

CHAPTER XI.

Large aloes. Soete Kloof. Character of the country about the Chamtoos Revier. Narrow glens. Remarkable caverns. Chamtoos Revier. Klein Revier. Descent into the vale of the Louri Revier. Wild beasts heard in the woods. Old Paerl's account of Gnadenthal. Desire of the Hottentots to hear the gospel. The Galgenbosch. Hospitable reception at Klaarefonteyn and Kaffre Kraal. Van Staade's Revier. Thickets about the Zwartzkop Revier. Arrival at Uitenhagen.

WE could not set off till half past eleven, when we saw a country before us, apparently level, but full of dells and gullies. The great variety of bushes and flowering shrubs, on all sides, attracted our attention. Large aloes are interspersed among the bushes, and, with their broad leaves, form a striking contrast to the many small-leaved evergreens which surround them. Some of them were in full bloom, towering above the thicket, and one, more perfect than the rest, was brought into the waggon. The flower consisted of seven branches, one in the centre, and six surrounding it at regular distances. The centre branch was a foot and a half long, the rest about thirteen inches, all thickly covered with a succession of long, bell-shaped flowers, each orange-coloured at the stem, and passing into bright vermillion towards the top. The brilliant appearance of this huge flower, or mass of flowers, disposed like a chandelier, and mounted on a stem six feet in height, with a capital of massive leaves spreading above three feet in diameter, is beyond conception grand. The bountiful Creator has been pleased to clothe this country, unproductive as it generally is in means of subsistence for man and beast, with an astonishing profusion of vegetable beauty. Hardly a spot exists, upon which some curious and beau-

tiful plant does not rear its head in its proper season; and in the midst of this brown desert, we see the magnificent chandelier, or red star-flower, measuring from four or five inches, to a foot and a half, in the spread of its rays, growing luxuriantly among stones and sand.

Unexpectedly, we found ourselves on the brow of a descent into a charming vale, called the Soute Kloof. We dismounted and walked into it. The whole country assumed a different character, as we approached the Chamtoos Revier. The descent into the Soute Kloof promised fair for a change in mineralogical appearances, for it was covered with fragments of a bluish quartz, with mica, and a disposition in the fissures of the quartz to chrysalization. A soft shistus broke forth in several places, but towards the bottom, all these favourable symptoms vanished, and the old combinations of sand-stone coloured by iron, with opaque veins of quartz, disappointed my wishes. Our attention, however, was sufficiently engrossed by the ever-changing scenery of this lovely spot. The elegant, but troublesome mimosa, occupies the greatest part of the wood, so as to render it in some parts impervious.

In passing over a gentle eminence, we were struck by the view of a remarkable cavern to the right, and left the waggons, that we might go and examine it. It consisted of a natural arch of about twenty feet span, the rock composed entirely of smaller or larger pebbles, cemented together by a ferruginous clay, so as to constitute a coarse pudding-stone. The whole appearance of the cavern was, in miniature, not unlike the rocks of Cushendun in the north of Ireland, which I visited in 1808. Mr. Melville, Schmitt, and Stein, climbed up the steep ascent into the cave, while I stood below, endeavouring to make a sketch of it. Deeply engaged with my work, and seeing Mr. Melville and Stein return to the waggon, I thought the whole party had left the cavern. Unexpectedly, I heard something stirring within, and stopped to listen. All was still, and I went on drawing, though somewhat alarmed. By and by, the noise increased, and fancying, that by our invasion of the

den, we might have roused some wild animal, which are said to be numerous in these solitary woods, I started from my station, and was just going to run off, when I saw Brother Schmitt's arm reaching out of the mouth of the cavern, endeavouring to dislodge a fragment of the rock, to obtain a specimen. As I knew *him* to be perfectly tame, I ascended, and proceeded to examine it more minutely, but hardly ever remember to have been more truly and tremblingly thrown into needless fear.

Leaving the narrow glens about the Soete Kloof, we crossed a level piece of ground, loosely covered with thorn-bushes, and arrived at a farm near the Wagedrift, on the Chamtoos Revier, where we halted to make some inquiry, as to the places mentioned in Colonel Bird's list, and found them all occupied, or in requisition. The farmer from the Chamtoos drift, on Klein Revier, was at the house, and took a lift in our waggon across the ford. The Chamtoos is a considerable river. Its stream is clear and sweet, and we regaled ourselves with a good draught of these waters, which we had been so long seeking, but cannot make our own. All accounts agree, that every habitable spot on this river is occupied, and the poor Hottentots have even been deprived of their right to a place on Klein Revier, which a former Governor had reserved for them. The captain having been decoyed away under some pretext or other, and no more heard of, for want of an heir to succeed him, the right to dispose of the land fell into the hands of Government. The English Governors intended to restore it to the Hottentots, and it had been mentioned to me as a place suitable for a Mission; but being already in possession of a farmer, though without a grant from Government, I and my Brethren agreed, that here also, in fixing upon a spot for a settlement, we would not, by any means, thwart the views, or oppose the pretensions, however slight, of any individual. We therefore resolved to proceed to Uitenhagen, and consult the landdrost, to whom I had been favoured with a letter from the Governor.

On leaving the Chamtoos Revier, we passed through a thicket of

mimosa, on level ground, till we arrived at the Klein Revier, when the farmer left us. Mr. Melville went with him across the river, in a canoe, half full of water, and returned with a bottle of sweet milk. Meanwhile I took the portrait of one of our oxen, whose horns spread to a greater extent, than any I had seen, the points being nearly six feet asunder. The brute stood patiently for his picture, but on attempting to measure his horns, he offered to use them in a way, that kept even his driver at a respectful distance.

We now entered a country similar to that in the Soete Kloof. The road winds through a low wood, and is extremely rugged, and full of holes. Many curious caverns appear in the hills on both sides. From the kloofs, we ascended a barren hill, consisting of masses of iron-stone, the surface of some appearing as if they had been in the fire. They lay upon white clay, in some places powdered, and mixed with sand. At sunset, we intended to encamp for the night, but as the Hottentots assured us, that it was only an hour's drive to a much better out-span place on the Louri Revier, we continued our journey over the edge of a barren hill. Descending into the Louri Revier vale, we all left the waggons, as it was with great difficulty, and even hazard, that they were brought down in safety, the road winding through a dark wood, full of holes and dangerous slopes. It was a fine star-light night. All nature seemed hushed in peace, except that now and then the croak of some nocturnal bird, or some unusual sound at a distance, or on the nearer hill, attracted our attention. Knowing that these woods are haunted by tygers, wolves, and buffaloes, we frequently fancied those sounds to proceed from some greedy throats, in search of prey, and they occasioned just enough of alarm, to add some speed to our progress, and make us glad to hear the barking of dogs at the distant farm. There we had intended to spend the night, but when the waggons with Brother Schmitt overtook us at the ford, we resolved, after crossing the river, to encamp on the opposite bank, to shorten our journey; for, if we had proceeded to the farm, we must have returned to the ford. Mr. Melville rode to

the house, where he left his horse in charge of two dragoons. On his return, he gave us but faint hopes of our being provided with the means of proceeding in the morning. Vorspann had been ordered here by the Veldcornet, but the farmer, Mr. Van Roy, being absent with two spans, his lady thought herself under no obligation to provide oxen for us. Mr. Melville, however, prevailed upon her to promise to let us have one spann in the morning, for a six hour's skoff, or half a day's journey. The second spann had been ordered by the Veldcornet to meet us at the Chamtoos Revier, and of course would miss us. Wolves were heard howling in the woods on the opposite bank.

3d. During the night, Sister Schmitt was alarmed by distinctly hearing tygers growling in the woods, on the hill nearest to our encampment. She got up quietly, Rambler following her, and went to the Hottentots, who were lying about the fire. By their report, she found that she was not mistaken. But not willing to alarm us, though I saw her return, and spoke to her, she did not mention it; till we rose in the morning. No traveller, however, need be afraid of the tyger of this country entering a tent. Unless attacked, or conceiving himself to be in danger, he cautiously avoids meddling with man. Whenever met with in an open field, if he has opportunity to escape, he makes off slowly and crouching, like a cat, but if prevented from escaping, is most furious and determined in self-defence. The woods about the Chamtoos and Louri Reviers are said to abound with them, and the very appearance of the country suggests the idea of its being a haunt of wild beasts. The hills, which are not high, are full of singular caverns and broken rocks, and the number of glens, intersecting each other in all directions, afford the best cover for all kinds of ravenous animals. Cattle are not considered safe, feeding in the woods or fields, and hardly in their kraals or pens.

Brother Schmitt, on mounting the hill near us, was delighted with this charming valley. His wife, meanwhile, visited the farmer's wife, Mrs. Van Roy. Thither we soon followed her. She

was full of the usual complaints against the measures of Government, and seemed a woman of spirit.

After breakfast, we held a council, in which it was determined, that Mr. Melville, Stein, and myself, should proceed in the traveling-waggon with Mr. Van Roy's spann, to a farm, called Klaarefonteyn, and there *hire* oxen to fetch the baggage-waggon and the rest of our party from hence, and both proceed towards Uitenhagen with relays, ordered, as before, by the landdrost's letter of command; for we gave up all expectation of seeing the spann, sent, by mistake, to the Chamtoos Revier.

Meanwhile, Brother Stein had visited the Hottentots and slaves belonging to Mr. Van Roy's farm, in their bondhoeks, or huts, and had much useful conversation with them. They had heard, that we were in search of a place to build a settlement, and the Hottentots declared, that they would all come and live in it, that they might hear the word of God; and, had they known last night, that we were *teachers* from Gnadenthal, they would have come to our camp, and begged to be instructed. They had obtained some information of the aim of our journey from Leonhard Paerl, who, as our precursor, officiously announced our errand. He had sat up with them the whole of the night preceding our arrival, describing Gnadenthal, its regulations, its schools, the instructions given to the Hottentots in the Christian religion, the cultivation of the grounds and gardens, &c. interspersing his account with observations on the necessity of conversion, the happiness enjoyed by those, who believed in Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and their hopes of eternal life, after the death of the body.

This simple narrative had so much engaged the attention of these poor people, that they expressed the greatest eagerness soon to have the same benefit bestowed upon them, in this country. Though old Leonhard's officiousness, in thus informing the farmers and others, what we were in search of, in some instances, raised needless uneasiness in prejudiced minds, yet we forgave it, in consideration of his frequently adding observations, which may have

been blessed by God in the hearts of those, that heard his artless speeches. Before we set out, a party of women and children came down to the river to see us. The children were all stark naked.

Marcus and Johannes attended the travelling-waggon. Our leader was a Hottentot from the farm. As we travelled along, we were greatly delighted with the variety and beauty of the prospects, that opened to our view. A dragoon had told us, that we should soon come into a country, looking like England, and we found his prediction verified. The so-called Galgenbosch, has very much the appearance of an extensive range of parks. We seemed to be passing from one park to another. The elegant mimosa is distributed upon the hills, in copses, or stands singly. Here and there a thicket fills a dell, or a wood of larger trees a wider glen. Clumps of high trees ornament the sides of the hills. Distant mountains of singular outline, with a nearer range of lower hills, ending towards the sea, with one of a conical form, present a most interesting horizon to the east, and the woody, wavy country between them and the road, affords infinite gratification to the eye of the traveller. But the habitations of man are very thinly scattered over an immense tract of country.

At two, we reached Klaarefonteyn, the farm of a Mr. Neukirch, of German origin, where we were most kindly received, and hospitably treated. Thick milk, bread of excellent quality, and a fried sausage were set before us. The old farm-house was burnt by the Caffres during the late invasion, and its ruins exhibited a proof of their savage mode of warfare. Mr. Neukirch was immediately ready to furnish oxen, to bring us to his brother's house, on Van Staades Revier, and, meanwhile, to send another span, which should fetch the baggage-waggon from Louri Revier, and join us in the morning. After about an hour's rest, we left this hospitable dwelling, and proceeded through thick woods, which opened here and there, affording a peep towards the mountains to the left, or the coasts of the Indian ocean to the right, of the road. Before we descended into the valley, we met two wag-

gons belonging to Bethelsdorp, full of Hottentots, but did not stop to converse with them, for which, probably, neither party could spare the time.

The descent towards the river is steep and rocky, and though lately much mended, very rough, almost resembling some of the roads in Plettenberg bay. Mr. Melville made a beautiful sketch of the view from the brow of the hill, towards the mountains. I walked alone down the road through the wood, examining the stones. On the summit of the hill, I found a white, gritty kind of limestone, but towards the bottom, nothing but a soft shistus, with quartz, and coarse sand-stone, too soft ever to make good roads. For about a mile, it leads through a wood of lofty trees, some falling through age, others pressed down by an immense quantity of bush-ropes, or Bavianstau, some disfigured by mosses, or covered with wild vines and a variety of creepers, while others tower aloft, unentangled, in perfect health and beauty. An almost impenetrable thicket forms the underwood. The river flows in a deep, shady bottom, and the farm-house, called Kaffre Kraal, built of red brick, presents itself pleasantly on the opposite eminence overlooking a deep glen, enclosed by steep, woody hills. The premises are the cleanest I have yet seen in this country. We were well received by Mrs. Neukirch, one coming in after the other, and followed by the farmer himself, who had overtaken Mr. Melville, and heard from him our story and our wants. The evening was very agreeably spent with him and his friendly wife, and we were lodged in a room adjoining the dwelling, purposely built for the accommodation of travellers.

4th. We breakfasted with the family, and Mr. Neukirch's conversation proved him to be an intelligent, friendly, and honourable man. During the forenoon, waiting for our companions, Mr. Melville and I were engaged in writing and drawing, and Brother Stein in visiting the Hottentots and slaves. In one of the huts, he found several people assembled about a sick person, to whom he spoke of the love of God our Saviour towards the whole human race, and

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explained to the poor patient the way of salvation, when a woman, sitting in a corner, began to utter loud groans. As she would not yield to remonstrance, he was obliged to leave the hut. The people seemed to wish for instruction.

At twelve o'clock, Brother Schmitt and his wife arrived with the baggage-waggon. We had much regretted their absence, during the course of our delightful ride through the Galgenbosch yesterday. The Hottentots and slaves on Louri Revier, had come to their tent, but not before they were gone to bed. Our Hottentots would not disturb their rest, which they regretted, being ever ready, by day or night, to do the work for which they are appointed. At six in the morning, they set out for this place.

Our friendly hostess prepared an early dinner for us, and we left this hospitable house with sentiments of much gratitude to its inhabitants, for the kind reception and entertainment we had experienced. After crossing Van Staades Revier, a clear and rapid stream, we kept for some time along the glen, with a high woody bank on the left side of the river. Several secretary-birds made their appearance. They almost seem to know, that they are protected by man, on account of their services, in destroying serpents and other noxious animals; they therefore take no pains to escape.

On gaining the heights, we met our host's son, armed, who, with some other young men, were escorting a waggon, containing four of the rebellious boors, condemned to imprisonment and banishment for a certain term of years.

As we doubled the conical hill to the left, being the last of the ridge of hills above described, we noticed, on its declivity, some huge fragments of rock, and many of smaller dimensions, lower down, apparently thrown from the upper region by a convulsion of nature, or by some milder process. For several miles, the road passes over a dreary waste, after which we entered into a dense thicket, consisting of a vast variety of bushes, intermixed with aloes, Indian figs of different species, and many shrubs and flowers unknown to us. This thicket covers a great extent of country, and