

began to think I had an attack, or at least the premonitory symptoms, of some of those ailments babies are subject to!

In five minutes more it was not what babies, but what full-grown men occasionally suffer from! Stand it any longer I could not, so I sprang from my resting-place and rushed to the fire. Carefully I examined myself, and so numerous were those convivial, playful little creatures, the ants, that I was absolutely covered with them.

CHAPTER XXX.

HYÆNAS.

WHAT an admirable subject for an artist, one who excelled in lights and shadows !

A white man being rapidly divested of his clothing, with two black men assisting him to get rid of countless ants—all intent upon a meal from his luckless corporation ; and this on one of the darkest of nights, the scene lit up by the glimmer of a struggling fire, which darkened the more the blackness of the surrounding country.

This was not employment for a few minutes ; it must have taken upwards of half an hour, and the way the little devils held on to their prey was worthy of a better cause.

Afterwards my wounds had to be carefully smeared with a piece of fat—a process far from agreeable, and one calculated to make me unpleasantly redolent.

Fresh fuel having been added to the fire, I this time lay down under the cart, and at once was comfortably asleep. Possibly this lasted for half an hour, but at any rate for no longer, when

rain began to descend in such enormous drops as are only to be witnessed in the tropics.

This gentle warning soon gave way to a regular and systematic downpour; and with it the violence of the wind increased, for it fairly shrieked and howled over the plain with an impetuosity that would make a listener believe it was positively actuated by a spirit of revenge and destruction. Occasionally it would lull away, when strange, unearthly moans would assail the ear, causing the impression to an imaginative mind that spirits from another world were contemplating with terror the war of the elements.

My position under the cart was untenable, so I got inside it and pulled the tilt up. Even there I was not safe from the penetrating power of the rain, for it beat with such violence against it as to make its weather-side a perfect spring of water. Though rolled up in a couple of blankets, I was soon as saturated as a sponge, and so chilly withal that my teeth actually chattered.

The storm was at its height when the horses began to struggle, and rushed to and fro in a most disconcerted manner. It became at once obvious that if the reims did not break they would throw themselves down, and cause each other serious injury. I shouted to them, and both boys were rushing to the spot, when a heavier plunge than any of the previous ones tore them loose, and off they darted across the veldt as fast as their legs could carry them.

In an instant they were out of sight, and all we could learn of the direction in which they had gone was the fast dying out thud, thud, thud, of their galloping hoofs.

This was not a time for inaction.

Divesting myself of the blankets, and springing to the ground, I ordered my boys to follow, and made after the retreating quadrupeds.

It was impossible to see the obstacles lying in my way, so ere I had gone a hundred yards I stumbled over a bush, and received a fearful fall, causing me to think at the moment that I had broken one of my arms.

However, I had no time for thought; rapidity of movement was essential, as already it was with difficulty that I could hear the guiding sounds; but here the native's instinct came in.

The Hottentot went in front of me, and I followed him at my best pace; but so intensely dark was the night, that though I was well aware he was close to me, it was with strained eyesight that I got an occasional glimpse of him.

But the little fellow was equal to the difficulty, and bravely pushed on, momentarily calling on the frightened animals to stop.

In ten minutes we must have progressed more than a mile, and it was a regular case of "bellows to mend" with me, for I was so thoroughly pumped as to make me convinced that I must soon halt, so in broken sentences I called after my leader, that if I stopped he was to continue the pursuit.

In truth, I was in an awkward position; for if he left me I doubted my capability to find my way back to the cart, for the other lad had long disappeared, goodness knew where! And to spend the night sitting out on the plain, with a blinding torrent of rain beating down upon me for five or six hours, was anything but a pleasant arrangement for contemplation.

Every step I took appeared as if it must be my last. I staggered to and fro like a drunken man, and my breath came and went in spasmodic gasps, when I heard, with unparalleled delight, the voice of my driver calling out, "Whoa, Tommy! whoa, old man! Whoa, Bobby, whoa! What are you about, you rogues? Whoa!"

Immediately afterwards he sung out to me that he had caught one of the truants.

I knew that all was right now, for the animals had become so much attached to one another that where one went the other would follow.

When I had reached my lad, I found that Tommy was a captive; and I had scarcely placed my hand upon the halter, when Bob walked up out of the darkness, and placed his head over his comrade's shoulder, and in an instant was secured.

The return journey was not easy. The fire, at best a feeble one, had been all but extinguished by the heavy downpour of water, and there was no star visible by which we could direct our course. The storm had blown from the southward; the

runaways had, on breaking loose, appeared to go down wind; so the only possible chance I could see of regaining the cart was to advance with the wind and rain in my face.

Giving the Tottie a leg-up, I put him on Bob's back, that horse being light in colour, and therefore more easily seen than the other, and told him to go in advance, while I followed on Tommy.

It was no easy task to make the animals face the driving rain, but we persevered for upwards of twenty minutes. Then the Hottentot shouted, with a hope that Gopani's boy would hear him; but no sound came in response to our call, except the wailing, idiotic howl of the hyæna.

"My master," said the boy, "that's the scoundrel that gave us all this trouble;" and I mentally cursed the brute.

It was scarcely a matter of suspicion in my mind, but had almost become a certainty, that we should be unable to find the cart; in fact, already I had resolved to dismount, and tie the horses together to prevent their again straying, when the driver turned sharply off to the left, somewhat increased the pace, and in about five minutes I had the pleasure of viewing the almost extinguished fire.

On reaching the cart, no vestige of the other lad could be seen. Again and again I called to him; still I received no answer.

Having tied the horses up, I thought I would

once more dispose myself in the old position in the conveyance, when to my surprise I found the lost boy—huddled up in my blankets and in a state of such abject terror as to be incapable of speech, let alone locomotion. Without much ceremony I hauled him out, the poor wretch not resisting; but so demoralized had his system become through fear, that when we reached the ground he could hardly stand. A little bullying acted wonderfully as a restorative, for in a few minutes he was able to go about and assist in making up the fires.

Fortunately now the rain began to moderate, and the wind to lose much of its previous force, so that in a short time, the comforting blaze leapt aloft again, and gave us warmth and light.

Deeming the night pretty far advanced, I resolved not to turn in, but to make myself as comfortable as possible beside the fire.

"Driver, where is the rifle?" said I.

"In the cart, Baas!"

"Do you think it is dry?"

"I think not. What could keep dry such a night as this?"

"Well! fetch it here;" and he brought it to me.

In case the cartridge had got wet I removed it, replacing the old one with another from my pocket.

Then putting the flap of my coat over the lock, and laying it across my knees, I sat impatiently waiting for dawn.

Talk about storm-tossed sailors anxiously looking for daybreak. No one looked forward more to its advent with greater longing than did I that night.

The hours seemed to be interminable, and it truly appeared as if they would never come to an end.

In the midst of our discomfort, however, there was one thing gratifying, viz., that the rain and wind had almost entirely ceased, and the black clouds which previously shut out the face of heaven rapidly began to break, and drift away to leeward. But all was dark, wet, and uncomfortable. Place myself in what position I chose, my hands would come in contact with the soaking blanket which I had wrapped around me. But the fire seemed to throw out more warmth, and the result was apparent in the steam which ascended from the sodden covering.

Dawn was now at hand was evident, for that grey cold light which so mysteriously ushers in the day was creeping over the plain, and, as the advance guard of the royal sun, was pressing from his course the darkness that had lately held paramount sway.

I was beginning to congratulate myself, when there was a second disturbance amongst the horses.

This time, however, they were more firmly secured; and the lesson we had learned a few hours before had not by any means been thrown

away, for the boys at once sprang to their heads, while I stood in their rear and spoke to them.

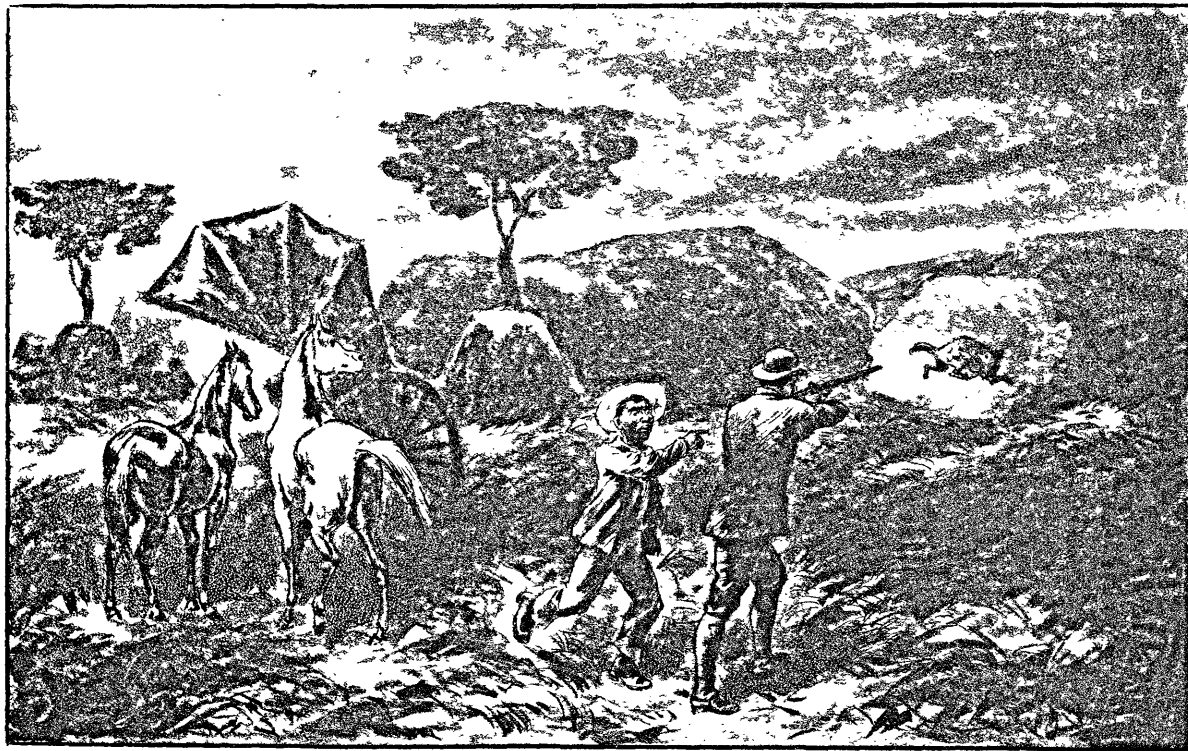
It is wonderful how a man's voice will soothe and reassure a frightened horse.

In a few seconds they had apparently overcome their terror.

"Baas! look at the wolf!" and to windward of us stood one of these gentry, about twenty-five yards off, his eyes and ears denoting the interest he took in the scene before him.

He was by no means a monster, but a member of that species which is universally considered the pluckiest of the genus.

I had my rifle in my hand. In a moment it was at my shoulder. I levelled low, for the distance was short, and with the report the night-prowler sprang into the air, turned round as if to bite his flank, and in an instant afterwards fell on his side, his head doubled under him, —dead.



A Night Prowler's End.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LIONS.

It is not often that the sun rises upon so disconsolate a group as our party presented that morning. The Hottentot driver looked—and was—the dirtiest of the dirty. The rain and wind had brought upon myself a severe attack of fever, and Gopani's relative was doubled up with pains in his stomach, and was shivering and incessantly chattering his teeth.

I comprehended at once that to keep him longer with me would be to risk his life, so I resolved to send him back upon the very first opportunity.

After a sorry meal of bok, burnt as dry as dust, and a couple of hours for the horses to graze, we started.

Although during the night the rain had descended in such vast quantities, not a drop of water could we find, for the parched and thirsty soil had drunk it all up. Tottie was right enough when he remarked, "There is no rain in this country."

This was the first shower that had fallen during a space of two or three years.

The English reader may imagine that at least there were puddles to be found.

Well, the three of us sought in all directions for such a thing, but never a one could we find.

However, the storm was not without its benefit, for it had cleared the atmosphere, and left a most invigorating and delightful crispness in the air.

Immediately after the start was made, I catechised the driver as to where water was to be found.

At first he promised we should obtain it in one hollow, afterwards in another, and ultimately declared he did not know when we should come across it.

Of course I abused him roundly, not so much for his ignorance, but for the deceitfulness which prompted him to a pretence of knowledge; but my tirade ended in our holding a council of war upon what might be the best move to make under such exceptionally trying circumstances.

In the far hazy distance stood a large koppie, to which the Hottentot drew my attention. He said,—

“Baas, that is Horroch’s; when I have been hunting hartebeast I got water out of a pit that is on the further side of it. There is a Kaffir cattle-station close by, and we shall be sure to find

some person who will show us water, if that spring should be dry."

Although it was a long *détour* from my course, yet the sufferings of my horses, which were already severe, determined me, without consideration, to accept the proffered advice.

It is very seldom that a person has to encounter so trying and painful a drive, for after leaving the waggon trail we had to strike across the veldt, which was in every direction intersected by earth-cracks, many of them being so formidable that nothing but a Cape cart could possibly have succeeded in gaining their opposite side.

Game also was exceedingly abundant, and flights of Namaqua partridges and doves kept constantly passing and repassing—a reliable indication of the immediate presence of water.

After difficulties which it would be impossible to enumerate singly, and about four hours of the severest toil, we arrived at the cattle kraal, and learned, to our intense dismay, that the spring of which the boy had spoken had long failed to supply its precious liquid.

However, here was a Buschman and a few head of miserable oxen. It was perfectly obvious that they could not subsist without drinking; but like all the natives in this part of the land, they strenuously denied the existence of water in the neighbourhood.

The Hottentot, however, refused to be deceived, being too apt himself at deceit; and being in-

timately acquainted with the guile and trickery of the people, he whispered to me,—

"Baas, there *is* water here, but I will have to talk to that old man for some time before he will tell me where it is to be found. Give me a piece of tobacco for him."

So the two worthies sat down and had a long and tedious pow-wow. The delay was so irksome that I almost lost my patience; but the result was finally satisfactory, for the old fellow got up, placed his greasy, slimy carosse round his shoulders, and stalked off in front of us with the air of a king.

In half an hour we reached three or four pits; by one was a trough, evidently used for the cattle to drink out of, the ground all about it having been much trampled under foot, while in the hole from which the liquid was taken there floated a considerable-sized gourd, cut into the shape of a ladle.

It took at least twenty minutes to fill the trough. What space of time therefore must it have occupied for these Buschmen to have watered fifty head of stock?

The surrounding country was most uninviting. There was scarcely a vestige of vegetation to be seen anywhere, whilst the rocks on the side of the koppie looked grey and weather-beaten. Moreover, there was a hungry look all over the scene, that denoted, as plainly as words could say, "Here reigns poverty supreme."

One thing which struck me as very extraordinary, was the remarkable tameness of the birds. In spite of our presence they dashed down into the water when we were only a few feet from it, showing no fear of man, but only the insurmountable mastery of thirst over all other instincts.

We had not been here long when we were joined by a family of Buschmen, than whom nothing could be more abject and wretched in appearance. They were positively encrusted with filth, and their limbs looked as if they possessed no particle of flesh to cover them, while their abdomens protruded to such an extent as to be disgusting. Want of water had doubtless brought them, but I imagine food was equally necessary; for having no fire-arms, it is only now and then that game falls into their hands—offal, carrion of any description, even when in a putrid condition, being their usual sustenance.

One tiny child, the most repulsive-looking infant I have ever seen, appeared to take a fancy to me—a most unusual occurrence, for invariably black children are frightened by the mere presence of a white man. In this case the little waif was above the weaknesses of his race, for all I could do would not keep him from fingering my garments, and keeping unpleasantly close to my boots.

Possibly from a feeling of humanity, decidedly actuated with a desire of getting rid of so unpleasant an attachment, I made the boy bring

from the cart what remained of our spring-bok, and hand it to these miserable wanderers. I cannot describe the wonderful change in the expression of their countenances which now took place. The abject terror which previously had been apparent in the man and women gave place to the most demoniac joy, in anticipation of the food which lay before them. The head of the family, without an instant's delay, began cutting up the flesh with his assegai, every few seconds placing a piece of the raw meat in his mouth, and chewing it with the greatest relish. The women would have gone and done likewise with pleasure, but fearing to intrude upon the privileges of their lord and master, sat tacitly by, watching with keen eyes the demolition of each precious morsel. Presently a fire was lit, and the remainder of the bok was placed upon the glowing embers, while the whole party cowered round it, as if to prevent the slightest particle of heat, or a breath of the cooking meat from escaping. Having some curiosity to see the other water-pit, which was close by, I directed my steps towards it. Although the flow was not so great as in the former, yet it was nearer to the surface of the surrounding ground.

There were cattle and game spoors all around it; and while examining these I came suddenly to a dead stop, and exclaimed mentally, "By Jove! I know *that* sign, and it is as fresh as a daisy. *Liens !!!*"

Fifteen months in the lion veldt had not been gone through by me for nothing. I knew the track of the king of beasts as well as an English farmer knows that of a shod horse or a bullock.

After taking a thorough survey, to make sure that one of the royal family was no longer in the immediate neighbourhood, I stooped down to examine the spoor.

It was so fresh that the sand had not fallen in over the markings made by the tip of the claws; thus I concluded that the brute had drunk there no later than break of day.

If I had had time, which I had not, and a double-barrelled gun, with the aid of the Buschmen at the fire I would certainly not have gone to rest that night without getting this gentleman's "pelt;" for know, O reader, that this race of men are the best trackers of any in the country.

I called my boy and pointed out the spoor to him, when he immediately endorsed my opinion—in fact went further, asserting that it had been made since sunrise, for else it would have been obliterated by the prints of the bok's feet, these animals invariably coming to drink immediately after dawn; but, added he, in a half-supplicating tone—

"My master, you must not go to hunt him with only one gun. For if you do not kill him at the first shot, I shall be unable to help you; and what will my chief say when I go back alone and tell him you are dead?"

When we returned to the Busch people I told him to inform them of what we had seen.

"Tauw," said they, "there are five of them in that grass," pointing to some high reeds lying about half a mile distant.

The old fellow continued, "There were seven when they came from the Limpopo, but the two old ones took to bad habits, and began killing cattle, so Hashesheba's people came down and shot them. The others are good lions, and only kill bok, so I love them, for they often supply me with a feed. When I see the *asphoes*, I know that there is plenty meat, and I and my wives go to the place, and wait till he has eaten enough, and when he leaves it we get the rest."

It was rather tempting to have five lions so very near, and disappointing to be unable to give them a call, particularly as these were such well-disposed beasts; but haste being imperative, and that, coupled with the fact of my possession of nothing but a single-barrelled rifle, were the incentives which caused me reluctantly to order the horses to be immediately put into harness, and to turn their heads away in the direction of the waggon track we had left in the morning on our search for water.

It is quite possible that the supposed hyænas which frightened my horses last night were nothing more nor less than one of these lions which crossed their wind, and thus the reason for the extreme violence with which they broke loose and dashed across the veldt.

An anecdote with reference to the fear of horses for the king of beasts, although irrelevant to the object of my journey, may not be uninteresting.

Among several lions' skins brought home by me a few years ago there was one of a lioness, only partially cured.

I drove with a friend of mine to Tynehead Station on my way up to Edinburgh. When my friend got out of the carriage to procure the tickets; he sent his servant down to the platform with the luggage, at the same time asking me to stand by the horse.

On my arm was the semi-tanned hide. When I approached its head it became exceedingly restive, and ultimately breaking from my control, dashed away, being with the greatest difficulty recaptured; and when brought back it was a mass of foam, and trembling in every limb. Scotch horses have never seen a lion, but their natural instinct tells them that the effluvium rising from the pelt of this animal indicates that a terrible and dreaded foe is in their immediate vicinity.

It is now noon. The whole of us trudge manfully along, Tottie acting as the leader. The tramp is not a little fatiguing, as the sand is exceedingly heavy, and the dwarf brush, in many parts, is matted and tangled into an impassable barrier. I see plenty of game, especially hartebeasts; but as I must hurry on I do not molest them.

Our course is north-west, as the trail that we have been previously travelling runs from north

to south, so we cut off a large angle; but I doubt whether we save time by so doing.

My opinion of the Boers is that they are a very stupid lot, but they certainly have shown wonderful acumen in the tracks they have selected for their waggon routes. An African traveller who is inexperienced in the country, should make it a rule never to leave a road to make a short cut, or he will infallibly find himself in trouble. The path I have journeyed over may have been traversed by European traders, but unquestionably it is to the Boers that it owes its existence.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MORE TROUBLES.

AFTER the rain of last night I thought I had just grounds for coming to the conclusion that we might hope for a cessation of the disagreeable circumstances it entailed; but in this I was doomed to disappointment, for about three o'clock the rain began to descend in one of those drizzly showers so frequent in Scotland as to have gained the name of Scotch mists. On the moors, when shooting in the land of the Gael, I did not object to them, but here on the confines of the tropics it is a different and far more serious affair.

About three hours after leaving the desolate tract of country that surrounds Horroch we again entered into a landscape where trees once more predominated, and the further we advanced to the northward the more attractive did the scenery become. One valley in particular into which we descended was as green as the savannahs of Georgia. It must have covered an area of many thousand acres, and doubtless possessed water, had we only known where to seek it. The sides of its

acclivities were densely covered with bush, and here and there jagged rocks projected, looking as if some Titanic power had transported them here from the sea boundaries of the continent. All that was needed was sunlight and brightness to have made the view thoroughly enjoyable; but when it was closed in with a mist like a grey pall, it prevented the extending of your sight beyond the closer surroundings.

Here game was exceedingly abundant, and the driver was very anxious to be allowed to shoot; but expedition was the order of the day, for I had indulged a hope of reaching Kania that evening. Truly blessed is he that expecteth little!

By five o'clock the rain was coming down in torrents, and so slippery had the soil become that the horses could scarcely keep their footing, the sand of the previous part of my journey being now replaced by a stiff clay.

We were obliged to outspan, and pass another night exposed to all the violence of a tropical drench. It is useless to repeat the miseries of that time; they were quite equal to those of the preceding night, with two exceptions, viz. that we got shelter under a clump of trees, and that the horses did not become restive.

Gopani's lad gave me great cause for uneasiness. Poor wretch! he was completely doubled up with pain, and I had nothing in the shape of medicine except quinine, which I did not consider it advisable to give him. At last a thought

struck me. I heated a large flat stone in the fire, and, wrapping it in one of the horse's blankets, placed it against his stomach; and the result was surprising, for in a minute or two he had obtained such relief from his agony that he thanked me several times over in his native Bechuana, one of the most melodious of languages, almost equal to the Italian of a "Tuscan spoken from a Roman tongue."

Our distance from Kania could not possibly exceed twenty miles. However, we could not see it at sunrise, the koppies to the north of us being very numerous and high.

In consequence of the shortness of the journey ahead, comparatively speaking, we delayed starting until noon, for the double purpose of drying some of our things and giving the horses a good feed before they had again to undertake a further spell of work.

When night commenced we were still on the road, and rain had again begun falling.

My poor animals had a dreadful time of it, and looked like the proverbial "fence rails."

At length Bob refused to go any further, and, when punished, deliberately lay down.

To remedy this he was taken out of harness, received a good whipping, and was put back in the trap. All was of no avail. He persistently refused to draw. Having made a fire I took a lighted brand from it, and upon examination of the horses I discovered, to my surprise, and, need

I add, horror, that both of them had their shoulders galled severely by the breast strap, these sores being produced by the wet. From my knowledge of distance I was pretty well convinced that Kania could not be far away, and the driver was of the same opinion, so Tommy was taken out of harness, and a saddle was put upon his back, for I determined to ride on until I reached that station.

Leaving instructions with Gopani's boy to take care of Bob during the night, and giving him permission to sleep in the cart, with the Hottentot for guide I renewed my journey.

I cannot tell what sort of scenes I went through. I can distinctly remember wandering over a plain for at least a couple of hours, and I also recollect the boy endeavouring to point out some lights and telling me that they were in Kania, but, whether or no, we failed to reach them.

On one occasion Tommy fell into a hole, and but for his docility must have done me a serious injury. Of this, however, I am certain, that about half-past ten we suddenly, and most unexpectedly so far as I was concerned, came upon a long, low house.

A shout immediately brought out the owner of the habitation.

Thank God! it was Mr. Good, the missionary of Kania.

When the family learnt that an Englishman was at their door, and in such sore distress, the dear, kind wife immediately left her room, re-made

the kitchen fire, and provided me with food, not the least enjoyable article of which, was a big cup of hot tea.

Dirty, was not a word for my appearance! I was simply filthy, my face begrimed with sweat and smoke, and my clothes as saturated as if they had been dragged through a pond. I was the first arrival from the outer world for more than three weeks, and I therefore had much to tell of which they were still ignorant, so it was very late indeed before we adjourned to our respective sleeping-places.

Tired as I was I could not sleep, but tossed from side to side on the comfortable couch until after daybreak. At length, disgusted with Somnus for refusing to solace me, I went out to see Tommy.

Poor beast! he had not fared well, as there was no stable for him, and it made my heart ache to behold how wretched he looked.

Nevertheless, he had had a good feed of mealies, and I don't doubt that his stomach being *pro tempore* replenished, he felt his hardship to be considerably lessened.

After a good deal of argument, and some taxing of my temper, I was enabled to make a bargain with a man to go and bring my cart to Kania.

At midday he returned, and with great satisfaction I found all my belongings safe and sound.

Meanwhile the chief had been communicated

with, and he expressed a wish to receive me the next day, which of course necessitated the loss of another twenty-four hours.

But I could not have availed myself of the time, for my animals are so thoroughly worn out that it would be impossible to renew the journey without further delay, thus I do not so much deplore it.

My host is all kindness ; seldom have I met a more earnestly sincere man, and one at the same time so entirely free from any trace of sectarianism. His spouse is exactly such a woman as a missionary should have for a wife—energetic, industrious, cheerful, and untiring in the execution of her work. They have a large family, and it must take no ordinary amount of labour to furnish each of the little ones with clothes ; yet all are made by the handiwork of their fond mother, for there are no convenient shops or stores here to which a person can rush upon the shortest notice, and rig a youngster out, as the sailors express it, "*from stem to stern.*"

A dreadful calamity happened a year ago to this family. The two eldest children, sons, then about sixteen years of age, were returning from school in the old colony ; when on the margin of the Orange river, they were induced by their Kaffir driver to go into the stream for a bathe.

The trio entered the water, holding each other's hands. After advancing a few paces, they suddenly found themselves out of their depths, and all of them were drowned.

With Christian resignation the parents bore this dreadful affliction, yet when they spoke of it, it was easy to see what a trial it had been to them.

I had heard of the disaster when at Linikani, and of course should never have alluded to it, but that Mr. Good mentioned the matter.

From the rough life I have been leading, sleeping in a house appeared to affect my respiration; so the worthy missionary had his waggon brought in front of the porch, swung a cartle in it, and made my bed there. That night I slept like a top.

Hashesheba, the chief of Kania, is a fine old fellow, possibly just a little nervous in his manner, and I am told possesses a great dread of war. His people he loves like his own children, and could not bear that any of them should be killed.

The surrounding chiefs being aware of this, I think are somewhat inclined to come the bully over him, although his tribe is probably the most numerous and powerful within a radius of 200 miles. He has also proved himself to be a great friend of Great Britain; for, when several of the rebels that had committed murder and pillage in Griqualand West sought shelter in his country, he informed Mr. Bethel of their whereabouts, and gave most valuable assistance in capturing them.

Sycheley, a chief living about two days' journey to the north, sent a message to him in consequence, to this purport that if he did so

again he would declare war against him, burn down his station, and carry off his cattle.

This Sycheley is a perfect bugbear in this neighbourhood. He once professed great friendship for the British, but now that he has heard news of the Isanwala disaster, and the powerful opposition which our arms were receiving in Zululand, the old rogue has turned his coat.

When I visited him, four years ago, his professions of friendship for the English were fulsome in the extreme; now, if I am correctly informed, I shall travel to his station with considerable danger to myself. He has heard, through what means I cannot say, of my arrival in the country; and from Hashesheba I hear that the crafty fox has sent definite instructions to him not to receive me, and threatens him with war should he give me any people.

Some years ago Sycheley started to visit her Majesty the Queen, to lay before her his grievances against the Boers, who had kidnapped many of his people and two of his children, whom they carried off into slavery in the Magalesburgh district. He got as far as Cape Town, where his funds failed. The officers of the garrison regiment showed him every attention, treating him as a distinguished guest. However, he got no further, and still harps upon the illiberality of the British Government in not providing him with a passage to London.

I paid a visit to Hashesheba on the appointed

day. His son, a well-grown lad of about twenty, was with him. Although both prefer to live in a Kaffir hut, still they possess good substantial houses, in one of which our interview took place.

From the chief's manner it was easy to see he wished to assist me; but he added, in his mild, quiet way,—

“ If I send my people to Natal, I will have no person to defend my kraal should any of my enemies attack us; but I will think the matter over, and let you know in two or three days.”

I imagine these Kaffirs are rich, for all appeared to have money, and many, I was told, owned very large herds of cattle.

The next morning all the headmen of the tribe were assembled, to present their chief with the first ripe ear of corn, that being the universal custom before the crop is gathered.

Every one of them was on horseback, and many of their ponies were splendid little animals.

So soon as the chief had eaten some of the grain, with a wild shout they all dashed away over the plain, each endeavouring to outpace his rival. The natives are, without exception, the ugliest horsemen it is possible to imagine, yet they manage, in the most fearless manner, to retain their seat over the roughest ground.

On the third day I again visited Hashesheba, and with deep regret found that I was once more to be disappointed. If it was possible to soften my sorrow, the old king certainly did his best

to do so, one of his excuses being that he had upwards of six hundred of his men at work on the diamond fields. I learnt that more of Sycheley's emissaries had been to him; and I also received a gentle hint, to the effect that some of his people will probably try to stop me on the road, by turning me into an animated target.

Should this be attempted, and a failure ensue, I pity any of them who come within shooting distance of my revolver.

Before I left this station, as a token of friendship and to provide me with food for the way, the chief sent me a sheep; but as a baksheesh is necessary for the bearer, it does not come as a cheap commodity.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A HOSTILE CHIEF.

'Twas a lovely day the morning I left Kania. The situation of this station is, without exception, one of the prettiest I have seen in South Africa. A range of hills, about a thousand feet high, with a saucer-like indentation in the centre of them, is the characteristic feature of the place.

It is provided with several springs, so the greatest necessary to existence is supplied in abundance. As there are only four entrances to this table-land, and they but narrow ones with somewhat precipitous sides, very little labour would be required to make it a most powerful position.

On rounding the southern termination of the ridge my course becomes due north, through a charming country densely covered with fine large timber, whilst the cultivation extends for several miles, now smiling with heavy crops of mealies. The harvest this year has been an exceptionally good one—a fortunate circumstance; for, twelve months previously, the people were all but reduced to starvation.

The rocks here—a species of red sandstone—are piled up in the most extraordinary manner in some places ; and, but for their size, the observer would be disposed to believe them to have been arranged by human agency.

Mr. Good had descanted with considerable warmth upon the beauty of the country I was about to traverse ; but his glowing description fell far short of its reality. In fact, I doubt whether in all my life I have ever seen an extent of more exquisite landscape than that lying between Kania and Pilan.

I note the fresh spoor of two waggons, which must have passed during the night. With them are two white men, as I know from their shoe-marks. I wonder who the strangers are ?

My curiosity is rather excited by the fact that they appear to have at least half a dozen horses with them.

In the afternoon I overtook them. One was an old acquaintance from Colesberg, the other a retired naval officer ; the former trading, the latter enjoying himself with hunting.

I rested for an hour in their society, where I had lunch, washed down with some of Bass’s bitter beer—a luxury not often enjoyed in this distant part of the world.

Renewing my journey, I reached the kraal of the chief of Pilan about four o’clock, and was not at all prepossessed in his favour, his countenance

being unusually forbidding, whilst in his manner he was rude and uncourteous.

After I had acquainted him with my business, he satirically asked me, "Why did I not remain to fight the Zulus?" adding afterwards, "Because you are afraid of their assegais, I suppose?" Then he inquired abruptly, "How dare you come into my country upon such an errand?"

Some of his followers here chimed in with the advice that perhaps it would be better to kill me then and there.

My Hottentot turned as white as his complexion would permit, and begged me at once to go away. This however I would not do in so sudden a manner, but retained my seat amongst the hostile crew, to whom I explained that it was an easy thing for them to take my life; but, I added, "You will have to pay a heavy price for the privilege. At Kania they know I have come here; and if anything happens to me before I leave your country, my Government will be revenged."

This disagreeable fellow then proposed to accompany me a few miles to show me my road; but, being suspicious of no kindly intention, I took good care to keep a revolver free for immediate use.

However, we parted without the actual occurrence of any *contretemps*, mutually professing good wishes for each other's safety, which at heart neither of us felt.

Not feeling quite safe in such a neighbourhood

of blustering blackguards, I pushed on, scarcely pulling a rein until eight or ten miles had been traversed, when I met a Boer who had been driven out of the interior, and with him I spent the night. This unfortunate had numerous and grave complaints to make as to his treatment in Matabeleland, and was firmly impressed with the belief that Leubenguelo had premeditatedly planned the murder of Captain Patterson and Mr. Sergeant, who had been sent up to him on a diplomatic mission. I sincerely hope that the day will come when the Matabele king will be made to answer for that dastardly outrage on our race.

Resuming my journey, I reached Sycheley's at nightfall, the country I passed on my way being well-wooded, except in the vicinity of the station, where the timber had been cleared off to admit of the growth of mealies.

That night I slept in the vacant house of a missionary, at present on his way up from the coast, he having been absent in England on leave.

This station was once a remarkably pretty place, but neglect has sent it sadly to rack and ruin. The garden, which some time ago was well kept and prolific, was now a tangle of weeds and briars, and the fruit-trees, from want of pruning and attention, have become completely wild.

As has often been the case in many parts of Africa, the river which flows through an adjoining kloof, and which used to yield an abundance of

water, is at present almost dry. Four years ago I bathed in a pool which must have been nine or ten feet deep; now the water had disappeared from it entirely, and nothing remains but a hard sun-baked mud bed. This spot, in days gone by, was a very favourite haunt of mine; for the overhanging cliffs sheltered me from the noonday sun, while the locality was a great place of resort for baboons, whose tricks and antics afforded me no end of amusement.

I have a great weakness for this animal; it has so much intelligence, and in many respects is so great a caricature of humanity in its ways. The affection for the young on the part of the parents is remarkably touching; nevertheless, if the juveniles do not behave themselves, they get well whacked for their misconduct.

One aged male, who was grizzly with years, was sufficiently tame to allow of my approaching within twenty-five or thirty paces of him. He seemed to be the butt for roguery amongst the younger members of the community. However, he was quite equal to the occasion, and would often capture one of his tormentors, to whom he would apply the *argumentum ad hominem* in the same manner as a Christian grandfather will "slipper" his grandchildren now and again. When such a thing occurred, the mamma would instantly rush to the rescue, and abuse the antiquated ancestor with all the vehemence that her (to me) unintelligible language could command.

There is no animal so watchful as a baboon, not even excepting that excellent guard the dog, snakes and leopards being held in especial detestation by them ; and when one of these enemies is discovered a note of warning is sounded, to which each individual pays immediate attention.

My Hottentot told me a strange story about the baboons. The truth of it, however, I will not vouch for ; yet I believe he himself is a thorough believer in its veracity. Here it is :—

When the mealies were ripening, the baboons invaded the gardens and committed great depredations upon the crops.

They are wary, having always their sentries placed in commanding positions ; so it is next to an impossibility to get within gunshot of them. If two or three men go into the field together they are off, up the adjoining rocks, in the twinkling of an eyelid.

However, if four men should enter a field, and one drop behind and hide himself, the others walking on and leaving him, the baboons will return in a few minutes, and come within range of the latent rifle. Thus, said my boy, “ *a baboon can count to three, but no further !* ”

Extraordinary stories are told of these animals rolling stones down a steep upon persons who passed below their haunts. That they intend to injure the traveller I do not believe. When searching for insects underneath the rocks, with the united force of several, large stones may be

dislodged, and roll down an incline from their own gravity, however; and this may account for the popular delusion.

In the morning I sent my boy to inform Sycheley of my arrival, and to request that he would appoint as early a time as possible for me to meet him.

On his return my messenger seemed to be in a tremendous fright, having been severely catechised, and some of the younger members of the chief's family expressed such a hatred for the white man, and also against him in person for serving one, that he tried every means in his power to counsel me not to visit the "*Kotla*" (place of assembly).

When he found I was resolved to go there at any price, he broke down entirely, and gave way to tears—a very rare exhibition of feeling on the part of a black man.

Sycheley's reply was this :—

“Tell your master I will see him at ten o'clock by to-morrow's sun. He can come.”

In accordance with this permission, I presented myself at the appointed time; and our interview, instead of taking place in the *Kotla*, was held in his house.

He listened more patiently than I expected he would to what I had to say, but declined to give me any answer for a couple of days. Several of the young men occasionally made remarks, exceedingly inimical to my cause and hostile to myself.

During this interview I became perfectly satisfied that nothing could be accomplished here, but I decided not to leave the place without giving him an opportunity to change his mind, or, possibly, be swayed by better advice. His principal councillor is one of his brothers; and to his door I attribute much of the enmity which I experienced. In all state matters he has had his finger in the pie, and invariably, when his advice has been followed, it has led to disaster. He it was that instigated the chief to make war against the Kaminyani, and every action fought proved most inauspicious to their arms. When these hostilities commenced Sycheley was a rich man, comparatively speaking; now he has lost, through reprisals, so many head of cattle that he complains of poverty; and it is easy to see that the world has not wagged well with the old fellow since our last meeting, for he is very much aged, and his hair has considerably whitened.

One of his principal griefs is, I believe, the cowardice of his sons, who, although in command of the army, have on every opportunity exhibited the white feather.

In stature they are like their sire—powerful, tall, heavily-built men; but their hearts are dissimilar. The father's is brave as that of a lion; theirs as fearful as those of mice. Mrs. Sycheley (for when he became converted he put away his other wives) is very obese, and has adopted European costume, with the exception of a red jackal-skin,

which she wears on her head in lieu of cap or bonnet. This is an insignium of royalty here, as well as in most of the adjoining tribes.

On my way down to the building in which I had housed my horses I met a great number of girls carrying water, all of them dressed in an extraordinary costume made out of pieces of reed stitched together. When they have arrived at the age of maturity, for six weeks this costume has to be adopted, and during the period no man may speak to them; nor are they permitted to remove the garb until the expiration of the conventional term, after which they are considered eligible for matrimony.

The "*Bakquena*" are, as a rule, a sturdy and well-made race; but civilization does not appear to have improved their morality.

Formerly several traders used to reside here, but such is no longer the case; wars and rumours of wars among neighbouring tribes, the Zulu campaign, and last, though not least, Sychelcy's professed poverty, having driven them, with one exception, into the Colony. This has had a most injurious effect upon the appearance of the station, for the houses which were once opulent trading stores are become a mass of ruins. In my humble belief, I am of opinion that this neighbourhood is rich in minerals. On one part of the road I observed quantities of what looked to me like pure copper. However, for many a year to come there will be one grand drawback to taking ad-

vantage of this country's hidden wealth—viz., transportation, the cost of which would much exceed the value of the load.

On my second interview with Sycheley he did not disguise his animosity against me and our nation. However, he did not condescend to vulgar abuse, but, without mincing matters, spoke at once the sentiments in his mind.

I informed him that I should acquaint our authorities with what he had said; and to this he had no objection, reminding me that he was as independent as Queen Victoria. He further asked me where my credentials were; and, when I produced the authority furnished me by the General in command of the Intelligence Department, he pooh-poohed the matter as a good joke, and observed,—

“ This is addressed to all the Kaffir chiefs! Am I to be put down amongst them? Why, sir, I am an ox, and they are but goats! When next you come here to see me officially, you must bring me a letter from your Queen. One would imagine that my country belonged to the white man, and that he had a right to *commandere* my people.”

Such open hostility was expressed on the countenances and by the gestures of his attendants that I have no hesitation in saying I felt more than pleased when I was safely out of the house; for, if there had been any disturbance, and an assault made upon me, I should have had a better chance of using my weapon effectually.

Before I had bidden adieu, he asked me by what route I was going to travel, and when I intended starting, both of which questions I answered; and, when he heard that I was going to visit the Kaminyani, he at once gave way to temper, for my daring to go to a tribe that had been so lately engaged in hostilities against him.

Gopani's boy, broken down, returns to his home with a waggon which is about to start for the Transvaal, in the employment of the solitary trader whom I have before mentioned. I neglected to say that, on account of the heavy sand, and the galled shoulders of my horses, I was obliged to leave my cart at Kania, to be forwarded here, with oxen attached to it as draught animals, whence it is to be returned to Liniakani on the first available opportunity; therefore I am once more on horseback, and consequently unable to carry anything with me except the blankets I sleep in and my arms and ammunition.

Hard times, I know, are in store for me; but turn back I will not until I have done my utmost to procure people to assist in our transport department, the weakest part in our whole military organization.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WILD DOGS.

WITH pleasure I shook the dust from off my feet as I departed from Sycheley's town; and there were more reasons than one for this.

First, I had been treated with the greatest want of courtesy, and, I may say, insulted by the chief. Secondly, disease had spread its wings over the place, and numbers of the populace were dying daily.

Unquestionably, famine had much to do with this fearful mortality, and possibly it may only be fair to attribute Sycheley's animosity towards me as the result of sulkiness arising from the sufferings which his people were enduring. I do not wish to be too hard on the old man.

I had known him under other circumstances, when he was kind and hospitable; yet I ever believed him to be a "fox;" and, in fact, once I told an adjoining king that I compared Sycheley to Warwick the king-maker, whose peculiar proclivities I explained.

"Ah! yes," answered my listener, "Warwick just one copy of Sycheley."

This chief has his hand in every person's business, and there is not a king in the country who has not felt his influence. The Matabeles, the Bamanwatos, the Barotses, have all experienced his machinations; and too often, I fear, his power has been the means of overturning a monarch.

That he is hostile to England now there is no doubt, and that he will continue to be so, unless amply subsidised, or a brilliant termination to the present war takes place, will doubtless be the case; but that he would commit himself to overt acts of enmity I very much question, for he is too "pawky" (as they say in Scotch parlance) to be guilty of such a *faux pas*. Moreover, he has an English adviser with him, who appears to possess considerable power as an inimical councillor, whose name it may not be policy to mention here.

The Naval Officer whom I have spoken of as having passed up country, arrived at the station the day before I left, and to him I confided the difficulties which had beset me: he kindly offered to remain behind his waggon, and ride out of the town in my company. Punctually to the time arranged we passed through the kloof by which I had to go *en route* for the north. A crowd of people were assembled on one side. However, they took no steps to prevent my progress, although we both thought a fight was impending. The animus of this crowd was to be clearly understood by the shouting, in terms of derision, as we went on our way; but three revolvers were

ready for work, and I fear I was, from continued disappointment, in such a state of mind as would not have kept me from their swift use had occasion required.

I knew my companion was pluck to the backbone, and would have assisted me to make such a fight as would have taught hostile natives to respect English fire-arms and English prowess. Of course a stray shot might have placed me *hors de combat*; but if I had been so lucky as not to get struck, I am convinced we should have had the best of it.

After passing through several miles of meadow-gardens, we came into a country of wild scrub-bush—just such a place as would be chosen by an enemy to secret himself; but happily no foe appeared, and well I think it was for them that such was the case, for the ground was level and in good order for galloping; so with Tommy between my legs (than which better horse was never bestrode by man in the capacity of charger), I believe I could have carried on a sort of Scythian warfare, which must needs have been most disastrous to our opponents.

Here I surely expected to be waylaid, for my boy told me such an ambush had been arranged for my reception by the sons of Sycheley. Under ordinary circumstances I do not doubt it would have occurred; but we had now entered the debateable ground between his nation and that of the Kaminyani, where, within the last

two years, several very severe engagements had been decided; so both parties feared to intrude upon it, in case they should encounter a force of the enemy.

Before me there are two days' hard riding to get to the station of the last-mentioned tribe, and through a country in which water is scarce, and, report says, game very abundant.

About four o'clock in the afternoon we overtook the waggons, outspanned near a spring, in a place surrounded with innumerable spoors of every size and description of antelope.

My friend was very hospitable. The whisky bottle was produced, and a hole made in it by sundry "tots," before we each turned in, with the hyænas and jackals singing a lullaby around our beds, far from unpleasant to one accustomed to the midnight sounds of wild Africa.

On the morrow, I found my horses in capital fettle, having had an abundance of corn at Sycheley's, and my present host having supplied them liberally over-night.

The Hottentot, who had been in a fearful funk for the last few days, seemed to be himself once more, talking with volubility as to the valiant deeds he would assuredly have done had our progress been arrested.

As the road was good, we traversed the country at a rapid pace—almost at the rate of six miles an hour—which is good travelling for this part of the world. About noon we off-saddled, and, I

am sorry to say, could obtain no water; this want telling heavily upon the energy of our nags.

Towards sundown I observed the spoor of many of the *carnivoræ*.

These are always to be noted where any tract of land becomes less frequented by the human family. To avoid a tedious *détour* we turned to the westward from the road, which then was almost due north. The track we were now following had evidently been used by the natives, for although little more than a path, it was clearly distinguishable. The sun was almost setting when my attendant called my attention to an animal standing on an adjacent knoll; and at first I found it difficult to define what it was, but at length recognized a grand old lion of the black mane species.

His curiosity seemed to be as much excited as my own, and his manner indicated that he was undecided whether to increase our mutual acquaintance, or to make a bolt of it.

I should have passed on and left him considering the matter, but that my horses "got his wind," and became most unmanageable, the led-horse doing all in his power to get loose.

However, the mount my servant rode was quite equal to the occasion, and quietly took the lead.

This beast I have not yet spoken of. I purchased him in Kania; and he was guaranteed both a good hunter and a "*sawlted*" horse. My

knowledge of him had already taught me that he was certainly the former, for a steadier old garron never looked through a bridle. He was destitute of speed, but wholly unconscious of fear; and I fancy could have gone from morning until night for weeks in succession without turning a hair, if not pushed beyond his gait.

His example was beneficial, for the mount I bestrode and my led-horse, although still a bit restive, immediately followed him.

When nearly abreast of the king of beasts, standing as he was in his original position, I drew my revolver, and fired a shot over his back, with an elevation sufficient to ensure its not touching him. This hint had precisely the desired effect, for he went away "loaping" over the prairie as if he had had a pack of foxhounds at his tail.

When the sun had gone down we found a "vley" of water, and as there was a quantity of fallen timber lying about, we off-saddled, and tried to make ourselves comfortable.

This must have been an old camping-ground, for the reason that I was awakened during the night from the severe irritation I suffered in my left arm, which I soon discovered to have been bitten all over by "*tam-pans*," an insect synonymous to the "*jigger*" of the West Indies, but, as the Americans express it, "a little more so!"

At the moment when I write up my diary, I still have the scars upon my fore-arm and wrist, and may yet possess two or three of these un-

desirable tenants buried under my skin. English east wind will kill them, thank God! for what on earth will stand it?

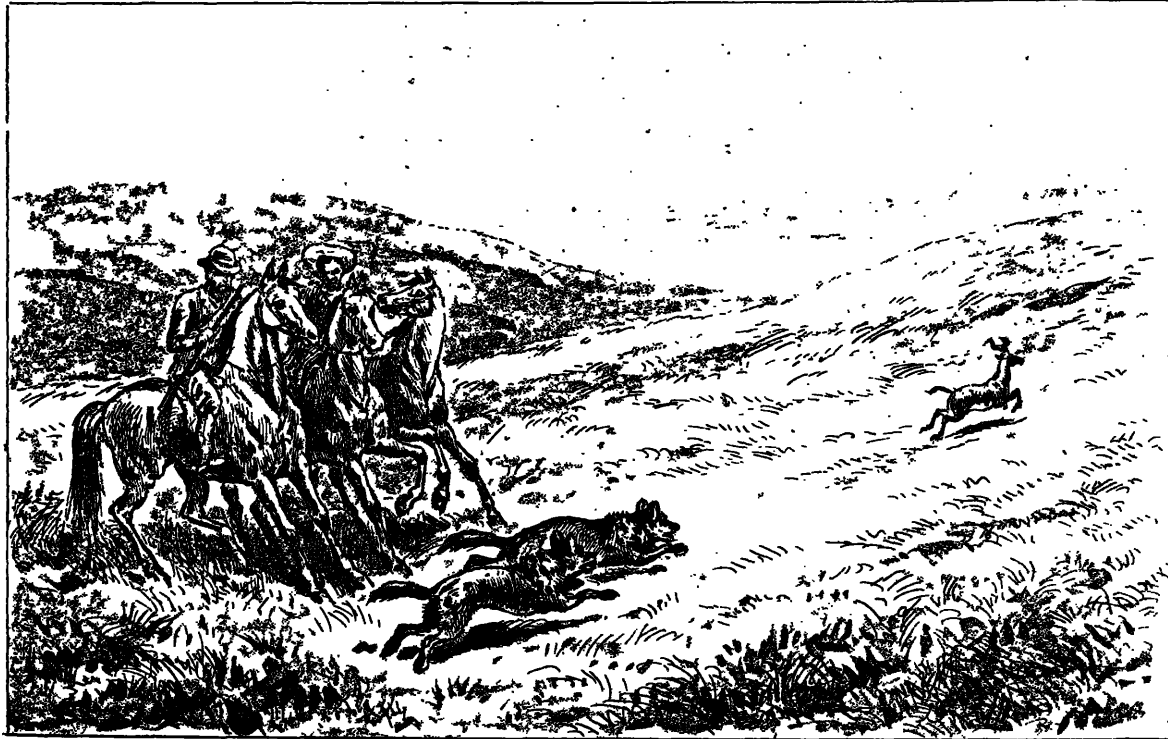
Taking it all-in-all, that night was a mistake; for towards morning the horses became alarmed, and it was imperative both to myself and my servant that we should sit up and keep guard. Hyænas and jackals held high carnival; but the lions, the spoors of which we had seen in abundance, kept silent—a sure sign that they were up to mischief.

The English reader who may intend at some future day to visit the wilds of South Africa, may not think this information unworthy of notice. When he hears the monarch of the veldt making a row, and alarming by his voice the whole of the more diminutive animal denizens, he may know that his majesty is not intent on destruction, but simply calling to his mates, or defying some rivals from his matrimonial exclusiveness.

The crescent-horn of a new moon showed itself about four o'clock, and on its appearance I once more tried to court sleep, but was unable to effect my purpose.

At daybreak a thick miasmatic mist covered the ground, and in half an hour afterwards I had to have recourse to that constant companion, the quinine-bottle. When I had eaten about a pound of "*beltong*" (sun-dried meat), we once more made a start, with a hope that the afternoon might see us at the Kaminyani station.

I was going along at a slow tripple—a pace



Wild Dogs pursuing Hartebeest.

similar to what is designated "racking" in North America—when a hartebeest crossed our course. The poor brute looked as if he were fairly worn out, for his flanks were covered with sweat and dust, his head drooped, his tail hung close to his hind-quarters, and every movement of his legs denoted intense weariness. That he saw us there could be no doubt; yet he passed on, neither increasing nor relaxing his pace. To have shot him was possible; in fact, my boy was most anxious to do so, but I stayed his hand, as we had sufficient food to last us until the termination of this day's ride.

I pulled up, and watched the poor animal struggling over a neighbouring rise, for trees were sparse, and brushwood only occurred in occasional patches. Several times it stumbled ere it reached the acclivity, which, once gained, would shut it from our view.

I could not help wondering why it fled, and who were its pursuers; but my surprise was soon dissipated, for on the spoor of the fugitive I saw, almost immediately after, several wild dogs. Then their number was increased to eighteen or twenty by some fresh arrivals. When they gained the path they all stopped short, and took stock of my cavalcade, so fearless being their manner, and so close were they at hand, that I confidently expected they would attack me in preference to following up the trail of the object of their pursuit.

It appeared to be a toss-up in their minds which game would be the most succulent; but

second thoughts brought them to the decision that the old hunt would be the best; so they resumed their chase of the worn-out hartebeest, departing over the veldt, running in a consecutive line, with heads and tails up, every few moments giving vent to their surplus feelings by a sharp, shrill yelp, more to be compared to the squeak of a fox-terrier than to the speaking of a foxhound.

The power of scent of these creatures must be really wonderful! Possibly they are much assisted by sight, for the tuft-grass leaves large patches of sand, on which the spoor of the quarry is easily discernible. They never fail to kill their game (of this I am informed by competent authority) unless it reach water of two or three feet in depth, where the larger antelopes invariably seek shelter, as in it they are able to strike their pursuers with their formidable feet, and thus disable them in succession.

There are two species of wild dog upon this continent with which I am conversant. Those I have just alluded to are striped like the hyæna, with bushy tails, and large tulip-shaped ears particularly full at the base. Their noses are short, and in general characteristic resemble the hyæna, with the exception that they do not droop off at the hind-quarters as that very ungainly animal does.

The other sort is a large yellow beast, with many of the details in construction peculiar to the English mastiff.

On the Limpopo, and in Matabeleland, I have

seen the latter ; and once, when in company with a trader, we both of us mistook an example of this species for a lion, so great was the similarity of colour. I have been told by natives who are, as I think, competent to give an opinion, that the cross between them and the civilized animal produces one of the pluckiest brutes that can be found. In Soochong, and in other parts of Bamanwatto I have seen representatives of this type, who have been much appreciated by their owners. If I was again to go on a hunting expedition to Africa, I should desire to have nothing but these animals with me, for the purpose of pursuing game ; for unlike our British breed, they would not descend to hiding themselves underneath, and even *in* the waggon, when opportunity offers, but would come out, and man-, or rather dog-fully bay all aggressors. At one period of my life, I was as fond of, and trusted as much to, the English dog, as man could do ; however, now my experiences of his character under other than native circumstances has caused me to lose all confidence in him (for no more sorry curs existed than the English half-bred bull dogs which were my companions during a previous sojourn in these hunting-grounds), thus I would rather have a native cur than ever so finely bred an English hound to be my companion in future.

About three o'clock I crossed a stream which is a tributary of the Notawani. Trees grew in profusion on either side of its banks, and many a bird cheered the silence with its melody. Guinea-