

our dinner—itself a strong inducement—but also entertained vindictive feelings towards them as the cause of our discomfiture, we saddled the horses and set off in pursuit, for we carefully marked the spot where they alighted. We had marked them down on a little brook to our right, but when we arrived there not a trace could we find; and were just returning to the waggon when up they rose almost at our feet, startling A.'s horse into such a jump that he could not fire, but giving me a fair shot, and one dropped to my first barrel and another flew a short way badly hit by the second. Again we marked them down, and after an unsuccessful search for the wounded bird, which must have run like a racer directly it alighted, we went after the flock, now reduced to five. The birds had this time rested on a ridge of newly burnt grass, where there was no cover, and standing on ant-heaps they could see us approaching, so A. rode a long détour to get behind them while their attention was fixed on me. When he was directly behind them he dismounted and hid behind his horse. I then rode up, and the birds taking wing flew straight over A.'s head, who this time laid low a brace of them. Frightened by the shot, they wheeled round, and one coming back over my head, paid the penalty for his rashness; the remaining two birds, thinking the neighbourhood altogether too hot to hold them, took a long flight, and disappeared over the crest of a hill, where it would have been like looking for a needle in a whole rick of hay to attempt to find them; so, as we

had at all events procured our Sunday dinner, we rode on after the waggons.

Round a small farmhouse on our road we passed the only trees we had come across since leaving Harrismith. Although the Australian blue-green is easily and cheaply procured, and in four or five years will spring up to a fine tree, the Boer farmers cannot be persuaded to expend the little capital and labour necessary to plant them; and although bitterly complaining of the want of rain, only laugh at the mad notion of the Englishmen, that planting trees will probably bring it for them.

All our watches had long become useless, either from neglect to wind them up, or accidents. The sun was our only time-teller, and it is surprising how very accurately a little practice enables one to ascertain what o'clock it is by it.

Next morning, on the other side of the stream, daylight showed us a farmhouse; and on sending a boy over we learnt that we were at the Vaal, and the drift we wished to cross at was just below us. The boy brought us back a dozen fresh eggs, which we made into a sort of fried batter-pudding for our Sunday dinner.

CHAPTER XIII.

Sunday Occupation—Duck-shooting—Crossing the Vaal—Skeletons of Bôk—A Night out on the Veldt—Curious Fuel—Kaffir Coffee.

ON Sundays, as we had plenty of time on our hands, we usually bestowed additional care on the dinner, and varied the monotony of the perpetual stews—which our very indifferent cook always prepared unless we interfered—with birds or bôk, roasted in a large iron pot. If eggs were in the commissariat, we launched out into omelettes or pancakes, not to speak of rice and tapioca puddings. Dried peaches are also a great luxury in waggon travelling; for when well soaked, and then boiled with sugar, they make a very good wholesome meal, with plenty of plain boiled rice. Sunday, too, was our day for washing; but Jantze rather staggered us one day when ordered off with a larger bundle than usual for the wash by saying, “No good, boss, for wash on Sunday.”

It is extraordinary how quickly a Kaffir will take advantage of any religion or custom of the whites to save himself work. The only way to keep the boys near the waggon on Sundays, and prevent them wandering away to any krall there might happen to be in the neighbourhood, was to keep them more or

less employed. We did not let them off their weekly washing, which after all was the lightest possible sort of labour.

Close to our camp was a large sheet of water, and extending to some distance all round it a border of marshy ground overgrown with reeds and rushes ; as we were strolling about in the afternoon we discovered that this was full of duck and water-fowl of every description. Accordingly, early on the Monday morning, A. and myself, on slaughter bent, took up our position hidden in the reeds, one at each end of the valley, so as to drive the ducks backwards and forwards to one another. I had barely settled myself when a large flock of ducks, disturbed by A., came slowly down over my head, and gave me a fair chance to bag a couple. Instantly, from all quarters of the vley, arose ducks, cranes, plovers, ibis, and many other kinds of wild fowl ; and for some minutes both of us were firing as fast as we could load our guns ; but the ducks rose at once, circling round from the centre of the pond to a great height before they came over our heads, and so caused many misses ; but between us we had eleven ducks when we retired to the waggon, besides several which fell where the mud was too deep for us to reach them. As we walked back to the waggon, up rose a fine snipe, almost similar in plumage, but nearly twice as big, as the British specimen, which I dropped just as he was dipping down into the stream ; and we lost some time in picking him out again, as the current carried him past. While looking for him, up rose another,

taking us unawares, and for a time he escaped, as we both missed ; but we had marked him down, and again flushing him, he was laid by the other in our bag. Before we reached the waggon three plovers fell to a volley, as a large flock went whistling over our heads. After breakfast we again tried the vley, but it was deserted by its feathered inhabitants, and we only killed a large snake, which refused to make way for us, and a solitary duck.

In the afternoon we crossed the Vaal, and very barely escaped having a serious accident in doing so. The descent into the river was very steep, and had to be taken at a run. This we accomplished in safety, but with a good deal of exciting anxiety ; then we went a hundred yards down the middle of the stream before taking a turn at right angles out of it on to the other side—an almost perpendicular bit of bank about four feet high. The forelouper did not bring the oxen up the bank in a straight line, so as to utilise all their combined strength at the right instant, for hauling the waggon up the steep incline, and consequently, only half the span pulling together, the waggon stopped and our hind wheels stuck fast, leaving the waggon almost perpendicular on its beam end. There was nothing to do but to unloose the oxen, and, pushing the waggon back again into the stream, and into a straight position, make another attempt. The instant, however, the chain was unfixd, without any assistance from us, the waggon of its own accord rolled back into the very middle of the river, and splashing into the stream let in a good deal of water.

Our second attempt was not much more successful, and it was not till the other span were brought up to our assistance that we mounted the bank and were on the soil of the Transvaal, and once again under the British flag.

P.'s waggon not being as heavy as ours, and having a better forelouper, required no assistance in crossing from our span, which gave his driver an opportunity to crow over ours.

We met with a most unusual piece of civility from the Boer of whom we had asked, and been directed on the way. He observed that we had mistaken his directions, and when nearly a mile distant from the farm he sent a boy to put us back on the right trek. We were so pleased and surprised at his courtesy that A. and myself rode back to thank him ; but as he could not understand a word of English, or German either, and we knew next to no Dutch, I fear he only thought we wanted to get something more out of him ; for in reply to our protestations of gratitude he kept on assuring us that he had no more milk, eggs, bread, or anything else of an edible nature in the house. At last, seeing that he had not an inkling of our meaning, and was evidently wishing to get rid of us, we shook hands and rejoined the waggons, by that time outspanned some distance away, as the night was too dark for trekking.

In waggon travelling, like other things, accidents never come singly ; so to follow up our bad fortune of the previous day, we again stuck fast in a muddy sproot before we had gone a mile on our first trek next morning, and were obliged to outspan and

have breakfast while we were digging furrows for the wheels out of it. While the waggons kept to the now well-worn track towards Heidelberg, A. and I took a wide tour of the veldt in search of bôk; but although we came across myriads of bones, skulls, and horns of wildebeeste and blesse-bôk, bearing witness to the wholesale slaughters which took place only a few years ago, when the Boers first found out the value of the skins, we did not come across any bôk, although we saw plenty of fresh spoor. The massacres which then took place have thinned the game—to an almost incredible extent for so short a time—throughout the greater part of South Africa. In many parts the veldt is literally speckled all over with the white-bleached bones of the bôk killed only for their hides, and when stripped left to rot away.

The waggons outspanned at the house of a Kaffir who was taking charge of the stock belonging to a Boer, and soon after we arrived the man himself came home, carrying a spring-bôk he had just shot, and from him we learnt that there were plenty of them on the plains behind his house. We all started off after them at once, leaving orders for the waggons to inspan when ready, and proceed along the main road to Heidelberg. A. and I started together, but as we sighted two herds at the same time he branched off after one, and I took the other. As the country was perfectly open, and there was not a chance of stalking, I pursued the method shown us by Grunveldt, and galloped straight upon them; but as they let me get within four hundred yards

without moving, I stopped short, got off my horse, and, sitting down, rested my rifle with one elbow on each knee, took a steady aim at the nearest of the band, and fired. To my delight—for it was my first spring-bòk—I saw the one I had aimed at bound up and then lie over with his white belly showing. I tried a couple of snap-shots at the flying herd, but without success.

As the horse I was riding would not stand the bleeding carcase being put on its back, I cut off the head and rode back after the waggon to fetch a boy to assist in bringing it back, first taking the bearings of the dead bòk's position. I soon overtook them, and brought back Francis with me, taking the precaution, before leaving, to find out the exact route they would pursue for the next few miles, and taking a point, in the direction of which, the main road ran, to ride towards in case we missed the spoor. Before Francis and I reached the spot where my bòk was, the darkness came upon us, and rendered it impossible to find it, even if we were to hit off the exact locality in which it lay; so returning to the Kaffir's house I promised him a few charges of powder if he would find it in the morning and bring it after the waggon, as we were quite run out of meat, and no other bòk is so palatable as the spring-bòk.

The moon was now well up, and gave us a splendid light to follow our road by; so we were able to keep up a good pace, and at the same time steer clear of holes, or of the deep ruts with which the road abounded. After we had been riding for

nearly an hour and a half, I began to think it strange that we did not come up with the waggons, as even if they were still trekking we ought to have overtaken them, as our directions for them to keep the main road had been so very plain. There was no doubt about our being on it ourselves, and there was nothing for us to do but continue, so on we went; but every moment obliged us to be more careful in picking our way, for black clouds coming up over the bright moon left us in almost perfect darkness.

After another hour's riding we saw on our left-hand side a dark object, which to our eager eyes looked like the waggons in the distance, and I began to think how acceptable would be the supper already prepared for us; but quickly our hopes were destroyed, for it was only a heap of stones and a small bit of wall left standing, the ruins of some hut evidently burnt down, and long deserted by its owner. The place was within fifty yards of where we were, but the darkness gave it the appearance of being far away. The moon was so entirely hidden by the black clouds, and all light so completely shut off, that we absolutely could not distinguish the road from the veldt, and it would have been a useless waste of time to look out for any human habitation. What to do I knew not, and Francis could offer no suggestion, and only made matters worse by ill-omened suggestions of impossible dangers. Where could the waggons be? Certainly not ahead, for no mortal oxen could have come the distance in the time that had elapsed since we left them. It was just as certain that we had

not passed them outspanned beside the road, for the darkness would only have shown us their fires more distinctly; and besides, we always outspanned so close to the road itself that we must have observed them and heard their voices. If they had turned off the main road, either purposely or by accident, it would be hopeless for us to attempt to find them; and if by accident, there was an off-chance of their discovering their mistake, and coming back to the road they knew we would be on; as we were now at a slight elevation from the surrounding plains, it was just possible we might see their fires, or hear the shots they would fire when we did not return. The Kaffir's house was a full twelve miles behind us, and probably not a house ahead until we came to Heidelberg, forty miles away. As it was now so dark that we had frequently to dismount and light matches to see if we were still on the road, in places where we could not distinguish the wheel tracks by feeling with our hands, the chances were that we should not be able to find the Kaffir's house even if we tried; so as there seemed no other alternative, I told Francis to unsaddle and hobble the horses, after giving them a drink at a small water-hole by the road-side. While he was thus employed, I set about cutting as much of the short grass as I could to make a fire with. Luckily for us the moon emerged from the clouds, and for half an hour gave us a brilliant light; and to my delight I discovered that the spot had been chosen as an outspanning place by a former party, and before the moon again went down Francis and I had collected a fine heap of

cow-dung for our fire. We cleared away a quantity of the stones on the ground, and heaped them up so as to get all the protection from the wind, now very cold and cutting, afforded us by the bit of wall left standing. Francis, in his mortal terror of snakes, did not at all appreciate moving the stones about; and I must confess that he made me jump round pretty sharply more than once with his false alarms and terrified ejaculations.

The former occupier of the spot must have been a great hunter, for, arranged so as to form the boundaries of what had once been a garden, were the skulls and horns of innumerable bôk. If these would only burn we had all the material for a splendid fire, and it was what we most needed; for I was dressed for the mid-day heat, with nothing on but a thin shirt and breeches, and the wind grew colder and the temperature lower every moment; by past experience we knew that there were several degrees of frost every night. We soon had a fire with the grass and dung, and then proceeded to test the combustible qualities of the skulls and horns. For a time they only appeared to put the fire out; but gradually the horns began to smoke and smoulder, then presently broke out in clear, strong flames, and the additional heat communicating itself to the bones, a magnificent bonfire was the result; but they burnt down so quickly, that I feared our supply not lasting out. As the heat made us feel more comfortable, our hunger made itself felt, as we had not eaten for many hours, and Francis was loud in his bewailings. Before starting in the morning, I had

put a couple of biscuits and a piece of betong the size of a walnut in my pocket, and this now came in most fortunately. Giving Francis the latter, I kept the biscuits ; and as the skulls were now blazing up like tar-wood, things did not look so bad ; and if I had only had a pipe and tobacco, I think I should almost have enjoyed it.

We had no means of signalling even if it would have been of any use, as I had left my rifle in the waggon when I went for the boy to assist me in bringing back the bôk. So the only thing was to be resigned to the inevitable, and make the best of passing a night on the open veldt. I used the saddle-cloth of my horse as a sort of coat, and with the saddles managed to get quite a comfortable place to lie down in ; but had to move round frequently, as the side exposed to the air became frozen while the other turned towards the fire was baked. Thoroughly tired out, I managed to get a few hours' sleep just before dawn. Francis, too, fell off, and the fire died away without more fuel being added to it ; so when I awoke, for a few minutes I was too benumbed and frozen to move, as the whole ground around us was thickly covered with hoar-frost. The great charred heap of piled-up skulls looked very grim and ghastly in the dim grey light of the morning.

We managed to get up another fire to warm ourselves at before catching the horses, which were almost as cold and stiff as we were. Saddling up, we rode off at a brisk trot back along the road to the Kaffir's hut, keeping a sharp look-out for the waggons or their spoor. When we had retraced our steps some

six miles, turning off to the left was a disused bye-road ; down this went the track of our waggons, which easily accounted for our having missed them. We went on, however, to the Kaffir's to get our bôk, and at his hut obtained a cup of some horrible concoction, which his wife called coffee, but which, hungry and thirsty as I was, I could not manage ; Francis hunted out a strip of beltong, which he proceeded to roast in the embers, and it sufficed to appease our appetites, as a very little of it went a long way. We then started off for the bôk ; but the Kaffir had made an earlier start, and we met him half-way returning with it ; so we transferred it to my horse and gave him a few cartridges as a reward, for I had no powder with me.

On our road to the waggon I met Josiah, one of the drivers, who had been sent after me on horseback, and from him I learnt that A. had also been missing all night ; but while he was telling me about it, I spied him riding along a hill a couple of miles away ; and he soon after, noticing our party, rode up and joined us. His night's adventures had been somewhat similar to my own. He had followed up a wounded bôk, not paying attention to the coming darkness, and when he at last gave up the chase had utterly lost all landmarks, and had not a notion in which direction to shape his way. For some time he wandered first in one direction and then in another, on the chance of seeing a light, sometimes fired his rifle along the ground as a signal of distress, until his ammunition was exhausted ; but receiving no response, he picked out a place where the grass grew

long and thick, and hobbling his horse, passed the night as comfortably as he could, but was worse off than I, for he was unable to find any cow-dung to make up a fire with. We were not in the best of tempers when we at last reached the waggon, for it was entirely owing to the carelessness of F. that the waggon had followed the disused path instead of keeping to the high road, as they should have done; and in which case I, at all events, should not have passed such an uncomfortable night. But after a good dinner, and a nobbler of brandy apiece, we felt more disposed to make a joke of what at the time was anything but a pleasant episode.

CHAPTER XIV.

The first Breakdown—Boers on the Scent of Grog—A Snake-hunt—Postage in the Transvaal—A Boer Postmaster—Bargaining with Boers—A Macatee Krall—Daka-smoking, and its Effects.

Thursday, 9th.—Next morning, feeling lazy, I stayed in bed while the waggon treked on; and, in spite of the joltings and jerkings, was sleeping peacefully till Jantze, putting his head inside the fore-sheet, roused me out with the information that a small herd of spring-bòk were feeding close to the trek. I was out in a second with my rifle, not stopping to dress; but I think the bòk were startled at my pink pyjamas, for they suddenly started off at a great pace before I could get a shot. I jumped on my horse and went after them; and an extraordinary sight I must have looked, with bare feet, bare head, and no covering but brilliant pink flannel pyjamas, which I always wore at night to keep off chills or fevers. I was unable to come up with the bòk; and while I was away we had our first serious breakdown. The iron nose to the wooden axle, without any apparent cause, snapped in two, and we were completely done for, without a blacksmith's aid. F. went off at once on horseback to our last outspanning place, and there found out where a farmer, who had the necessary

tools, lived. He rode another twelve miles to the man's farm, but did not return till next day with the mended plate. While we were waiting for him two Boers came up on horseback to buy grog, and brought bottles with them to carry it away in. Our protestations that we had none were of no avail, and they kept on asserting that we had plenty, and that they meant to stop till we sold it them. We could not imagine what had given them the impression that we were travelling publicans, which they evidently took us for; till at last, requisitioning Josiah as an interpreter, we discovered that they had taken the two water-barrels on the back of P.'s waggon for casks of rum. When this was clear, we told them to go and help themselves to as much as they liked; and their faces were a study, as their expression changed from joyous anticipation to supreme disgust, when they became aware that they were filling their bottles with rank water, only put in to cleanse the casks, instead of the much-desired grog. We gave them a tot apiece of the real stuff just to soften the blow, and then intimated that the sooner they were off the better we should be pleased, as otherwise they would have remained for a week on the chance of being given another tot.

While at the water near us, I saw the most repulsive-looking snake I ever came across; about six feet long, of a dirty, black colour, and covered with rough skin, and a large, flat, wicked-looking head. As I had neither stick nor gun with me, and could see no stone, I could not kill it. As I stood watching the beast, which never made an attempt to move off,

it just swung its head backwards and forwards, as if half meditating an attack. Just then P. came up to water his horse, and the beast thinking better of his laziness, slowly retreated into a hole in the bank before we could molest it. We spent an hour vainly trying to dig it out, and then let off a blue devil in the hole, which I hope suffocated it.

Next day we came to a post-office, or rather house where the post-cart stops, and took the opportunity to post our letters of the past fortnight. The responsible position of postmaster was vested in a Boer who owned the house, but this functionary could not tell us the postage to England, as he had never had a letter addressed there before. He only kept penny Transvaal stamps; so, as letters for England needed a Natal stamp as well, we left him money to give the post-cart driver, who, he assured us, would stamp them properly in the first town.

From a Dutch farm we procured some bread at a dollar, or rix-dollar (1s. 6d.), a loaf, and also a fresh supply of dried peaches at 1s. a pound—a very exorbitant charge, as in Pretoria they only cost 3d. in the market. The Boer would have preferred to have no deal at all, than to miss an opportunity of doing an Englishman.

In the evening we passed a large krall of Macatee Kaffirs, situated on the summit of a low round hill, and from a distance the sun shining on the kralls gave them the appearance of a large encampment of soldiers, for the kralls were laid out regularly in lines and cross lines. The Macatee Kaffirs are spread all over the Transvaal and Free State, and

from them the working boys principally come. They are the most hideously ugly race of all the Kaffirs. As we passed by their krall many came down to see who we were. Our boys bought from them a large bundle of daka or wild hemp (henbane), which with Kaffirs occupies the same position that opium does with the Chinese, and with equally injurious effects. Its operation on the senses, however, is exactly the reverse of opium. After a boy has taken a few whiffs, he is possessed of the most extraordinary eloquence, and will rant and rave for an hour together, only interrupted by convulsive fits of coughing, as the smoke penetrates his lungs. His ravings will often take the form of violent abuse of the white man, and his "boss" in particular; and it occasionally becomes necessary to extinguish his volubility with a bucket of cold water as a mild preventive, and the boy upon whom his mantle next falls will be wiser and confine himself to imaginary exploits he has performed in battle or the chase. They have rather a curious mode of inhaling the smoke of this powerful drug. The pipe itself is of many shapes and various materials; but the most fashionable consists of a cow's horn, the shorter the better, with a piece of hollow reed inserted in the centre at an angle of forty-five degrees; on the top of this reed is fixed a penny stone ink-pot, with the bottom knocked out, which forms the bowl of the pipe. The cow's horn is now filled with water up to where the reed tube with the bowl joins it, and the bowl is filled with burning cinders, on which the daka is placed. The smokers seat themselves

in a circle, with their elbows resting on their knees ; the first applies his lips to the mouth of the horn and draws the smoke up until his mouth is quite full, and hands it on to the next, who does likewise ; meanwhile, the first has handed to him a pannikin of water, with which he slowly fills his mouth, forcing the smoke down into his lungs ; the pannikin he again hands on to the next, and receives in exchange a long hollow reed, through which he proceeds to squirt the water and smoke out of his mouth ; and so the whole process is repeated from member to member of the circle. The coughing and choking that now commences is almost incredible, and quite indescribable. Suddenly one of them will be inspired with an oration, and wildly gesticulating will shout at the pitch of his voice, or hiss through his teeth for perhaps an hour at a stretch, and it is not etiquette to interrupt him. At last, tired by his own eloquence and succumbing to the intoxicating fumes, he falls into a state of torpor, and another taking up the theme, so it goes on until the whole company are overcome. A man under the effects of daka does not need an audience to talk to, but will harangue the empty air with as much energy, as a full circle of admiring auditors. When under the influence of this baneful stuff a boy is utterly unaccountable for his actions ; and I have seen the quietest best-behaved boy, insolent, threatening and dangerous after a very few whiffs. It is next to impossible to entirely prevent the boys using it, and it is better to allow it to be smoked openly, and so be able to stop it before the effects take a violent form,

than have the boys discontented always and taking every possible opportunity of illicitly indulging in it to excess, whenever they can evade their master's eye. They are very ingenious in their means of using it, and will make a pipe out of anything that may be at hand, from a potato hollowed out and a large stalk of grass, to the fashionable ink-pot ; it is quite futile to destroy their pipes, for they will make shift with a hole in a lump of mud or moistened sand, and lay down on the ground with their mouths to it, rather than be deprived of the use altogether.

A boy once asked me, " Boss, why you not smoke Kaffir pipe ? "

" Why should I destroy my health, and become quarrelsome and ill like you do ? "

" Ah, boss ! it makes everything seem so small, and so far away, and everything so pretty and warm ; his sweetheart also comes and talks to Kaffir while he smokes daka. "

This, in a boy's own words, expresses the effect the daka has upon him ; and so no wonder it has an irresistible temptation to them when wet, hungry, tired, and cold.

Nearly all the Kaffirs we met about these parts were more or less clothed, as they are in the habit of going out to work for about six months out of the twelve, either as farm-labourers or house-servants, and in those capacities a certain amount of covering is necessary.

The scenery became far wilder as we advanced. The hills were loftier and more broken up, and here and there covered with thick brushwood. The

veldt itself was strewn with quartz rocks, and rugged boulders. The streams were full of beautiful quartz pebbles, worn smooth by the constant friction. Many of the rocks have streaks of pure iron in them, and on every side are relics of the volcanic action which must have formed the greater part of the whole Transvaal.

We had expected to reach Heidelberg for Sunday ; but as it was getting dark, and we were still ten miles away, we outspanned by the side of a clear, deep-flowing stream, in an open space between two masses of ragged reef.

CHAPTER XV.

No Coffee—Birds and Insects in the Transvaal—Heidelberg—An up-country Billiard-room—Wild Ostriches—Riding into Pretoria—Letters from Home—Conflicting Intelligence—Mr. White assists us—The Route decided—F. leaves us—The “European”—The Queen’s Birthday—Ball at Government House.

Sunday, May 12th.—In the morning there was no coffee ground for breakfast, and the boy whose duty it was to grind it excused himself on the pretext that it was Sunday. This same boy later on in the day had no compunction about leaving the horses to stray where they chose, while he sneaked away to the Macatee krall, and came back intoxicated when he thought we should not observe him, and when called to account did not mind telling lie after lie in his defence. As this was the second occasion on which a boy had attempted to take advantage of our reluctance to work on Sundays, we made an example of him on the spot, which prevented any more skulking on the part of the others.

The various changes in the bird and insect life, as the day passes on, are very marked and curious.

In the early morning all round we heard the cries of the coranne and partridge, and as we went to bathe very likely put up a couple of wild duck, or disturbed

a bôk come down for his morning draught. As the heat of the day comes on, the game of all description retires to the shade, and is neither to be seen nor heard, and the air is full of gorgeous insects of every size and colour, from the large butterfly, flitting from reed to reed, to the sphinxes and sand-flies, whose movements, as they dart and glance through the sunlight, are too quick for the eye to follow. Darting after these, and glancing like little bolts of shiny gold or silver, set with emeralds and rubies, are innumerable brilliantly-plumaged small birds, who again retire into the reeds when the butterflies shut up their wings as the heat of the sun ceases to warm them into activity. But the cooling atmosphere is far from being tenantless; for, as the sun goes down, myriads of clear-winged long-bodied flies swarm up from the ground, and after these there dart out from their hiding-places of the daytime a devouring crowd of blackbirds with white tails, who gobble up the flies by the dozen. A larger kind, with gold feathers in their wings, also assist at the banquet; and a smart little wagtail has a larger share perhaps than either of the others, for he is quicker in his movements, and never misses his dart. When these go to bed later on, owls, night-hawks, bats, crickets, frogs, and jackals, combine together to break the deep stillness of the night with their harsh discordant cries and croakings.

The boys always change their costume for Sundays in some way or other, and they also take the opportunity to wash, dry, and grease themselves. One day Jantze appeared in a red shirt and a pair of boots as

his sole covering; another Sunday it was a hat and a pair of trousers.

Next afternoon we arrived in Heidelberg, and distance certainly lent great enchantment to our first view. Looking down on the village from a mile or two away, it has all the appearance of a pretty, old-fashioned German hamlet, but a closer inspection showed it to be a decidedly dirty and unpicturesque little place. Like all colonial townships it is built with a large square in the middle, in which the Boers have their kirk and school. The English church, and the clergyman's house, are there also. It is a prosperous township, in spite of its rather squalid appearance; and one firm alone have a very large share of the whole wool trade of the colony, and are reputed to turn over their 100,000*l.* a year.

In the evening we were invited to visit the "Billiard-room," which turned out to be a very small bagatelle-board, in a room so circumscribed that the players were much cramped in their play. Attached was a bar; the proprietor, an Austrian ex-soldier, seemed to be making a good thing out of the two combined, as all the youth and fashion of Heidelberg were there gathered together, and 2*s.* a game was charged for the bagatelle.

We started off early next morning, as Heidelberg held out no inducements for us to protract our stay, and we were anxious to reach Pretoria and obtain information which would help us to definitely settle our route. We treked hard all day Wednesday, and from the waggons saw some wild ostriches; but within the Transvaal these are now forbidden game,

so as to prevent their total annihilation. A man is allowed to ride them down if he can, and then pluck their feathers; but if he kills one, he lays himself open to a fine of 200*l.*, or two years' imprisonment, so it is rather like giving a man permission to catch birds by putting salt on their tails.

Forty-eight hours after leaving Heidelberg we outspanned within six miles of Pretoria, having treked in that time a distance of forty-six miles. A. and myself rode on at once to get our letters, leaving the waggons close to a good supply of clear water, and with a canteen and a farm handy for any supplies they might be in need of. The road into Pretoria ran along the top of a reef of iron-stone for several miles, and was very bad riding. The town itself is surrounded by hills on all sides, and we came very suddenly into view of it as we reached the bottom of a long piece of down-hill, and then passed through a narrow opening between two ridges into the plain upon which Pretoria is laid out. The tents of the 13th, on the outside of the town; the fort, situated on a rising ground above them, with the British flag, and the red coats of the sentries, gave it a very military appearance as we rode on past the camp down a wide street opening into the town square. We stopped on our way at the post-office to receive our long-looked-forward-to letters from home. We put up our horses, and as a favour obtained a room apiece at the "Edinburgh," the only hotel Pretoria at present possesses. Although the rooms were very small indeed, and furnished in the most primitive style, we were thankful to get them,

and have a place to read our letters in. That very night we proceeded to make what inquiries we could to ascertain in which direction lay our best chances of sport. There was no difficulty in obtaining information, and we were only embarrassed by the multitude of our advisers, for each advocated a different route ; but we received very dispiriting answers from our informants as regarded killing big game. All agreed that we had come the worst year we could possibly have chosen for a shooting expedition ; and as soon as one man had finished an account of a district where we might expect to kill large game, and be unmolested by Kaffirs, another would come up with later intelligence, to the effect that there was no game at all, and the Kaffirs were up in arms. But by degrees we were able to confine our ultimate choice to two districts—either to the Waterburgh and down the banks of the Limpopo, or else the country beyond Leydenburg, between the rivers Sabie and Crocodile. Ultimately we were decided in our choice of the latter, by the offer of Mr. C. K. White, an old and experienced colonist, to himself accompany us and be our guide to the land of the big game. Mr. White agreed to meet us in Leydenburg on the 1st of July, before when it would not be safe to descend into the low-lying country, which, in the summer-time, from its unhealthy vapours, and malaria arising from the swampy nature of the ground, is fatal to Europeans, although a fine climate for the winter months of July, August, and September. It was now only the 20th of May, so we had plenty of time to spare before our rendezvous ; but as we were

assured that we could have excellent bôk-shooting on our road, we did not mind the delay.

The second day we were at Pretoria our guide F. was obliged to leave us, as important news reached him which made his presence elsewhere absolutely imperative. We were now so used to the waggon life, and had gained so much experience in treatment of both boys and oxen, that it was not of so much importance as it would have been a month before ; and although it would throw a great deal of extra and the least agreeable part of the work on our shoulders, and expose us to petty thefts on the part of Kaffirs and Boers with whom we might deal, we determined to put up with these inconveniences rather than engage another man in his place.

As the waggons were too far off for us to visit every day, and we were not yet sufficiently sure of the boys to leave them in sole charge, we thought it better to bring them up into the town, where they would be under our constant supervision ; so we outspanned them near a stream of water in a fine open field on the outskirts of the town, where there was a fair feed for the oxen ; I left the hotel myself, and was very glad to take up my quarters again in the waggon.

While we were at Pretoria a restaurant, the "European," was opened, and rapidly cut out the "Edinburgh" in the custom of all those who lived at table-d'hôtes ; and no wonder, for I there had better cooking, better attendance, better plate and better liquors, than I came across anywhere else in the whole of South Africa, outside the three clubs. The two proprietors have put their hearts into the

business ; and, although socially far above the greater part of their customers, are far more attentive and obliging than the ordinary hotel-keepers. I know it made me feel quite uncomfortable at first to have my plate of soup and glass of sherry brought me by one who was formerly first amongst the football team at Eton, and a deservedly popular member of society in England.

On the 24th of May, being the Queen's birthday, there were great doings. A whole holiday was declared, and every flag in the town was displayed. In the early morning a royal salute was fired from the fort by the regulars, and another by the volunteer artillery. Later on the Governor reviewed three companies of the 13th, and the whole town turned out to look on. Three very hearty cheers were given for her Majesty (when the band had played the national anthem) by all the Englishmen, with heads uncovered, although the sun was at 90° in the shade. The Dutch neither cheered nor took off their hats, and looked sullenly on ; but did not attempt any anti-demonstration, much as they would have liked to.

For some days past the stores had displayed large black boards with "white gloves" upon them, and the lives of the various salesmen had been almost worried out of them in attempts to match half-a-dozen different shades of colour with the same material ; and various other signs had clearly pointed out that some important occasion was at hand for the display of an unusual amount of adornment. The night of the Queen's birthday was the long-looked-forward-to festival, for the

Governor was giving a ball and supper in honour of her Majesty Queen Victoria, and all well-disposed people within the colony were bidden to the feast. At nine o'clock A. and myself set off to Government House, and after various hairbreadth escapes from tumbling into the many sloods which intersect the town—as the night was pitch dark and lamps and carriages are unknown—we arrived at the gates, where men of the 13th were in attendance to take charge of the coats and hats, and usher the visitors into a large reception-room, at one end of which stood the Governor ; it was not until we had paid our respects to him that we had time to look about us. The large room we were in had been formed from the gravel carriage-ground in front of the house, by extending canvas from the top of the house verandah to the other side and putting cloth on the ground ; in the drawing-room thus formed were orange-trees bearing fruit, and various kinds of flowering shrubs, all naturally growing ; and from the trunks and branches of several large trees which reached the ceiling, were suspended rows of Chinese lanterns and other illuminations, while a natural hedge of shrubs shut off from the room, like a huge screen, the table where tea, coffee, etc., were being served. Opening out of the drawing-room was the supper-room, likewise formed of canvas, and with the same natural decorations. The ground-floor rooms, with good boards, were thus left open for the dancing, already in full swing to the music of the 13th band, who, placed in the verandah, were equally well heard in all the three

dancing-rooms. But nothing struck me as more remarkable about the whole ball, than the ladies' toilettes.

So far away from either milliners or dressmakers, I had expected to see the most extraordinary attempts at ball-dresses ; but, on the contrary, the dresses were as good as at any ordinary English county ball ; and while most of the ladies had on really tasteful as well as well-made dresses, there were not half-a-dozen in the room who were not good to look upon. The gentlemen were not equally happy in their costumes, and a London tailor would have gone into convulsions on the spot at the dress-coats and waistcoats there displayed ; but frock and cut-away black cloth coats were far in preponderance of the orthodox evening cut. The various military uniforms gave a bright colouring to the scene ; and on the way home at two o'clock in the morning, we all agreed that there had never been seen a prettier ball or been one more thoroughly enjoyed than that on her Majesty's birthday, 1878, at Pretoria.

CHAPTER XVI.

Final Preparations—A Dinner-party on the Road—A Jackal Hunt
—The Boys are troublesome—Francis has a lucky Escape—
Poaching Fish—Spring-bôk—Vultures—Kaffirs and Spirits
—Middelburg—Herr Marensky.

WE spent the next week in overhauling our stores and laying in fresh supplies of those articles of which we had either run short, or which experience had shown us were most useful and appropriate. A large stock of "rims," as lengths of prepared hide are called, and which entirely take the place of rope throughout the whole of South Africa; forslat, thin strips of skin used for the whip-lashes, and which drivers wear out every two or three days; and rimpey, a sort of skin string; two or three thick coats for the boys, who had been feeling the cold rather severely the last few nights; more preserved milk, a luxury none can appreciate who have not been obliged to depend for days together upon coffee and meal as the staple article of food; another sack of onions, without which the continual stews soon become insipid; a fresh supply of spirits and tobacco for the boys; and a few additional tools and cooking utensils. We also procured two more horses of a better class than our others, and also some saddlery, both of which we had to pay through

the nose for, as the Government were buying up every horse and saddle they could lay their hands on, for the use of the volunteers serving against Secocoeni.

Every day made us more anxious to leave the town, for the boys were becoming less inclined to go with us each hour, as they heard reports of the fighting in various parts; and as there was a great demand for labour, they knew that they would easily obtain work at high wages, without the possible risk they ran in accompanying us. It was only the certainty of losing the wages they had already earned—and which, following the invariable colonial habit, we were not to pay them until the conclusion of their engagements—that prevented them deserting in a body. It was not until the 3rd of June that we at last fairly got the waggon under weigh, and set our backs on Pretoria. One thing and another, however, had delayed our start till so late in the day, that darkness came on fast as we reached the suburbs of the town, and we were obliged to there outspan for the night. Next day we made an early start; but before we had gone a mile a big dog we had brought for the double purpose of watch-dog, and for running down game, etc., which had shown a strong disinclination to leave the town ever since the previous day, broke the rim he was tied by to the waggon, and made off back to his master's house. I mounted a horse and gave hot chase after him; but all in vain, for he was not to be seen when I appeared; so not caring to delay our journey for a beast which would probably have been more trouble

than he was worth, I gave him up, and rode back to the waggon, firmly resolved to buy no more dogs, but with a very shrewd suspicion that I had been done successfully.

On the way we outspanned at a stream, where there was a splendid orange grove ; and the liberal owner gave us as many as we had the face to carry away in a large sack, utterly refusing to take any payment except a pouch of tobacco, of which he had run short. While we were in the garden we spied a covered cart drawn by mules coming along the road towards us, and in it were Colonel Rolands and Captain Carrington, who were returning from a tour of inspection round the various forts and encampments against Secocoeni. As their mules were tired, and night fast coming on, we persuaded them to stay the night and have dinner with us. Luckily we had a large piece of salt beef, which we at once put into the pot, and our dinner-party was quite a success as the beef was undeniable, and devilled sardines made as good an entrée as could be desired. From our guests we received much necessary information as to the safety of the road we intended to take ; and it was not until midnight that, with a farewell glass of squareface, we said Good-night and Good-bye.

We felt the loss of F. more of a morning than any other time, as the boys were very loth to leave their warm blankets, and his energetic measures used to hasten them wonderfully. The morning after our dinner I roused them up at six o'clock, but they were so slow and lazy in bringing the oxen and

spanning them in, that it was nine o'clock before we made a start, and we lost all the cool air of the early morning, when the oxen do double the work with half the exertion they expend in the hot mid-day.

Treking along in the afternoon we sighted a jackal on the road ahead of us, so mounting quickly on our new horses we gave chase, and had a splendid gallop for several miles across an open piece of veldt. Every moment we were gaining on it, and were debating on how we should compass its death when suddenly, seeing that escape by flight was impossible, the jackal disappeared into an enormous bear-hole, and left us, helpless and in the lurch; but although we had not caught the jackal, we had so thoroughly proved the speed of the new purchases, that we were not at all discontented with our wasted energies. As we were riding slowly back to the waggon, the horse A. was riding put his foot into a deep hole, and threw him very heavily to the ground. Luckily he was only badly bruised and shaken, instead of having a limb broken, and he pluckily rode on back, in spite of the pain.

As the boys had put us to such inconvenience by their laziness in the morning, we determined to be even with them; so before turning into bed we sent them out to bring in the oxen and tie them up to the dusselboom overnight, so as to be all ready for the early morning start. They obeyed reluctantly enough, but soon came back, saying it was too dark to find them, and at first refused to go out after them again. However, we took all their blankets and coverings for the night, and put them inside the

waggon, and then told the boys that they would not have them back until they brought the oxen. As it was a bitterly cold night, and they were half frozen already, they made the best of it, and in an hour all the oxen were safely tied up. Our measures had the desired effect, for the boys were never again so long about getting the oxen in of a morning, when we afterwards allowed them to run loose all night.

On Thursday we passed through a narrow rocky gorge, very unlike any country we had hitherto been in; but on the other side we came again upon the uninteresting high veldt, with its miles and miles of ups and downs of brown burnt-up grass, with never a bit of green on it to relieve the eye. The oxen were at last beginning to show the effects of never having a really good feed, their bones were painfully visible through their skins, and they had far more trouble than at first, in pulling the waggon, (although lighter than at starting,) up any little hill, or through the deep sand.

Francis, our black cook, had one day as near a chance of a bad tumble as I have ever seen. He was as usual leading the horses at some distance behind the waggon, riding one and leading three others, all tied together with one long rim fastened to his own horse's neck. At a small sprout one of them refused to cross over, so incautious Francis appealed to Jantze to assist him with the waggon whip. Between Jantze and Francis there subsisted a most deadly hatred; so the former, I suspect with malice aforethought, brought down his lash with a tremendous crack across the hind quarters of

the four horses. With one bound all four cleared the sprout, and in an instant were beyond any control, plunging madly forward, and doing their best to get free from the restraining rim. Past the waggon they dashed like a flash of lightning, Francis meanwhile uttering piercing shrieks, holding on with teeth, toes, and nails, and looking the very picture of a hideous orang-outang. We could do nothing to assist him ; and if we could have been of assistance, I fear we were in such convulsions of laughter that we should have been of very little avail ; but luckily nothing serious happened, for the horses soon broke their fastening, and finding themselves free, were not long in recovering from their fright ; and when we came up we found the four placidly cropping the scanty grass by the side of the road, and Francis still speechless with terror, and not certain if he was alive or dead, but very resolute never to ride such a "devil," as he now verily believed my horse "Cricket" which he was riding, to be.

While we were having our evening meal of rusks and coffee, a fierce altercation arose between Francis and the other boys, who, instigated by Jantze, were chaffing Francis beyond endurance on his afternoon's performance ; for he presently drew his knife, declaring his intention of killing Jantze, and as things really looked serious, we had to interfere and make them all lie down quietly, and keep their quarrels for next day, when they would probably be to all appearances as friendly as possible.

On Saturday night we outspanned ready for Sunday by a stream with several fine deep pools,

which looked as if they must be full of fish ; but in vain we tried them with various tempting baits ; and at last, our patience exhausted, we determined to resort to a poacher's trick much in vogue, in rivers where no one ever fishes, and where therefore no sport is spoiled. The apparatus, although very deadly, is very simple. Just a flask of powder, with a long hollow reed containing a fuse, fixed into the mouth of the flask instead of a cork, and firmly lashed over with tarred tow and grease, to prevent any moisture penetrating to the powder. An engine of destruction thus constructed was placed in the pool ; and to keep it in its position, as the pool was too deep for it to reach the bottom, we fixed two pieces of board crossways to the top of the reed. The flask was now some three feet below the surface, and the top of the reed and fuse high and dry, above supported by the boards. A match was then applied to the fuse, and the poachers retired to watch the effects. The fuse took so long to burn that we began to think it had gone out, and were just on the point of going to see, as no smoke was visible, when splash ! boom ! splash ! and the whole pool seemed to fly up in a shower of foam ; and gradually, as it again subsided, and the little waves changed into ripples, the bodies of the slain appeared on the surface, and were caught a little lower down, where the stream bore them. The yellow fish are the usual victims, as the barbel and eels generally lie covered up in the deep slime, and escape the force of the concussion. The bodies of the fish show no marks of violence, and they will often recover and swim off un-

harméd unless promptly pulled out and knocked on the head.

We made a long trek in the cool of the evening, and outspanned again by an excellent supply of water, where we enjoyed the rare luxury of a swim, and then spent the rest of the day in writing letters, for the weekly post-cart from Leydenburg to Pretoria passed us in the evening.

On Monday morning early, leaving the others to see to the inspanning, I rode off on the chance of coming across bòk, as the post-cart driver had seen some on his way down, making in our direction. Before I had gone a mile I came on a large herd of blesse-bòk, but as ill-luck would have it they were in such rough country that before I could get up to them they had made off out of range; but, soon after, on reaching the top of the rise, I saw a nice lot of spring-bòk feeding at the bottom. Instantly dismounting, I threw the reins over my horse's head, and left him where he was; while, keeping on my hands and knees, I crawled along, taking advantage of every tuft of grass or ant-heap. The bòk fed on, unsuspecting of the approaching danger, till out of a tuft of grass just in front of me flew a couple of coranne, whose harsh cries instantly alarmed the bòk. However, I was now within 400 yards, and had my rifle ready sighted; so squatting down, I had time for a long, steady aim, while the spring-bòk were making up their minds which way to run, and had the satisfaction of seeing one left behind as the herd dashed away at the report of my rifle, following one another in a long line, jumping and hustling over each other.

Four more shots I had before they were out of sight, but only one told. However, I was quite pleased with my morning's work, and rode back to get an extra horse to bring the two bôk back, taking off a haunch of the fattest to have cooked at once for our dinner. P. accompanied me to assist in skinning and cleaning the game before putting them on the horse. As we approached the spot where the nearest bôk lay, we perceived a large flock of vultures hovering over the spot, and hastened our pace, so as to be there before the foul birds could lay their polluting touch on the meat. As we came nearer they gradually soared higher and higher, until they disappeared in space ; but what was our astonishment, on arriving at the exact place where I had left the first bôk not an hour before, to find nothing remaining of it but the skull and a few of the larger bones. At first I thought I must have made a mistake ; but there were my tracks and the empty cartridge-cases to put it beyond doubt. Of the second bôk there was even less, for only two leg-bones remained to show that he had ever existed. Although done before our eyes, so to speak, it yet seemed incredible ; but on telling the story afterwards to a Boer, he not only expressed no surprise, but said that he had several times shot a spring-bôk at a long range of 800 or 900, and before he could ride up the vultures had swooped down and rendered it unfit for food.

It is a most marvellous thing how the rapacious beasts gather together, as if by magic. There is not a speck upon the sky, and the clear atmosphere enables one to see an enormous distance ; but let a

bòk be killed, a horse or an ox die, or lie down by the side of the road, and in two minutes a vulture will be seen overhead, and within five, long lines will appear on the cloudless sky, all hurrying up to the feast. It does not require a bòk to be killed for the vulture to put in an appearance; the instant a shot is fired at game, above the herd they appear mere specks in the sky, but still there, waiting either for what the hunter will leave of anything he may kill, or marking with unerring eye where the stray bullet may wound. They will follow the wounded beast until it sickens, and, either dying or through weakness, falls a prey to them.

Doubtless they act as scavengers, and as such are unmolested, for in that capacity they are thoroughly efficient, and nothing can be too small or too repulsive to be left by them. I have often been inclined to slaughter some of the disgusting beasts when I have come upon them by the side of a dead horse, cow, or buffalo, too gorged to do more than flop lazily out of my way. Hunters have many devices for keeping them off the killed animals. If there is an ant-bear hole anywhere near, the safest plan is to put the carcass into that, and strew a little earth or grass over the top of it. But in default of an ant-bear hole, a few twigs of bushes bent right across the body, and a few more stuck upright about the legs, will suffice to keep the birds off for several hours; but after that time, as they get bolder and bolder, one of them will alight on the body, and when he receives no harm from the make-believe trap, the others soon gather courage and join in the

feast. I have kept them off for a whole day and night by fastening a few strips of white paper on to the twigs. But white paper, or any substitute, is not at all a usual article for a hunter to have handy, and occasionally there are neither holes, twigs, nor grass to be found near the place. The best chance, in that case—but it is only a chance—of keeping the vultures off, is to tie the legs together with a strip of the skin, and bend the neck and head between the fore legs. This gives the animal an unnatural appearance; and the birds, on the look out for danger, will sometimes think it is a bait, and leave it unmolested. The same means will preserve it from lions or jackals, if the additional security is used of firing off the rifle along the ground on each side of it, which gives the grass and earth the smell of the burnt powder, and which at once warns animals with noses that all is not right.

We made a trek in the evening to Honey's Hotel, where we gave the boys all round a stiff glass of spirits, to warm them up for the night trek we meditated into Middelburg. It is quite extraordinary the unconcerned manner Kaffirs, when quite boys, will drink the fiery compounds called spirits. Our forelouper, whom the other boys have dubbed "Wildebeeste," from his rough, unkempt appearance, was only about sixteen years old; so, when it came to his turn for the half-tumbler of peach brandy, resembling nothing in taste but a concoction of petroleum, prussic acid, and cayenne pepper, we suggested the advisability of his diluting it with a little water; but with a most energetic "Tykar, boss" (No), he

swallowed down the poisonous liquid in a couple of gulps, and dashed outside, uttering an elfish yell of mingled pain and pleasure. The one quality a Kaffir thinks necessary in spirits is that it should burn his throat, and he only judges its excellence by how severely it tries him at the time, and how long after it is down the effect endures.

After the boys had finished their "povsas," we set off again for, and reached, Middelburg at 12.30. There was so little light that we could not see where to outspan, but just tied up the oxen to the dusselboom on the first open space we came to; and when morning came, we found we could not have done better, for we were in the market-square, or rather what will be the square at some remote future period. At present, the town consists of one long row of houses, and a few others scattered here and there, but not above fifty in all. The principal of these consist of six stores, a couple of canteens, a post-office, church, and blacksmith's shop. A detachment of the 13th, under Captain Persse, were encamped just above the village, and from him we received every hospitality and a great deal of information about the game in the neighbourhood. During the morning we went into Mr. Wemner's store to buy a few necessaries, and seeing some bottles of beer, and glasses all handy, at once ordered a bottle, as we had not tasted any for some time. We finished the first, and Wemner pressed a second on us, which we ordered, although we did not much want it. On leaving the store, we were very much surprised when he absolutely refused to take pay-

ment for it, alleging that he never sold any liquors to be drunk on the premises. As beer costs 5s. a bottle there, and our purchases had been very trivial, we were rather loth to avail ourselves of his kindness, but as it was his usual custom, it would have insulted him to insist too strongly upon paying.

In the afternoon we rode up, to pay a visit to Potsabelo, the Berlin mission station, and to call on Herr Marensky, the pastor in charge; unfortunately our time was so limited, that, much to my regret, we had to take our leave before we had half satisfied our curiosity; but Herr Marensky most kindly invited me to pay him a visit on the following Saturday, and, by staying till Monday, have a full opportunity of seeing the full working of the station.

While at dinner in the camp, Captain Perse offered to accompany us early next morning to a farm belonging to a Mr. Hartogh, about twelve miles distant, where we had received information that there were large herds of spring- and blesse-bòk.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Chase after Blesse-bôk—Mr. and Mrs. Hartogh—Countless Herds of Bôk—Orebi—Salt-pans—Pig—A Cropper—Buck-jumpers—Mere-cat and Kite—Potsabelo Mission Station.

NEXT morning, as we were starting, Captain Persee's servant came down, bringing with him six dogs, greyhounds and deer-hounds, for us to take with the waggon, and a message to the effect that his master would join us on the road. The dogs delayed our trek very considerably, as they took every occasion of fighting each other, and getting into such an entanglement that we had constantly to halt the waggon before we could set them free, only to begin fighting afresh. We had intended to reach the farm in one trek, but the oxen showed such evident symptoms of fatigue that we were forced to outspan half-way. While outspanned we saw a very large herd of spring- and blesse-bôk together, but were not able to get within range. Soon after Captain Persee joined us, and after a snack of lunch, he and A., taking the dogs, set off over the veldt in search of the bôk. I stayed behind to bring on the waggon, as P. had not been able to leave Middelburg at the early hour we started. Before we had gone a mile a herd of many hundred blesse-bôk came over a hill

towards the waggon. I jumped on my horse, but the country was so rough that I could not get a fair chance before they were out of range, and I returned to the waggon rather disconsolate; but I was soon cheered up, for straight down the path towards us came a still larger herd at full gallop, driven by the other two. I was on my horse again in an instant, and this time succeeded in hitting a fine old ram who was heading the herd, but only broke his leg. He turned off from the rest and made off as fast as if unhurt, in the opposite direction, with me after him, but for three or four miles I gained very little on him, as the ground was unfavourable for galloping. To all appearances the old bôk was not travelling faster than a slow horse's trot, but his shambling canter kept him well ahead of me over the broken ground, and on he went, never showing a sign of fatigue. At last the veldt changed its character, and instead of a hard, uneven surface, broken up with broad, deep hollows, and numberless ant-hills, a stretch of, to all appearance, smooth springy grass extended away in front. Now was my time; and touching "Cricket" with the spurs, I increased the pace so much that the bôk evidently began to tire, and before long I was within fifty yards of him; the horse seemed to catch the excitement and raced up almost alongside, when just in front appeared a huge bear-hole. Very cleverly Cricket jumped it in his stride; but the ground was rotten on the far side, and catching his fore feet in the deep loose soil, over we went, horse and rider turning a complete somersault. Luckily it was soft falling, and

I was not long in picking myself up, and to my relief found my rifle uninjured. I looked round for the bôk, and was surprised to see it just laying down on a bit of high grass not 300 yards away, and too exhausted to get up when I rode close to it and jumped off; but as I walked alongside and was pulling out my knife to give it the *coup de grace*, up it jumped, and charging straight at me, before I could get out of its way, it was upon me, and I was again sprawling on the ground, but not a bit hurt; before it had gone many yards past me I put another bullet through its heart, which brought the bôk down without a struggle.

As the waggon was not a great distance off, and my horse too tired for the extra burden, I returned and sent off a couple of boys with another horse to bring the dead bôk in.

While we were waiting Persse rejoined us on foot, his horse, a young one, having broken away at his shot, and left him unable to follow up a blesse-bôk he had mortally wounded. I despatched Francis on horseback after the runaway, but it was midnight before he came back with it to us, by then outspanned close to Mr. Hartogh's farm. As all the boys who knew how to cook were engaged, we set to and prepared our own dinners: grilled bôk steak, fried liver, boiled rice, and a supply of fresh milk, butter and bread from the farm—such a dinner as would not have been bad at any time, but which our long hard day's work made a most sumptuous banquet to us.

After dinner we proceeded to pay our respects to Mr. and Mrs. Hartogh and their family at the farm,

who received us in the most hospitable manner possible to conceive. Mr. Hartogh told us that we were to stay as long as we were able, to use his house as our own, send to the farm for everything we wanted, and that nothing would please him and Mrs. Hartogh so much as our asking them to have meals ready for us at any time we could come in and join them. At ten o'clock we said Good-night, after a parting glass of square-face and some slices of most excellent seed-cake for supper.

Next morning, while breakfast was being cooked, Persse, accompanied by A., went out with the dogs to find the bôk he had wounded the previous evening; but the vultures had been beforehand with them, and they only discovered the carcass by seeing a long string of the birds flying off from the remnants of the feast. On their way back they had a capital course with another blesse-bôk, and after a hard run the dogs pulled it down; but the ground was so hard, and the short dry grass so prickly, that all the dogs had sore feet at the finish, and were useless for more hunting.

We had constantly heard descriptions of the numberless myriads in which the various antelope, at one time were to be seen all over the high veldt, and even yet in some of the less frequented parts of it, but we had always received these stories *cum grano*. In the afternoon, while riding round, more to get an idea of the surrounding country than after game, I came upon a sight which more than vindicated the veracity of all those whom we had ignorantly put down as exaggerators. I had been riding slowly up

the slope of a high ridge, at the foot of which, on the other side, ran the river, forming the boundary of the farm ; I had not seen a single bôk of any description, but when I reached the top a sight met my eyes which fairly took my breath away. For many miles a plain stretched away before me, with the river winding through it, and on this plain were countless thousands of black specks, in places so thick as to hide the grass completely. I could hardly believe my eyes that they were really living animals ; but it was beyond doubt ; and presently, as I began to descend, preparing my rifle and cartridges meanwhile, those nearest to me began to form a long dense black line, miles long, and rapidly to retreat.

For some time I watched, from where I was, the herds gradually forming into one huge, compact mass ; but then, so as not to allow them too far a start, I galloped off in pursuit. The blesse-bôk went first in dull-brown lines, and behind them came the spring-bôk, yellow one moment and white the next, as they turned to the side, or exposed their fan-like white quarters.

I was not long in securing one of the latter ; and as I could not carry more if I shot them, I watched the herds retreating to the next rise, where they halted, and stood watching me. Before the wholesale slaughters by the Boers, at the seasons when the bôk were changing their summer or winter quarters, it was no uncommon thing for a waggon to have to pull up for an hour at a time while the herds crossed the path in front, and quagga, wildebeeste, blesse-

bôk, and spring-bôk, went past in such crowding masses that they never swerved as shot after shot was fired into the line; but that is a thing of the past. The bôk are now so wary that, however big the herd, it is no easy matter to get within shot unless on horseback, for the open country they frequent almost invariably puts stalking out of the question. The herds used to be in such dense numbers that only the foremost could get a bite of the grass, and these soon became fat and gradually lazy, when they were forced out of the van by the hungry, active bôk behind, who in their turn, by over-indulging in the rich feed, were unable to keep their places, and again took their position in the rear. Numbers were trampled to death in the rush to the front, and many more starved, unable to fight their way. Antelopes, just like men, always ill-treat the weak and helpless; and the moment one of their number is wounded or taken ill, the others set upon and fight him to death. Perhaps it is a wise instinct which teaches them that disease may breed disease; but I think it is more likely the natural brutal impulse of the strong to oppress the weak—a sort of “kick him now he’s down” feeling.

In the evening Captain Persse left us, and early next morning we were joined by another officer of the 13th, also quartered at Middelburg.

Directly after a breakfast of splendid pork sausages, sent us down as a present by Mrs. Hargtogh, he and I started off for the reedy muddy banks of the river, where we were told we might expect to come across pig. We carried our guns with us, and

cartridges loaded with ball in one barrel and shot in the other, so as to be ready for anything. We sent Jantze to meet us and follow down with our rifles and ammunition, so that if unsuccessful at pig we might have a turn at the blesse-bôk. We beat the banks on both sides for several miles without seeing spoor of a pig, and indeed nothing living but a large iguana, which escaped into the water on our approach ; and so giving up the idea of "pork," we made for Jantze, and exchanged our guns for the rifles. Before we had gone a hundred paces a small herd of blesse-bôk passed us, one of which we wounded. Following it up at a fast gallop, we were soon near enough for my companion to drop him. As Jantze was near, we left him with instructions to "plant" the bôk in a bear-hole, or to protect it from the birds with sticks, and then go to the waggons and get a horse to carry it on. We then went off over the veldt, and after missing several running shots at Orebi—a small yellow bôk, the best eating of any antelope—which we put up in the long grass of the Pans (as dried up, broad, shallow ponds are called), we came upon another large herd of blesse-bôk, but so far off that it was more out of a wish to try my rifle than with any hopes of hitting, that, putting up the 800 yards sight, I sat down and fired at one old fellow who, standing on an ant-hill, seemed to be in command of the herd. From where I was I thought he had gone on unharmed with the rest ; but my comrade from his horse saw it fall, and on galloping up we found such a fine fat bôk that we determined to take his skin, head, and a haunch