

lad, who is to accompany me wherever I please to go, his life to be the penalty if accident me befall.

He is a relative of the chief, but unfortunately speaks neither Dutch nor English, and, from his delicate physique, I should imagine to be incapable of supporting either fatigue or exposure.

Next day I made an alteration in my intended mode of travelling, purchasing a light spring Cape cart, which could carry three people.

I was advised to this step, as it would not only enable me to convey my baggage, but also a cooking-pot, a few plates, knives, and forks. As in future I shall have to sleep so much out on the veldt, if not more so than in shelter, these additions will be of invaluable service.

Thus Tommy and Bobby will have to go into harness, and I very much doubt if either of them have ever done so before.

The following day I received both chiefs, for as one was departing the other arrived. It was perfectly grand to see the rivals pass each other!

Their courtesy was worthy of the old French *régime*, but not so was the conduct of the followers.

Each scowled upon the retainers of the adverse house, and if I had not been present knobkerrys would have been brought into play, and doubtless many heads broken.

The scene reminded me of the Montague and

Capulet passing each other in the streets, as described by the immortal bard!

The answers of E'Calapin and Gopani to me were identical.

They feared that they could not afford to give me people, yet still would do their best during the interval of my absence, so that I was not to consider that they had refused my request.

My own opinion is that both these worthies feared to weaken his party, lest the other should take advantage of it to obtain the sole chieftainship.

Through one of the followers of Gopani I learnt that E'Calapin had a Hottentot living among his portion of the tribe, who could speak English and Dutch, as well as Bechuana, had some knowledge of horses, and could drive.

I sent a message to E'Calapin by Mr. Jansen's principal servant. When this man stated the object of his visit, the chief got into a terrible rage, particularly when he was told through what source I had received my information.

However, thinking better of the matter, in the evening the man I wanted arrived.

He looked a scoundrel of the first water, and commenced by being saucy.

I told him what he had to expect if that were his usual mode of proceeding, which caused him to come down several pegs in as many seconds.

So as to make an early start in the morning, I had both horses put into harness.

It was exactly as I had anticipated. Tommy was perfectly willing to draw, but Bob refused point-blank; however, after a due amount of application of my whip, I got them both started, and drove them a few miles, both going fairly for green animals; but as their mouths were anything but those of harness horses, in their present uneducated state, we got into a dry sand-crack, when there was "the devil to pay" and no mistake.

Under trying ordeals such as these, losing temper is the worst possible thing that can happen; so we unharnessed, got assistance, and pulled the trap out, after which the animals were again hitched to the conveyance; but Bob thought proper to back instead of going forward, and once more the cart got into a ditch.

A second time the same performance had to be repeated, and the results were more fortunate.

In the evening the big bay horse, who, to my great regret, has been growing worse and worse—so much so indeed, that I fear he will never carry a rider again—caused me great uneasiness. Poor brute, he has travelled so many miles with me now, and done his work so well, that I feel more than an ordinary amount of attachment for him, and it is evident that he does the same for me.

I cannot go out of doors without his following me about. If I stop walking for a moment, his head will be immediately upon my shoulder,

and as the discharge from his nostrils much resembles "farcy," this is anything but pleasant.

Three or four times it flashed across my mind that it might be the premonitory symptoms of glanders, and consequently it would be my duty to destroy him; but I hesitated before taking such a step, so long as a single doubt remained.

From all inquiries I made, the latter disease is almost unknown, which gave me further grounds to hope for the best in reference to him.

Ultimately, the poor sufferer drove me into the house, for neither sticks nor shouts would keep him from besieging me.

This is a curious characteristic of the African horse, and one which I have often noticed before. Let them but get sick, and by a sublime instinct they seek man's assistance as the only thing to aid them in their infirmity.

A most curious incident illustrative of this occurred.

No person being about, and the hall door being open, the invalid walked through it into the hall, and from thence into a bedroom, obviously in search of me. From his tremendous height, and the lowness of the doors, it seemed surprising to everybody how he got in; and long and difficult were the efforts made by us to turn him out.

Unwelcome guest he must have known himself to be, but he was positively resolved not to be denied. At length, by dint of sheer shoving and

pulling, the delinquent was ousted from the chamber he had taken possession of.

But our troubles did not cease here; for when forced into the hall he looked as if he had made a determined resolution that he would pass the night *there*, at any rate.

If the poor wretch had been in his ordinary health, and therefore strength, I believe he would have baffled all our efforts; as it was, he pretty actively occupied our attention for upwards of a quarter of an hour.

Was there one of us who did not feel for him? So that when he found himself in the yard, there were several volunteers desirous to do something to render the poor brute more comfortable for the night.

One got bedding, another a Kaffir blanket, and a third made him a good warm mash, while I administered to him a pint of hot rum and water, swimming in butter and seasoned with about an ounce of ground ginger.

From the way he enjoyed the latter, it was evident that he had no personal objection to the use of ardent spirits; and this fact I recommend to the close attention of the well-known and worthy father superior of the English teetotal movement.

While residing here I did not sleep in the main house, but in a small bedroom at the north end of the building, in which was the workshop. In consequence, when I retired to rest, I had to pass Katrina, the baboon.

This animal and I had struck up a most extraordinary friendship from the first moment. It appeared surprising to me that she should do so, as she mortally hated every Kaffir that came near the station.

It has frequently amused me to see her crouch and hide herself behind the tree—to which she was made fast—all the time squinting round its side to notice whether the object of her enmity would come within reach of her chain.

One unfortunate man, with a new wideawake on his head, and a sound, though not clean blanket round his shoulders, did inadvertently do so.

With a spring like that of a leopard, she was upon him in an instant, had his hat off with one hand, and with the other tore the blanket from the bottom right up to the shoulders; and the poor Kaffir was so taken aback that I almost expected him to faint.

Strange as it may appear, Katrina would never let me pass of an evening without bidding me good-night, mumbling some odd jargon as if to express her thanks for my taking notice of her. I suppose I gained her good will through kindness, for many were the oranges, lemons, and onions I used to bring her. She would sit for half an hour at a time opposite any person to whom she was attached, and catch mealies in her mouth that were thrown to her.

The only way I could ever make her walk upon her hind legs was by giving her some delicacy

divided into two parts, so that each hand held a portion of the *bonne bouche*. Then if I were to take her chain and force her to move, she would walk perfectly upright, and with apparent ease.

To see her attack a scorpion was most ridiculous. If anybody brought her one, and threw it on the ground before her, the moment it dropped she would place her hand upon it, and instantaneously begin rubbing back and forward with surprising velocity for upwards of a couple of minutes. By that time the venomous creature was rendered perfectly innocuous, when she would place it in her mouth and chew it up as if it were delicious. Truly wonderful is Nature in all her ways!

CHAPTER XXV.

A FRESH START.

O FATE! cruel Fate! why am I treated thus?

I was up and out in the morning before the first streak of dawn had announced the coming day, even long before my attendants had arrived.

The preceding evening I had packed everything into the smallest compass, and kind, good-hearted Mrs. Jansen had given me one of her own coffee-kettles, with a couple of plates and several knives and forks; also had baked for me four large loaves of bread, and furnished me with some thirty to forty pounds of cold cooked meat. Nor were pepper and salt wanting. These I carried from my room, and carefully stowed away in such positions as they were least likely to get broken.

At sunrise my attendants made their appearance and it was evident from the first moment that they would not work harmoniously together.

In Gopani's relative I felt the greatest confidence—in the other I did not; but the unfortunate circumstance was, that I had to communicate all my orders to the former through the latter.

My troubles commenced at the start.

The horses being cold, through standing out all night, had an obvious objection to work, and refused to move.

After the exercise of some patience, I succeeded in inducing them to alter their resolution, but in a few minutes afterwards we came to a full stop; and at least half an hour was lost before the journey was renewed. Much whipping and coercion was here necessary, which I object to, for the reason that five minutes of severe punishment takes more out of an animal than many hours' work.

Again we move forward, pass through the kraals, debouch to the right, go down a steep incline, traverse a river at a very bad ford, and ascend a steep slope.

For the next half-mile the road is tolerably good, when we turn due west, and begin to climb a range of hills, fully fifteen hundred feet in altitude.

The road at first was fairly good, but by degrees it became worse and worse; on that account we all got out and walked, each of the boys taking a horse by the head.

But stones and boulders blocked the way, so as to make it no easy task for them to draw even an empty cart. Ultimately they refused to pull; the whip was again applied, but in this instance with different results; for the animals became restive, broke loose from their leaders, and dashed off to the right over a small plateau. In front of

them was a ravine, so perpendicular on its sides, that it might almost have been called a precipice. I fully expected that they would go over it, and alas! what then. All my fair hopes would have been dashed to the ground.

Fortunately the sagacity of the animals told them when to stop; and it was with the deepest feelings of gratitude that I laid hold upon the ribbons, and piloted them back to the road. But ascend it they would not.

I used every expedient and measure that I had ever known employed on such occasions, even to putting up the Hottentot to drive, and myself and the other boy placing our shoulders to the felloes of each wheel.

By this means we advanced possibly a hundred yards more, when another halt took place, from which neither persuasion nor skill could induce them to move.

It was of no use. I felt thoroughly non-plussed; and worse than all, the floggings which had already been administered must have taken several days' work out of my animals, which I was so anxious to keep fresh and capable for the long and painful journey before them.

I sat down upon an adjoining stone. My attendants unhitched the horses, and there and then we held a consultation.

My first idea was that some of the chiefs might have harness horses, but this I was assured they had not.

As a *dernier ressort*, I determined to send Gopani's boy to Mr. Jansen's, and inform him how I was situated.

The willing lad bolted off like a hare to perform his mission.

He had scarcely been gone over a quarter of an hour when I espied him returning, accompanied by another, mounted on the back of a white horse.

In twenty minutes they were with me.

This fortunate arrival was a godsend to me, and it is thus to be accounted for. Mrs. Jansen, through her telescope, having some misgivings that I should not succeed in ascending the hill with my own horses, had, like a true sailor's wife, watched my progress, and thus becoming cognizant of the strait in which I was placed, despatched one of her servants with their old and tried cart-horse, to add to my team. Soon he was fastened to the pole, as leader. He was a sorry old brute to look at, but big and muscular, and in his youth I should imagine must have been possessed of great power.

However, he was willing and patient; so once more we commenced ascending—driving unicorn. More slowly than a funeral procession ever advanced, we toiled forwards; one time we would gain ten yards, the next twenty, until we reached within four or five hundred feet of the summit.

From here the pathway was a perfect jumble

of loose stones, and how we had to toil and sweat, and pull and shove, no one knows, unless such as have ascended similar places.

I have driven up many a hillside in my life. I have now in my memory numbers, which it is almost considered a feat to have overcome, but nothing before in my existence have I witnessed like this diabolical place. I give due credit to my horses, and particularly to the gallant old beast that was lent me. At length, after a long length I may say, the jumble of stones gave way by degrees to soil; rapidly and more rapidly, and with fewer halts we climb upward; and after a few more exertions, thank God! I look out over the ridge and see an undulating, unlimited veldt extending before me, here and there covered with clumps of trees.

An immediate cessation from labour ensues, the horses are taken out and knee-haltered, and a halt of half an hour follows.

I was actually too worn out to do anything, and threw myself on the ground, under the glare of the powerful sun, and lay for some time almost in a state of coma.

As the distance before us that we had to traverse was upwards of forty-five miles, it became necessary for us to be again up and at work. But when I arose to assist in harnessing, I felt a well-known pain, that reminded me of the past, stealing through my bones. I halted for a moment and pulled myself together, while I

mentally ejaculated, "Old fellow ! you have once more got African jungle fever."

The remedy was at hand.

A dose of quinine, that would have half filled a tea-spoon. I took it, in full confidence of the effect, and in a quarter of an hour was able to proceed forward.

It is seldom, or I may say never, that one hears of a person dying of a *coup de soleil* in Africa ; yet I will say, without fear of contradiction, that it possesses the cruellest and most uncompromising sun that is to be found in any part of the world, particularly at that season of the year when the grass is all burnt off the face of the earth, and nothing but a rusty brown, bare soil surrounds you. The sun here seems fairly to beat you down ; you struggle against it, fight against it, and resolve not to be overcome. For a minute or two afterwards you lift your legs higher, and walk forward with renewed energy and lengthened stride ; but gradually and inadvertently you discover, in spite of all your efforts, that you are relapsing into your former gait.

Before starting I gave Mr. Jansen's boy a handsome "baksheesh," and told him to thank his kind master and mistress, and to speed home as rapidly as possible, in case his services should be required. But not only was I indebted to the missionary for this valuable aid that the lad had afforded me, but I was to be a further recipient of his favours, for the servant had received orders to leave the white horse with me.

Thus he was placed in harness alongside of Tommy, while Bob was led; so, in this form of cavalcade, we renewed our journey.

The country now before us was dried-up veldt. For the first ten or twelve miles scarcely a blade of grass could be seen; after then the sterility gradually disappeared, and mother earth looked once more pleasant under a green covering.

About what I should judge to be, by the altitude of the sun, half-past two, we again unharnessed, made a fire, produced the coffee-pot and cold meat, and forthwith set to, to enjoy a picnic meal. I was hungry, and ate, I should think, quite a pound of mutton; but my boys were hungrier, and consumed at least five pounds apiece.

This taught me a lesson—namely, never to leave cold mutton in the way of these fellows, or else a well-stocked larder would rapidly become empty.

Every available corner of the waggon-box was filled, to my surprise, with oranges. Good Mrs. Jansen, when my back had been turned, having added these delicious fruit, knowing well they were a luxury I should not enjoy for many and many a day to come.

So we each had one, it being my rule to divide fairly whatever I have, of the edible order, with my boys.

Again we were under weigh—Bobby alongside the white horse, and Tommy led.

Timber became more abundant as we advanced, and the grass more rank. Spring-bok were

occasionally seen crossing the road; however, our destination was still many a mile before us, so we hurried on, regardless of the opportunity we had of killing game.

There is no question of it now; we have crossed the Rubicon, and are beyond the limits of civilization. You may look to all the "airts" of the wind, and over these flats the eye can distinguish a long way, but not a single sign of human habitation is in sight. One uninterrupted, unbroken flat, extends around you, here and there dotted with a clump of brushwood or a solitary mimosa-tree, but nothing else to intercept the vision.

The horses become more and more tired, the old white one in particular, who is outpaced by his younger and consequently fleetier companion.

Thus a halt is decided upon at the first convenient place.

Soon a desirable situation is reached. The sun is just setting straight in our front, surrounded by all its African glories; and as the luminary disappears, the horses are taken out, knee-haltered, and allowed half an hour to feed. E'Calapin's boy at once set himself to work to make a fire, and prepare the camp, while Gopani's lad acts as herd to prevent the horses straying, or possibly returning to Linakani.

That night I slept soundly, the ground under the cart being my bed, and did not awake till sunrise, although the Hottentot informed me that

hyenas had been howling around us all night. What matters that? I am an old traveller; and the voice of wild animals has long ago ceased to be, for me, anything but a soothing and cheerful lullaby.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BLACK BEAUTIES.

As soon as I was moving the horses were untied, knee-haltered, and turned loose to feed for a few hours. I remained in camp, while the Hottentot took the rifle and went off in search of game.

Fortunately we had brought a "*vatchee*" of water with us, so about nine o'clock I began preparing another *al fresco* meal. The kettle had scarcely boiled, when the herd brought the horses home, and each of them received several handfuls of mealies. This is a most dangerous grain to use as feed in large quantities, unless it has been steeped. The mutton was again produced, and I was about to carve off a portion of it to cook over the embers, when the *Tottie* appeared with a *duykerbok* over his shoulders.

This necessitated a little delay; for, with fresh meat in such quantities, I resolved to have a thorough good repast.

In five minutes the carcass was divested of its skin, and the kidneys, liver, and heart underwent a very trifling ablution before being placed upon

the fire. Water not being found here, we have to be particularly careful of it, so none is thrown away uselessly.

I frequently think that the Kaffir, or Bechuana—in fact, any of the hunting races of Africa—are never seen to such advantage as when sitting over a fire, on which hisses a good supply of fresh meat. Their eyes seem to enlarge themselves, their mouths open, showing their white teeth, while they sit toasting themselves—I had almost said roasting themselves—with their hands spread in front of their faces. It is upon such occasions as these that they become communicative, and narrate all the petty scandals that vex the society of their respective villages, or tell of their deeds of prowess in the hunting or battle-field.

It does not take long to cook fresh meat over glowing embers; ten minutes will render it edible to a white man, and half that period for a black one. Another thing which has struck me as being remarkable is, that all these natives will take flesh off the fire so hot that no white man could touch it with his bare fingers, yet they will shove it into their mouths without flinching, and apparently enjoy it with the greatest gusto.

By ten o'clock we were again *en route*. The horses appeared to have suffered a great deal by the task imposed upon them the day before. Thus we determined to start but drive slowly, in order to lose as little time as could be, and

to make some progress ; while the horses would, by this course, overcome their stiffness.

The country is much the same in appearance as that through which we passed yesterday, with the exception that trees are now becoming more numerous—a certain indication that we are approaching water.

"Take the reins, Baas!" exclaimed the Hottentot hurriedly.

Mechanically I did so, at the same time inquiring, "What is it?"

But ere I could receive any reply he had glided out of the conveyance, pulled out the rifle from the back of the cart, and disappeared into the surrounding brush.

I was going to pull up, when the other lad signalled for me to go slowly on.

A few moments later I heard the well-known report of my Martini-Henry. I knew that if the weapon was held straight it was sure to kill, so was not surprised to see the driver return, dragging behind him by the leg a splendid springbok. I believe this fellow to be a capital hunter ; but as, up to this date, he has only fired two shots, and killed on each occasion, the inroad into my ammunition will not be so great as I had anticipated ; and it is a most valuable commodity, for where I now am it will be impossible to replenish my stock.

I praised his shooting, at which he appeared to be intensely gratified.

Heretofore I had kept him in his place, and seldom spoke to him; but the few words I had just expressed seemed to give him licence to enter into conversation. In this manner he commenced it.

“ You should have been with me last year, Bass! I was shooting up on the Mabawbee veldt, and had rare sport. Killed two hundred and forty elephants myself; and as to rhinoster and sea-cows, you could not have counted them!”

I quietly asked him if he would not mention three hundred at once, and his answer, which was perfectly self-possessed, was—

“ It is possible I did not count them correctly!”

We now commenced a descent, which lasted for upwards of six or seven miles, when the clear, bright waters of the Molipo were seen. It is a stream about the size of the Dove, in Derbyshire, and, like it, broken into numerous pools and rapids.

Here we outspanned, that the horses might rest, and have as much of the precious liquid as they chose.

While preparing our coffee we were surrounded by a perfect bevy of black beauties, many of whom wore the costume of Europeans, with blue, pink, or scarlet skirts, and who almost invariably had a bright yellow handkerchief tied over their heads. A few were more scantily clad, only having a carosse fastened over their shoulders. We have not progressed far enough north yet to find the

full dress of the female population as that of Eve—*minus the fig-leaf*.

The occasion of this assembly was because several marriages had taken place in the morning, and the inhabitants of the district were making merry in consequence, as the custom is for the relatives of the bride to kill an ox or a sheep, according to their means, the flesh of which, when cooked, is given to all comers.

I sent for the chief. An old, weather-beaten man made his appearance, who seemed half fuddled with Kaffir beer. This may not have been the case, as his nervousness might have resulted from disinclination or dislike to the subject I broached. However, the upshot was, that he was not a free agent, and therefore he could answer neither way, but would refer the matter to his suzerain, the chief at Lotligani, to whose headquarters I was now proceeding.

Nevertheless, the old fellow shook hands with me before parting, doubtless the result of being rather glad to get rid of my importunities. The festive crowd of Hebes, with their swains, still continued their amusements in my vicinity. They danced frequently. The figure, which was far from unattractive, resembled much some of those old country-dances we used to delight in a quarter of a century ago, and it was certainly as boisterous as Sir Roger de Coverley. Frequently merry peals of laughter from each Terpsichorean would rise and fall. Whether this was part of the pro-

gramme, or produced at the awkwardness of some of the performers, I was unable to learn.

The situation selected on the banks of the Molipo was admirably suited for such a purpose; and but for the black faces and wonderfully brilliant costumes, it required little stretch of imagination for the beholder to believe he was in England.

My attendants seemed to enjoy the fun amazingly; in fact, judging from appearances, they were being made quite lions of, and romped as vociferously as any in the crowd; so much so, that when I considered it time to make a fresh start, I had some difficulty in getting them away.

When they left the revellers, the entire crowd broke up and followed them to the cart, some of the men going so far as to assist in bringing up the horses, and giving aid to put them into harness, while the ladies kept their voluble tongues incessantly going, I do not doubt upbraiding me for depriving them of such agreeable companions.

At length the Hottentot said to me,—

“Bass, which of all these women do you think the nicest?”

“I fear they would deem me rude if I looked sufficiently close at them to make a decision.”

“No, they would not!” he answered.

Now I have all my life been possessed of great temerity in the presence of ladies; in fact I may almost say the feeling amounts to bashfulness; so

I retorted with the desire of getting rid of the subject,—

" I'm certain they would."

" You see, Bass," was the laconic reply; and in an instant after my fellow was in their midst, had said some talismanic sentence, and in a moment all of them were standing facing me in a single file.

This was one of the moments of my life in which my fortitude was sadly tried. I dared not run away, still less be guilty of want of courtesy; so I resolved to do what the old Scotch proverb tells us, "Put staigh heart to a stiff brae." Moreover, I don't think a fellow feels as nervous in the presence of a black woman as he would before a white one.

So resolved to do or die, I walked down the line both front and rear. There were so many—fifty or sixty—I suppose, that I found it impossible to come to a hurried conclusion, for fear I should do an injustice; and, of all things, that is the last action I should like to be guilty of.

Besides, there was another reason—viz., that there really were some winsome lasses among them.

So I took a second tour of inspection, much more scrutinizing than the first, and still I was not satisfied. If the ranks had broken up now I would have said no more; but there they stood, stcadly as a rock, awaiting the verdict. To hesitate is to be lost; so I just thought I would take another turn up and down the rank and file.

Even more carefully than before I passed up the front. One young lady of about sixteen I took special notice of. This time I particularly noted the colour of her headgear, and what was her number from the left flank; so in passing along the rear, when directly behind her position, I quietly touched her on the shoulder. In an instant she faced to the right-about, when I presented her with an orange; and before any of her comrades could stop her she was off, like an arrow from a bow, out over the veldt, and the entire crowd after her. She might not have been the swiftest, but she was certainly the cleverest; for never did I see such doubles; no hare before a greyhound could have surpassed them.

I scarcely ever laughed more in my life, the scene was so truly ludicrous; and what made it even more so was that the pursued and pursuers pulled up their stiffly-starched, light print dresses almost to their knees, to permit their limbs to have freer action; and as all were guiltless of shoes and stockings, their black feet and ankles looked very funny.

The hunt lasted at least five minutes before the runaway was captured; but by this time she had devoured, not the apple, but orange of discord.

Would you believe it? these young ladies wanted to play this game again; and it was nearly as violent as lawn tennis, though probably a little more graceful. But I declined with thanks; for I thought, if often repeated, it would

be rather rough on my oranges. As I had nothing to give them but my blessing, I sought out an appropriate text, which I delivered from the cart standing: “Be virtuous, and you will be happy; but you won’t have a good time.”

“Drive on, boy! What the deuce are you stopping for? Am I master of this ’ere craft, or are you? Hurry up; do you hear?”

And he lingeringly started the horses.

When we had been about five minutes under weigh, feelingly he inquired of me,—

“Don’t you think, Bass, that we had better stop here all night?”

“I have got the tooth-ache, sir—bad, sir. Speak another word to me, and the consequences will be awful.” So we continued proceeding.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HORSE LOST.

“THE shades of night were falling fast” as a white and a black man, two horses, and an African cart, entered the precincts of the Baralong village of Lotligani. In fact, the shades had fallen; for first, my confounded Tottie almost drove over a bullock. Of course, after the manner of masters, I there and then angrily reproved him for his carelessness, although I confess I did not see the animal till after the brute had nearly caused us serious damage. Bullocks should really be more careful in selecting their sleeping-places; if they are impervious to harm, other people are not. Soon afterwards my servant placed me on the verge of a hole, almost as deep as a well, out of which soil for making bricks had been dug. I believe this driver could see a mosquito on the darkest night if he chose; but his thoughts and himself were both absent at Molipo. So I gave him a dig in the ribs, just to remind him that I had no wish to be hurried out of this wicked world yet a while; and the only observation he made was, “Oh, Bass!” But I noticed with

satisfaction that he drove more carefully afterwards.

What is it to me, I should like to know, if a man is weak enough to be bewitched by a lot of girls! Such weakness *I* never heard of; and then the wretch—I regret to say it; was the like ever seen?—has two wives at home pining on account of his absence!

There is no satisfying some people. Set him up with two wives! Begad! there is many a poor fellow who has got but one, and would be charmed to have none at all.

And perhaps the poor things are crying for him while he is *cavorting* himself about the country. Just fancy crying for a black fellow like this, and he one of the ugliest, bandy-legged, yellow-skinned, woolly-headed scoundrels that ever the sun shone on! I am certain nobody would cry for me, quite certain; although I believe, if it were left to unprejudiced judges, I am the better looking of the two.

But there are lights twinkling; it must be the town at last, thank goodness! for, although trying to be facetious, I feel awfully tired. My goodness! what would I not give for a bottle of Bass, a good-sized piece of bread and cheese, and then to turn in, even upon a clean floor, let alone a bed. I hope the ants to-night will only be in hundreds instead of thousands. I wonder if any person in England ever had a thousand ants for his bed-fellows. That is a new sensation—I assert

without fear of contradiction—to one who has not enjoyed it before. And so I moralized as the deepened shadows of numerous beehive-like huts commenced to surround us.

Before leaving Zeerust, Mr. Van Yepren, Landdrost of Haute-Marico, informed me that he had heard a rumour that an officer of the Intelligence Department occasionally visited Lotligani, whose head-quarters were at the Diamond Fields in Griqualand West. Thus I had determined to find this gentleman on my arrival if it were possible.

As we piloted our way through the intricacies of numerous Baralong kraals, not without having run into sundry hedges, and made frequent escapes, we ultimately met one of the natives, evidently of the gay and festive order.

On inquiring from him if he knew where Mr. Bethel resided, he volunteered, for a pecuniary remuneration, to take us to his house.

After about three quarters of an hour, threading in and out and to and fro, we reached a mud cabin with dilapidated thatched roof, an attempt at a wattle fence enclosing the front.

Here I dismounted, and knocked at the door; but as no answer was given to my summons, I struck a match and looked into the dwelling.

At a glance it was easy to perceive that it had not been inhabited for some time.

Disgusted, I returned to the cart, and rather hotly pitched into the guide for not having told me Mr. Bethel was from home.

With the utmost self-possession he retorted,—
" You did not ask for Mr. Bethel, but for Mr. Bethel's house ! Mr. Bethel has gone to the Diamond Fields."

Being desirous of making further use of this sharp individual, I next asked him, Was there a trader in the station ? He informed me that there was. I then requested him to show me where he resided.

After another long tramp, as wearying as its predecessor, I reached a most tumble-down structure of clay, the back portion of which was enclosed by a yard. I made some noise falling over several obstacles, and being vociferously bayed at by two or three curs which seemed instigated by a particular desire to become more intimately acquainted with my calves, when a voice hailed me from within. I responded that I was a Government servant, travelling on duty ; and he immediately told me to wait where I was, while he brought a light.

In the course of some minutes a very young man, apparently suffering from a severe attack of fever, made his appearance and welcomed me most hospitably.

Soon the horses were out of harness and placed in a sheltered corner, where they were provided with an ample feed of barley, blanketed, and made comfortable for the night.

I then entered my new friend's domicile. It was composed of wattle and daub, and had doubt-

less once stood erect, only the winds had taken a fancy to it, and in their playfulness given it a slope much greater than the tower of Pisa. They had also made holes in various parts of the building, of such magnitude that it required rather a stretch of imagination to believe you were inside a house. However, such as it was, I was made welcome to. After a little delay a fire was kindled, and some very tough goat produced, which all of us carefully tended during the cooking process.

A person would have supposed that, with such ventilators in the walls and roof, we should not have been troubled with smoke. However, such was by no means the case, for it rested around us in so dense a fog as to render a view of my neighbour an utter impossibility. I informed him that I had sought Mr. Bethel, and of my disappointment on not finding him, and he confirmed what the guide had told me, but proposed that I should sleep where that gentleman usually did—in an adjoining building which had been erected for a store, but which, unfortunately, had never attained completion. In an hour, or thereabouts, I retired to rest, enwrapped in a couple of blankets, and, lying on a truckle bedstead, slept the sleep of the weary.

Before going further, let me state that the white horse Mr. Jansen had lent me knocked up at Molipo, and that I was obliged to leave it behind with Gopani's boy, who was instructed to drive it on after us as rapidly as possible.

Up to this hour he had not put in an appearance, which caused me no small amount of uneasiness.

I have no recollection this night of having been troubled by ants or other disagreeable insects. Possibly I am now becoming a pachyderm, for I did not wake until sunrise.

When I had made my ablutions, in a saucepan which held about a pint of water, I prepared myself for my day's work.

This I commenced by sending a messenger to the chief to inform him of my arrival, and to express a desire that I might have an interview with him as soon as was possible.

When at breakfast a kind of forerunner, or rather spy, came down to inspect me, and so thoroughly had this fellow been trained that he would have done credit to Fouché.

After further delay I was told that the chief, Monsewah, would pay me a visit in the course of the morning; and as nothing could be done until this meeting should take place, I spent the intermediate time in grooming the horses and looking after their comforts.

My missing boy and horse had not yet turned up, and the lengthened delay caused me much anxiety.

I made several efforts to get persons to go in search of him, but without success, although I promised them handsome payment.

The indifference with which these people treat

money is remarkable; still it may be just possible that my not having yet seen the chief prevented their performing any service for me.

However, at two o'clock the truant appeared, minus the horse. His story was simple.

He had followed us slowly along, as the poor animal was too exhausted to travel faster than at a snail's pace. When he arrived in Lotligani, he could not discover where we were, so he knee-haltered his charge and took shelter for the night in a Kaffir's kraal. In the morning the worn-out beast was nowhere to be found, so he had spent all the forenoon in unsuccessfully looking for it.

After providing him with a good feed, I despatched him to renew his search.

Two, three, four o'clock passed, and Monsewah had not visited me.

Of course this delay is most provoking; but as this chief has great power, and very numerous subjects, it is absolutely necessary calmly to submit to the indignity. I sent him, however, a gentle reminder to the effect, that if he could not come to me, as he was a much older man than myself, if he would let me know where he was, I would visit him.

About sun-down, when standing outside the premises, a man in a black coat galloped past; his legs and arms were going like the sails of a wind-mill, and the reins flying loose about his horse's neck.

He had hardly rode by above a couple of hundred

yards when his steed made a stumble, and the rider got one of those beautiful falls which evoke admiration in all true horsemen.

I took no notice of the circumstance, but soon after entered our primitive dwelling to see if there were any more of the tough goat, and what prospect there might be of my getting some of it.

Scarcely had I been seated a few minutes, when a white person made his appearance, to learn if I could set a broken arm.

Professing my willingness to do so, if no more skilful hand could be obtained, I was led to a neighbouring kraal, where I found the injured man, his arm dislocated at the shoulder.

After a considerable amount of hauling, and no little pain to the sufferer, the injured limb was placed in its proper position. The patient turned out to be the Wesleyan missionary of the station, who never failed to bewail his fate, and to abuse the awkwardness of the confounded brute he had been riding.

The discomfort I suffered here from cold, during the following night, was really dreadful. It would scarcely be believed that, so close to the tropical line of Capricorn, it was possible for such to be the case; and it will rather surprise the reader when I inform him that the mealies, left to steep over night for the horses, were frozen into one solid mass in the morning!

The reason of this is, that the plateau on which Lotligani stands is four thousand seven hundred

feet above the level of the sea. The wind, also, seemed to blow incessantly, and it is quite as penetrating as any that I have ever experienced in Russia, or upon the prairies of the far West.

The climacteric changes in this region are most extraordinary, and particularly trying to the constitution, as the sun, at mid-day, is so insufferably torrid as to be almost past endurance.

In the evening three old men called upon me, and gave me to understand that the chief was at an adjoining village, where some marriage festivities were being carried on, and as the principals were relatives, his presence was necessary, but that I should see him in the morning.

Here the trader whispered to me, "The old fellow is on the spree, and I understand has been as drunk as an owl for the last three days."

Thus we see that the sin, which philanthropists are so constantly bemoaning, is by no means confined to that very estimable little island—England.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LOTLIGANI.

PATIENCE does meet with its reward occasionally ! To my surprise a couple of horses arrived this morning, to take me to visit the chief.

One being a garron, I rejected its use ; and the other I mounted a friend on who had arrived during the night, and whose waggons were outspanned about half a mile from the station.

Bobby, my most imposing steed, I selected for my own riding.

The distance we had to travel did not exceed five miles, and with little difficulty we found the Kotla, where the old chief was seated, in the midst of all his headmen and councillors. Chairs were immediately produced, and we "located" ourselves beside him. The scene was most attractive, for the position was admirably selected for the exhibition of native pomp. From its elevation you could see over a wide extent of country, covered with trees, with here and there large and irregularly shaped rocks cropping out of the soil. True enough there was a marriage

fête going on, and men, women, and children were all dressed in their holiday attire. Outside the place of audience were numbers of the younger members of the community, evidently much enjoying the new excitement, as their merry voices, laughter, and clapping of hands plainly indicated. After the usual compliments I proceeded to business. I briefly as possible stated the object of my visit; and the chief, in response, first inquired why Mr. Bethel was not with me; nor could I at first make him understand how I should have come from the Transvaal and Natal, while the former gentleman hailed from Griqualand West. This required the explanation, that Sir Bartle Frere was the "Great Chief" in Africa; that beneath him were minor chiefs, each in command of districts, the same as he had headmen in charge of villages, and that I had not come from the same one as Mr. Bethel, but from another of equal importance with that of his commanding officer. This explanation evidently pleased him, for he said to one of the headmen, "These white people are truly wonderful!"

Ultimately he informed me that he could take no step without considering, but that if I chose to meet him at Lotligani that evening he would give me an answer.

If the old gentleman had been tipsy the night before, he stood the effects of it singularly well.

He was a hearty old fellow of about sixty-five; was anything but destitute of politeness, with a

soft voice, and I should think was, in his own tongue, an eloquent man, yet he came at once to the point of the subject discussed. He had a formidable number of greyheads around, whose gravity and imperturbability almost amounted to the ludicrous. The whole assemblage stood up as we departed, and I do not think that the interview lasted more than ten minutes.

On returning to our horses, we found ourselves in the middle of all the merry-makers, who were obviously struck with the beauty, proportion, and size of my charger.

When we got into the saddle we had scarcely gone a hundred yards when a large escort of the *élite* of the tribe joined us. They were mounted on Basuto ponies, probably the most surefooted, hardy, and enduring of their race, it being a common expression in Africa for persons to say of these miniature horses, "If you don't press them, they will go for ever."

Another peculiarity of this breed is, that they will thrive, and even grow fat, where another horse would starve.

The young aristocrats thought at first, that by pressing their horses, and making as much noise around me as possible, I should be induced to give Bob his head, and join in a scurry home; but to their disappointment I refused to be guilty of an escapade suitable alone for a pack of school-boys.

At length one spoke to me, and wished to know

if my "kamille" could go faster than he was doing.

I told him "A little!"

As a response he unblushingly affirmed, "My horse can overtake an ostrich!"

"Is he for sale?" I inquired.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because such a valuable animal should never be parted with by your tribe," I remarked. "Keep him, and value him as you would gold!" At this he appeared considerably chagrined.

In the evening I called upon the chief, but he had not returned from the merrymaking; and as I did not choose to lower my dignity by hanging about for his arrival, at an early hour I betook myself to bed.

In the morning I visited his kraal.

After a short delay he joined me, and about a couple of dozen stools were produced, which they arranged in a half-circle. The old man took a seat in the midst, and placed me on his right hand. At my feet sat my interpreter, who, ere we had been conversing five minutes, pulled out and lit a dirty pipe. At this I pitched into him sharply, compelling him to replace it in his pocket.

Monsewah at once wished to learn what was the cause of my wrath, and what I had said.

I told him that in my country, in the presence of persons of rank and position like himself, servants were not permitted to smoke, as it was considered a mark of disrespect.

" Oh ! " he said, " you are a great people. I should like to go to England and visit your Queen."

I replied, " Doubtless you would find yourself a welcome guest, and be given a spare bedroom in Buckingham Palace ! "

But all this palaver was not doing business, and I reminded him that I was there for that purpose, and also that I had still a long journey to make.

He inquired where I was going.

I gave him a list of the places, deviating a good deal from the truth as I repeated each name, for this old gentleman has a character for being as crafty as any fox.

His smiling expression of countenance changed immediately, and he stated that it grieved him much to hear it, for he feared he should never see his " dear friend again."

" Why ? " I inquired.

" Because those savages will kill you ; your body will become food for the hyæna and the vulture, and the bones of that noble frame will whiten the earth."

After this poetically expressed and cheering sentiment, I again tried to pin him down to business ; when, finding that I was really in earnest, he informed me that nothing could be done so hurriedly, but that, loving every man of his tribe as his own child, he could not part with them to go to such a far distant country

without lengthened and mature consideration. "But," added he, "*when you come back*"—and here his eyes twinkled ironically—"I will do anything to serve my dear friend, as you must know."

There was nothing further for me to do; so, after exchanging mutual professions of admiration, esteem, and respect, I bid adieu, and hastened to make preparations for my departure.

Before leaving here let me say a few words in reference to the locality.

Lotlogani stands in the middle of a vast plain, and there is no water nearer than the Molipo, a distance of six miles, whence it is carried in crocks on the heads of the women.

Still, around it are thousands of acres of mealies and Kaffir corn. When I was there the former crop had been gathered; the latter still stood out, and promised a most abundant harvest.

The women, as elsewhere throughout this region, do all the manual labour, and it was far from a pleasant sight to see them of an evening toiling homewards from their work, bearing on their heads a load sufficient for a donkey, with, not unfrequently in addition, a child strapped on to their backs. Can it then be wondered at how the lithe, beautiful, and well-limbed girls of fourteen or fifteen, become worn out and aged women before they are five-and-twenty? The old chief, at my request, sent out persons to look for the white horse, but up to the present hour nothing has been heard of it.

That it is not dead I am certain, or we should have noticed the vultures circling above where the carcass lay; therefore I have come to the conclusion that it has either wandered off to the Molipo river in search of water, or returned to its former home.

The chief, however, promised me, on consideration of a payment of five shillings, that it shall be found if in his country, and returned by a responsible man to Linakani.

At my sleeping-place I met two gentlemen, just arrived from the Diamond Fields, and they kindly asked me to breakfast with them at the residence of Mr. Bethel—the house where I first alighted on my arrival. They were very agreeable, and the meal was better than I could have anticipated. Both are going to proceed to an adjoining village on business, but as their horses are entirely knocked up, their progress will necessarily be slow, for bullocks must needs be substituted.

By half-past eleven I am again in the cart; Kania, distant about eighty-five miles, being my next stopping place.

The road, I hear, is over the most villainous sand-track, water only occurring twice during the way; so, if we accomplish it in forty-eight hours I shall consider myself fortunate. Worse than all, we shall find no inhabitants on the route, unless by chance we should come across some straggling Buschmen or cattle herds.

The horses seem to be glad once more to find

themselves in harness. Probably they anticipate better days and more comfort in store for them, for they trot right merrily through the station and for a mile across the adjoining flat.

Here I overtake my breakfast acquaintances, hurrying on their way with six young bullocks in front of their light cart. These beasts of burden seem to be getting over the ground in grand style; but the pace is scarcely sufficient to cause surprise when the ear notes with what frequency and severity the whip is applied.

Bidding them adieu, I pull my horses down to a moderate pace and face northward, knowing full well *that* hard times and short commons are before us all.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DESERT.

IN all my experiences of African travelling I have seldom encountered a road so fearfully heavy as this one! The wheel is constantly up over the felloes in sand, and I consequently know that the draught power of the horses is being most severely tasked. My boys I can make walk, and reduce the rate of speed so as not to overtax their endurance. In an hour and a quarter we cross the Molipo—here almost as pretty as it was where we had formerly seen it. At first timber is tolerably abundant, but it gradually gives way to the uninterrupted grass veldt.

Road! call this a road! I don't doubt that waggons have traversed it; but how far back, and how far between, it is quite impossible to say. To walk upon it is almost as difficult as upon the shingle beach between Portland and Weymouth!

The better to lighten the waggon, and save my animals, I also got out of the cart, having placed the reins over the splash-board, thus leaving the horses almost entirely to their own guidance.

I led the way, the conveyance came next, and the attendants brought up the rear. It was dreadfully fatiguing work. If I had had proper walking-shoes on, it would not have been so much so; but heavy riding-boots up to the knee, and breeches as tight at that part of my limb as they could well be made, are not the kind of nether habiliments most suitable for pedestrian exercise. The sun, moreover, was fearfully hot; and the flies, that hideous plague of this country, kept me in a constant state of intense irritation. If I had been in a Turkish bath I should not have perspired more profusely. Still "Avanti" is the word, and thirty miles must be accomplished, if possible, before nightfall.

I call up the Tottie, and have a conversation with him.

"You are certain you know," inquired I, "where that first water is?"

"Yes, Baas; quite certain," is his answer.

"When shall we reach it?" I ask.

"When the sun is so *high*," is his reply, pointing to the horizon due west.

Onwards then we trudge, never more hot and never more thirsty in our lives.

We are now skirting the edge of the Kalahari desert, which stretches westward till the dunes of sand that form its limit are washed by the South Atlantic Ocean.

It is a huge waste when you consider its great magnitude; and all over its extent water is ex-

tremely scarce, although there is a certain amount of scant herbage. Still it has its inhabitants, for many a Buschman with his family lives in its fastnesses, while wild animals of nearly all the descriptions peculiar to South Africa roam fearlessly over its otherwise deserted steppes.

It is doubtful if a white man has ever traversed this desert from south to north; from east to west, however, this has been accomplished, when the sufferings overcome by the adventurers are all but unparalleled in the annals of historical travel.

I could not help frequently glancing towards the west, and thinking how, if I could follow that setting sun, what chance there might be of my enjoying a good comfortable meal and bottle of wine on board one of the "Union" or "Donald Currie" ships.

These open grass veldts, without any object to attract the attention, are most tedious, and with the tedium even the most light-hearted man will be apt to become sad and melancholy.

A great change has come over the atmosphere within the last hour, the breeze now having died away completely, and all the air is one dead still calm. There was something, too, which caused me to believe that there was an excess of electricity brooding over the plain. Black clouds began to rise to the southward, large and ponderous—so massive-looking indeed as to make one wonder why, by the natural law of gravity, such weighty substances should not fall to earth.

“Here! Tottie!” I called out; “we are going to have rain to-night?”

“No, Baas,” was his answer; “it never rain in this country.” (A nice description for a native to give you of his land!)

“O my master!” ejaculated he; “look at the spring-bok!”

Sure enough there was an immense troop of them, watching us with that expression of wonder in their large eyes so peculiar to this family.

They did not seem to consider our approach as a matter of any importance, for already we were within two hundred yards, and as yet they gave no intimation of an intention to move off.

I was little in the humour for shooting, so I bade him take the rifle; when, just as he was about to press the trigger, a *wildebeast* sprang up out of the long grass between him and the object at which he aimed.

Naturally he desired to have the larger game, so he fired a running shot at it; and not with any feelings of sorrow I saw him miss like a man, for the reason that there was sufficient meat in the cart to last us for a day or two, and every hour we were getting into a locality where bok becomes more abundant.

An hour before sunset we came across a very large flock of guinea-fowl; I imagine there must have been some hundreds of them. They were remarkably tame, and ran along the track about

twenty yards in front of me. The presence of these birds is usually accepted as an indication that water is near. They are marvellously swift on foot, and most persistently refuse to take wing, unless they are compelled to have recourse to it as a *dernier ressort*.

The sand continues dreadfully heavy. None of us have ridden, still the horses' flanks heave with as great violence as if they had run a three-mile race, and I am in little better plight. My attendants, however, do not suffer; in fact, they appear almost as fresh as they did at the hour of starting.

Darkness now descends—at first gradually, afterwards more rapidly—over the landscape, and an air of mystery seems to pervade all your eyes cannot distinctly discern. This produces a strange, weird sensation, such as one might feel on leaving the world we know, and entering that we are unacquainted with.

There are few objects, excepting an occasional acacia-tree, to cast shadows; but those that they produce are frequently startling, at other times ludicrous.

These leave upon your mind much the same kind of sensation that is conveyed by many of the absurdities etched by Gustave Doré.

"Look here, Tottie! where is that water?" I called out.

"Soon, Baas; down there," he replied, pointing.

Therefore onwards I trudged, the night now

having become sufficiently dark to prevent anything being observed except the sand, which was exposed in a continuous line by the wheels of the few waggons that had cut it out.

I could not help observing that the horses were becoming excessively nervous, more especially Bobby. Several times I had to speak to them, and whenever I did so they appeared reassured. At length both jumped violently to the left, and it was with difficulty I could restrain them from rushing out over the veldt. The boys also kept close to me, in fact so much so as to embarrass my movements.

“What the devil does all this mean? Where is the water, driver?”

“Down there, master; there, you see!”

“Well, go and find it, and shout for me when you are at it,” I said very peremptorily.

“My master! don’t you think other boy had better go?” he now spoke inquiringly.

“No, you rascal! begone!” said I, my anger beginning to arise; “off with you!”

But still he stirred not, while the other seemed to cling to me in abject terror.

At length the Hottentot said, “I do not think, master, the water is here.”

“Find a good camping-place, and we will unharness.” Scarcely had the words left my mouth, when the horses made the most strenuous efforts to break away, and it was only by sheer physical strength that I prevented them.

"What the deuce makes the horses so restive?" I asked.

"It's only the wolves, master."

"Let us get to a camping-place! Come, look sharp, lads; there is no time to be lost!"

By this time the face of the heavens had become completely changed. Dark clouds, black as ink, scudded across the sky, and occasional flashes of lightning darted from the zenith down to the southward. The wind, which had been still heretofore, commenced to moan, and sounded like surf breaking upon a shingle beach.

I felt we were in for what the sailors call a dirty night; but as these things will happen, all that could be done was to make the best of it. What are such occurrences in life? No more than the bitter that must be taken with the sweet!

In a quarter of an hour afterwards, with no small amount of trouble, we found a tree and a bush, growing out of an ant heap, with a considerable quantity of broken sticks in the immediate vicinity. This was fortunate, for the horses were again becoming restive. So we halted, and in ten minutes afterwards had two substantial, bright fires burning—one to the north of the cart, the other to the south of the tree and bush—between both of which the horses were made fast. Although I was very weary—more, almost worn out, I enjoyed our meal; and the boy seemed to have recovered from his dejection, for without

invitation he commenced relating about the 240 elephants, which the Baas thought was far beneath a just amount, but that 300 ought to be substituted—when I retired. It is useless to wait for these fellows to finish spinning yarns when once they begin, especially if their appetites are satisfied, and they have an audience. In fact they will continue till—well, I do not know, for I never tried them!

So I rolled myself in the blankets, put my saddle under my head, and lay down in full confidence of having a refreshing sleep. I dozed off immediately, and soon would have been in dream-land, when I thought some irritation of my skin required scratching. There are so few luxuries to be enjoyed here that I could not deny myself so trivial a pleasure.

The result was gratifying in the extreme, so I turned upon the other side, said a mental little prayer in thanks for the rest I anticipated, and closed my eyes again.

There was evidently some hitch in the arrangements, for in a few minutes I discovered that I felt very irritated in another limb. It was desirable to scratch it also. I did so with kind and gentle energy; then reversed the side I was reclining on, and again sought slumber, to invoke which the better I shut my eyes. However, not one place wanted scratching now—four, five, a dozen did! I will resist, thought I; it is imaginary; but the longer I resisted the worse I got, until I