 loaded with various kinds of shot for the fowling-pieces, completed our magazine.

We took a large amount of lead, for although there was small chance of our using even a tithe of it, yet we could take no more convenient article of trade, as the cost of carriage more than quadruples its value up country. Our other stores consisted of,—

2 cwt. coffee.	4 doz. jams.
1 box tea.	2 cwt. salt.
25 lbs. raisins and plums.	3 doz. preserved lobster.
1 doz. each brandy and gin.	1 cwt. rice.
3 doz. pickles.	1 cwt. candles.

30 lbs. sweets.	10 lbs. chocolate.
3 cwt. sugar.	6 tins Australian meat.
200 Adelaide flour.	3 doz. preserved salmon.
1 cwt. rusks.	1 cwt. potatoes.
3 galls. rum for boys.	2 gross matches.
8 doz. milk.	2 large hams.
4 doz. soups, vinegar, pepper, mustard, Worcester sauce, and spice.	

Medicines.

1 oz. quinine.	2 large bots. chlorodyne.
3 boxes Cockle's pills.	1 box rhubarb pills.
4 oz. chloroform.	1 lb. Epsom salts.
1 bottle castor oil.	arnica.
Lint, wool, zinc ointment, diachylum plaister, court plaister, surgical needles, lancet and scissors, bottle of sweet oil.	

Miscellaneous.

Arsenical soap, alum, knives and scissors, a nine-gallon case of paraffin oil, and a paraffin cooking-stove for use in wet weather, but which we never used during the whole journey. Japanned iron plates, pint cups of the same material, spoons, forks, knives, pepper, salt and mustard tins, a dozen skinning knives, saws, axes, spades, lanterns, a large collection of carpenter's tools, and supplies of rims, rim pey and forslat.

The large amounts of coffee and salt we were advised to take was a matter of wonder to me, until it was explained that any money was almost valueless in parts of the country we might probably visit. It was necessary to always have at hand some article which would form a medium of exchange for

eggs, milk, corn, or any commodity we might fall short of. For the same purpose we took with us, 3 doz. coloured blankets, 3 doz. pairs of sheets, 6 pieces of Pun-Jum linen, 60 Kaffir picks, a large roll of thick brass wire to make bangles of, a dozen sheets with enormous pictures of lions and elephants in the middle of them, and 35 lbs. of beads of various colours. Beads, however, are perhaps the most risky article of trade, as, like more civilized nations, the Kaffirs have most fastidious and variable tastes in the matter of finery. One year, for instance, a handful of large blue beads will purchase a tusk of ivory from a member of one tribe, and in another tribe ten times the quantity will not be taken for a bucket of mealies ; but as likely as not the trader who trusts to this and takes up a large quantity to the first tribe another year, will find that a very small dark red or any other kind is all the rage, and that his blues are not as valuable, after having travelled a thousand miles, as in the town he started from.

Powder, lead, and caps, are the only commodities which are certain to be eagerly run after, and which occasionally will command almost fabulous prices. Even within the civilized parts of the Transvaal I have seen a pound of powder, costing at Maritzburg only 1s. 7d. sold for 2l. Of course the sale was illegal, and the seller ran the risk of being informed against by the buyer, who would share in the very heavy fine which would certainly be inflicted.

The sweets were specially intended for the Boers, who are great sweet-tooths, and a handful of lolly-pops will often prove efficacious in obtaining a supply of

milk, eggs, or butter, when money would have been useless.

At Maritzburg we procured two Westley-Richard falling-block carbines, sighted up to 800 yards, which were very light, handy, and altogether effective weapons for use on horseback.

We took the opportunity of being near the volunteer rifle-ranges, and also a gun-smith, to try the sighting of all our guns, as well as give them a thorough overhauling. We followed the advice of several old hunters, and took out the steel sights, putting ivory ones in their places, as the sun glares less on the ivory than the steel. If the sight could only be kept a dull black, it would be preferable to the white; but I was never able to prevent the black rubbing off after a time; and then, if there was any sun, it was impossible to take a true aim. I could not obtain a piece of ebony, or should have experimented with it; but I fancy after a time the continual rubbing would put a polish on that even, and so render it as glittering in the sun as steel.

The heat was very great in Maritzburg during the daytime, and as there was no ice in the town, everything was tepid. Two enterprising establishments widely advertised iced drinks; and so drew many thirsty people eager to cool their parched throats, but only to utterly disappoint them; for the boasted iced-drinks of these veracious establishments were no cooler than those to be had elsewhere; and the angry expostulations of the deceived ones were met by the assurance that the last piece of ice had just melted, but if they would come in again it would be

all right. We made several unsuccessful attempts, so gave it up as a bad job ; and I am inclined to think the ice only existed on the advertisement sheets.

Eggs, milk, and fish are almost as conspicuous as the ice by their absence in any form from a bill of fare. Eggs were being sold in the market at 3*s.* 6*d.* to 4*s.* a dozen, and preserved milk was the only shape in which that article was procurable. In the winter months an occasional supply of fish arrives from Durban, and finds a very good market even at the high price cost of carriage drives it up to. Very few of the river fish of South Africa are fit to eat, and none of them are worth the trouble of picking out the bones. The only way we ever found of eating them with any comfort or safety was to bake them with vinegar, which made the bones brittle and not liable to choke one with every mouthful. We never ate fish when any other food was procurable. Very few Kaffirs in their native state will touch fish, as they are tabooed to them by the witch-doctors ; but their superstition on such points cannot have a very strong hold on them, and they do not eat them, more because, in their ignorance, they are afraid of being poisoned. After our boys had once by accident tasted the remains of a tin of potted salmon, they were always particularly eager to be given a taste of "feesh" whenever we were indulging in any of our tinned supplies, or even of the fish we caught and cooked ourselves.

Now that our stores were all collected, our battery of guns and supplies of ammunition complete, and

oxen only waiting for the waggon to be finished, all that remained for us to do was to collect our retinue of boys. We had determined to take from Pieter Maritzburg only such boys as were necessary for the care of the waggon, horses, oxen, and the cooking department, and to pick up the boys for hunting purposes in the country we ultimately decided on trekking to. All Saturday was devoted to this purpose. After inspecting very many who did not suit us, or who were unwilling to go on a long journey with a more or less indefinite termination, we selected an American negro called Joseph Francis as our cook and general man of all work, at 50s. a month; William, a strong, tall half-caste from the old colony, as driver, at 50s. a month; another half-caste at 20s. as forelouter or leader of the oxen; and Jantze, sent by Moheesa, and who was strongly recommended to us, to look after the horses and make himself generally useful, at 2*l.* a month. We gave up the entire management of the boys and waggon to F., as our inexperience would have led us into endless blunders, sometimes not easily rectified.

CHAPTER VII.

Howick—A second Waggon—Castle Hotel—Waterfalls—Troubles with the Boys—And the Waggon—Repacking—Sunday Picnics—Our Start—Our first Outspan—No Game—Mooi River.

THE waggon-maker was not up to his time with the waggon; and as all our preparations were finished, and we could do no good staying in Pieter Maritzburg, where the heat, which had increased daily, made residence unpleasant, A. and myself determined on riding out to Howick, a small village fourteen miles from the town, on the main road to Pretoria, and at an elevation of a thousand feet higher, where we were assured we should be able to spend a few days enjoyably with the benefit of a cooler atmosphere; and there we intended staying until F. should bring the waggon out, and let us commence our journey.

Before leaving Maritzburg we were introduced to a traveller with waggon and oxen, etc., all ready for the road, who wished to join our party, at all events as far as Pretoria; and as his object, like our own, was to go in for any sport possible to procure on the way, and not be too hurried, we agreed to travel together till anything turned up to part us; as it is always an important advantage to have at one's call a second span of bullocks and extra heads and

hands to fall back upon in any emergency, such as an unusually stiff bit of country, a stick in a mud-hole, a breakdown, or any other of the many obstacles we had to encounter and overcome before we could reach our destination. P.'s waggon was already on the top of the town-hill, as the ascent of a very formidable mountain just out of Maritzburg is called, and which in bad weather has often delayed a heavily laden waggon for a fortnight before it has reached the summit. As ours would be able to join him in three days' time he determined to stay where he was, and come on with F. to pick us up at Howick. A. and myself started off at three o'clock, with the few articles we required for two or three days' stay in our saddle-bags. From the side of the hill we had a very fine view of the town and low-lying country for many miles round; but when fairly on the top, ups and downs of sparsely covered sand gave us an uninteresting ride for a couple of hours before we came in sight of the lights of the village, for the sun had gone down and darkness was upon us before we arrived at the Castle Hotel, kept by Mr. Pruffer and his wife. Pruffer himself is a German, and has had a most adventurous life. He was in the first rush at Ballarat, and passed many years wandering about Australia before trying his luck at the diamond fields of South Africa: from there he migrated to Maritzburg, where he built, and for some time kept the Royal Hotel. Things not going well, he took the Castle, at Howick, which he and Mrs. Pruffer now do their best, to make like a real

home to all their visitors. It is worth a long journey to sit on the balcony of the little house after an excellent dinner and listen to Pruffer's yarns and very quaint and shrewd remarks on the men and manners he has come across in his travels, from a blue-eyed, broken-nosed Hottentot to Prince Bismarck.

At Howick the great objects of interest are two waterfalls, the first where the river falls, when full, a clear 360 feet into a broad gorge, down which it takes its course till it forms part of the Umgeni river. About two miles above this fall is a place to me connected with a very pleasant party, where the river broadens out and forms a beautiful series of small waterfalls across the whole breadth of the channel of the stream ; and on every dry ridge, and from every deep crevice of the rocks in the centre of the water, grow brilliant flowers and tall grasses, making a lovely contrast in colour with the mosses and water-weeds on the spray-splashed rocks.

F. did not get away with the waggon till Wednesday evening, but managed to reach the summit of the town hill before he outspanned for the night. While there the forelouper proved obstreperous, so F. dismissed him on the spot, and sent him at once right away from the waggon. Next day, after they had inspanned and were on the road, a sheriff's officer appeared, who insisted on taking Francis the black cook away with him, as the stupid fellow had got into a mess with some fascinating creature of the same colour, who on his departure had sued him for breach of promise, and