

daylight, a circumstance to which I attribute the blindness of nine out of ten of those which have been kept in confinement; with the duykerbock (*Cephalolophus mergens*) the blindness is not so common, as it often issues forth in the daytime in search of food. Practised shots hunt both these gazelles with a rifle, but under any circumstance it requires a very skilful hand to bring down one of the little creatures, which are under two feet high, at a distance of 300 yards.

There are sportsmen, as they call themselves, who hunt these graceful animals with greyhounds—a rough method of torture that has been introduced by white men into all parts of the world. Formerly dogs were only employed by the natives of South Africa in hunting ferocious and dangerous animals, or such as were required for the sake of their skins. Amongst these may be reckoned the South African jackal (*Canis mesomelas* and *cinereus*), the caama-fox, the earth-wolf (*Proteles Lalandii*), and the genet.

The steinbock—or “steenbuck,” as it is called by the Boers—and the duykerbock are represented all along the wooded slopes of the plateaus of South and Central Africa down to the coast by the grysbok (*Tragulus melanotis*) and the small blauwbock (*Cephalolophus cœruleus*); whilst towards the north their place is taken by the orbeki, that are found living in pairs on the plains in the salt lake district, and in small herds beyond the Zambesi.

Travelling here across the wooded hills was a business that in itself occupied all our attention;

for the road was full of stones, just like the dry bed of a torrent, and our waggon was jolted about with such violence that it cost us the life of one of our dogs that was caught unawares under the wheel. It was a relief to find ourselves at the Vaal River ferry, where, for the sum of ten shillings, we were all taken across.

On reaching the right bank of the Vaal, we made our encampment at the foot of a hill not far from Klipdrift. Compared with the other towns in South Africa, Klipdrift may be called pretty. About 150 little houses, built partly of stone and partly of iron, are all that remain of what was once the capital of the river-diggings, which had a population of 5000 or more. They lie upon the slope of some low hills that are scarcely eighty feet above the level of the river-bed, and are covered with countless blocks of dark brown trap.

Coming from the south-south-east, the river here makes a bend to the west, and in various places, both above and below the town, its murmuring stream is broken by a number of little islands, sometimes rocky, sometimes overgrown with grass, and occasionally covered with trees, all contributing an air of pleasantness to the general scene. At the time of my visit tall trees were growing on both banks, the left bank being considerably higher than the right.

The inhabitants of the native quarter of Klipdrift, consisting of Batlapins and Barolong, are very industrious. The men get their living as day-labourers, while the women earn their share of the

housekeeping expenses by doing laundry-work ; and when they are engaged in washing linen on the banks of the river, they give a picturesque and animated character to the scene.

Even the most cursory glance is sufficient to detect the difference between the Koranna and Bechuana races ; and there can be no hesitation in affirming that the representatives of the Bechuanas, the Batlapins and Barolongs, are by far the more comely, both in face and form. Varying in complexion from a dull black to a deep brown, their features, if not handsome, could hardly be called plain, whilst the yellow-brown countenances of the Korannas are literally ugly, the eyes being deeply sunk, the nose scarcely developed at all, the jawbone thick, the lips far protruding. The skull corresponds with the ignoble profile, and is small and narrow. The Koranna women, too, are especially disfigured by an awkward gait, which seems to arise from some singular formation of the lower vertebral column. Either their cheeks or their foreheads are usually daubed with red ochre or tattooed with a labyrinth of blue lines ; and I have seen many of them with both forehead and cheeks so covered with brown and black streaks that they had precisely the appearance of monkeys.

During a visit to the Koranna quarter I entered one of the huts. The scene was truly strange. In a hollow in the middle of the hut were some glowing embers ; in the midst of the embers was a fleecy object, which on a second glance I perceived to be a

lamb in the process of roasting. Two women, naked to their waists, were lounging on some mats smoking. Several children, quite naked, their skins, naturally yellow, begrimed with the blackest dirt, were playing about; while the head of the family, in the tattered remnants of an old European coat,



INTERIOR OF A KORANNA HUT.

was sitting close to the hearth, stirring the ashes, and intently watching the cooking. All of a sudden he made a very loud smack with his tongue—a signal, I imagined, that the meal was ready, an opinion in which I was confirmed by seeing him

expel from his mouth the lump of tobacco which is never dispensed with except for the purpose of eating. As soon as the lamb had been removed from the fire, and the scorched fleece had been torn off, the carcase was cut up and distributed rapidly in allotted rations. The children gnawed away greedily at their portions, but the elders had knives with which, close to their lips, they cut off morsels of the lump, which was held, one end in the left hand, and the other between their teeth.

Besides the flesh of animals, of which the favourite parts are the entrails and the brains, the Korannas take meal-pap, boiled gourds, and milk; but they hold fish, crabs, and mollusks generally in utter abhorrence. In this respect they are like most of the tribes in the interior, although along the sea-coast many natives have been known who for a long period have subsisted upon fish as the chief article of their diet.

The whole neighbourhood doubtless abounds with many rare species of animals. The valleys, with their rich tropical vegetation, the marshes contiguous to the river, the densely wooded banks, the river-bed, alike where it is stony and where it is muddy, must all be equally prolific; but I am sorry that I had no leisure to make proper investigation. My stay at Klipdrift was necessarily very short, and I could only get a superficial acquaintance with the environs as we hurried through them. But the place is like an oasis in the bare monotony of the South African highland, and would be sure to yield

a rich harvest to any naturalist who could linger there for some time. Even during my rapid transit I observed several interesting kinds of falcons and sparrow-hawks, as well as owls of different sorts, horned owls, dwarf owls, and owls whose special haunts seemed to be hills, and trees, and swamps. I noticed, likewise, several distinct varieties of crows, and in the thickets on the river-bank and near the farms I reckoned no less than five different species of starlings, two of which, one quite small, the other larger with a long tail, struck me as being very pretty. Shrikes abounded, but were even surpassed in numbers by the granivorous song-birds, amongst which were several of the long-tailed finches. Thrushes and other insectivorous birds, such as the wagtail and the reed-sparrow, were likewise to be seen. Of the woodpecker tribe I only noticed two examples, but I saw several of the sunbirds, and a kind of bee-eater, as well as two sorts of kingfishers and cuckoos. Swallows and a kind of goatsucker were occasionally seen skimming along; and in addition to all these there were representatives of nearly all the feathered races of South Africa, especially of the doves, lesser bustards, plovers, ducks, and divers.

Amongst the reptiles, three kinds of land-tortoises were frequently to be turned up between the stones in the hills; they were the common tortoise, the common South African tortoise, and another of a flat shape, with square green marks in the middle of its shell.

Of fish I observed five species, one of which, the South African silurus, with its flat smooth head, is found as far north as the other side of the Zambesi in fresh water as well as in the salt-pans and the salt rivers.

In the neighbourhood of Klipdrift I made an exchange which seemed to me advisable. I bartered four of my horses for a team of six oxen, and although I was a pecuniary loser by the transaction, I could not be otherwise than satisfied when the bargain was concluded, as the horse disease, which rages every year, had broken out in the district, and I had observed several carcasses bleaching in the sun. Had it not been for this disease, I could have obtained a far better price for my horses, but under the circumstances the owner of the oxen hesitated long before he would entertain the proposal for exchange at all. He assured me that I should find the whole six to be quiet and docile, and all that draught-oxen ought to be; however, I soon discovered that two of them were so wild as to be almost unmanageable. My change of team consequently involved me in engaging two additional black servants—one to lead the foremost of the three pairs, another to urge them on by the free use of the whip.

I had no difficulty in finding what I required. In the Koranna village, one of my companions had fallen in with a German, who had taken up his residence there, and I applied to him to inquire among the natives for a couple of strong young men, who would come up the country with me for a few weeks. In

the course of the day he brought me a Koranna lad of about sixteen, and a Koranna half-breed, named Gert, both of whom professed themselves ready to engage themselves to me for the work I wanted. I was to pay them at the rate of 8s. 6d. a week each.

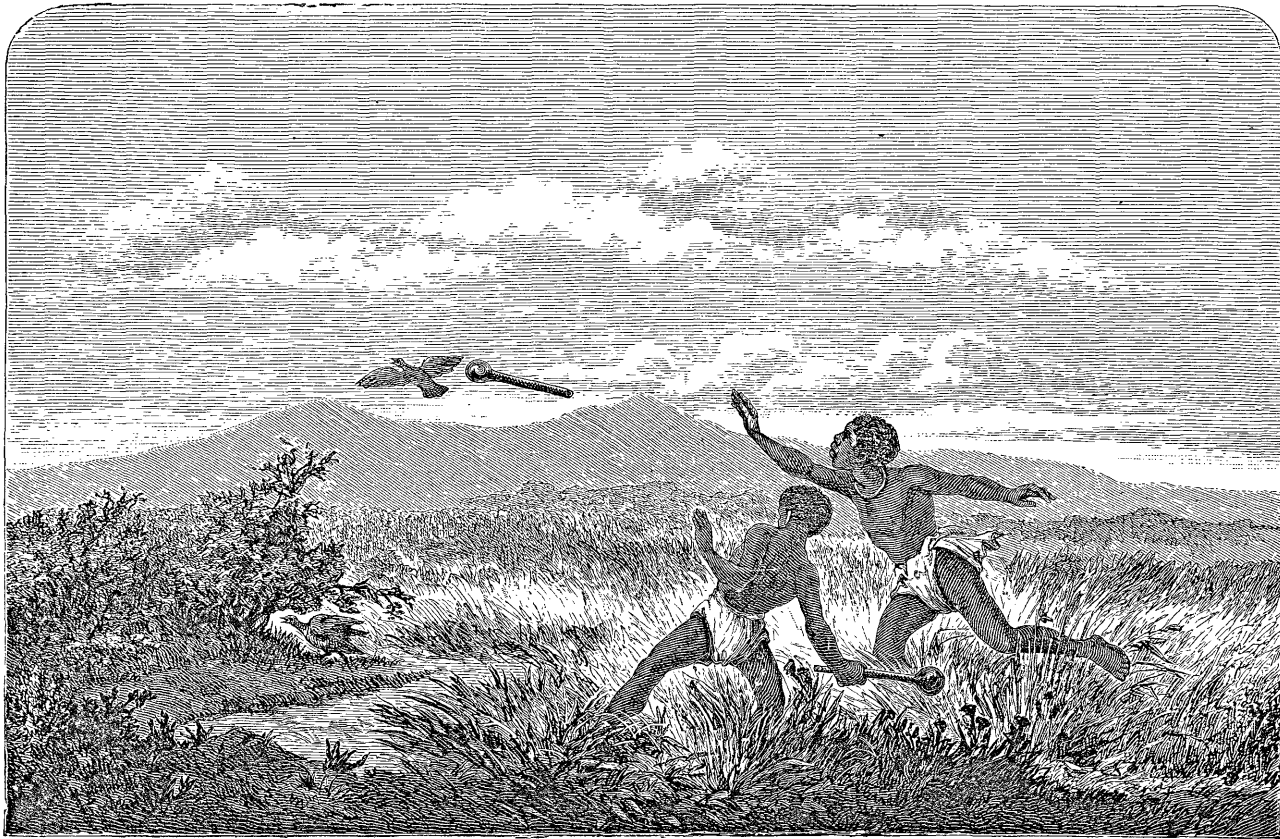
After laying in an adequate stock of tea, sugar, and meal, we left Klipdrift, and, according to my scheme, proceeded northwards towards the confluence of the rivers, to the district inhabited by the western Batlapins—where I wished to explore the deserted river-diggings—taking Gong Gong on the way. The country over which we passed was a high table-land, wooded in parts, and dotted at intervals with settlements, both of Korannas and Batlapins; it was slightly undulated, and sloped sharply down on the west towards the Vaal.

A special interest, both to the sportsman and the naturalist, is awakened by the fact that the district lying between the Harts and Vaal Rivers is the first in which, approached from the south, herds of the striped grey gnu (*Catoblepas Gorgon*) are to be seen. By the Boers called “the blue wildebeest,” and by the Bechuanas known as the “kokon,” this animal ranges northwards all over the Orange Free State, and beyond the Zambesi. It is, although larger, less wild than the black or common gnu, and its horns are of a different shape, being bent downwards and forwards, more like those of our own shorthorns. Huntsmen distinguish the two species by the colour of their tails; the black gnus have white tails, whilst the blue-grey gnu can be recognized at a

great distance by their black tails, and by the black stripes on the upper and front parts of their bodies. They must rank with the springbock and blessbock gazelles, in being the most common game on the treeless plains, from the western region of Cape Colony as far as lat. 23° north.

Late in the afternoon we turned into a small glen, at its opening into the Vaal valley. A few little canvas huts, and some tents, could be seen peeping gracefully from the dark green foliage, and constituted all that now remained of the once flourishing town of Gong Gong.

Hence we proceeded still northwards. Some white specks in the distance, on the steep rocky cliffs overhanging the Vaal, marked the sites of New Kierke Rush, and other places that a few years since had been the prosperous settlements of the river-diggings. The journey from Gong Gong to Delporthope, which is about a mile from the mouth of the Harts, was one of the most uncomfortable that I have ever made in a bullock-waggon, and I was at a loss to comprehend how, in the flourishing times of the diggings, such a road could have sufficed for the requirements of a population of some thousands. It was no better than the channel of a boulder-stream, and travelling along it was equally difficult and painful. No sooner had one of our back wheels, by the combined efforts of the six oxen goaded on mercilessly by the driver's whip, been dragged out of a hole left by a rain-pool, than one of the front wheels would come in contact with a huge stone a foot high, which it was impos-



BATLAPIN BOYS THROWING THE KIRI.

sible to surmount. To add to our difficulties, the oxen began to be restive, and to get beyond control; and so violent was the jolting, that my barometer was ruined. It was not surprising that the journey occupied about three times as long as we had calculated; nor was it much consolation to perceive, from the fragments of broken waggons which we passed, that others before us had fared even worse than ourselves.

My attention was for a while diverted from my own affairs, by meeting a Batlapin carrying a leveret, and the "kiri" with which he had killed it. This is a very favourite weapon of both the Zulus and the Bechuanas. It is generally made of wood, but amongst the northern Bamangwato it is sometimes formed of rhinoceros horn; it varies from a foot to a yard in length, having at one end a knob, either plain or carved, as large as a hen's egg, or occasionally as large as a man's fist. In hand to hand conflicts it is a very effectual and deadly weapon, but it is chiefly used for hunting, and is hurled, by some tribes, with a marvellous precision. It was with the "kiri" that the Matabele Zulus dashed in the skulls of the male adult population of the rebel Makalaka villages.

The country now sank gradually toward the Harts River, and the valley lay broad and open, bounded on the far north by the N'Kaap, the rocky and wooded slope of the highland. The scenery at the confluence of the rivers had always been described to me as pretty, but I found that the term was only

comparative, the district of Griqualand West appearing to me singularly deficient in natural beauty.

After rushing on their way from the south in numerous rapids, the waters of the Vaal here subside into a broad muddy channel, and flow peacefully on to the mouth of the Harts River, which comes from the north-east. Just before the streams unite, the Vaal makes a sudden turn to the west, and so flows on for a little distance, when it bends away in a south-south-west direction. Where it makes this last bend, the bank of the river is swampy and overgrown by trees, and is the haunt of wild cats, lynxes, and other beasts of prey, besides herds of wild swine.

The southern portion of the right-hand bank is a fertile plain, though it is only close to the river-mouth that trees grow to any considerable size. The upper layer is loam upon a substratum of clay. The opposite shore of the Harts River is much higher, rising in a rocky cliff composed of stratified schist, underlying chalk-beds poor in fossils, and forming the table-land connected with the N'Kaap. This highland descends abruptly to the Vaal River, just above the bend, and is intersected by a glen which lies above 300 yards from the mouth of the Harts River, but which must not be confounded with the Klipdach's grotto, discovered by Hübner. Formerly both shores on the lower part of the river were in the possession of the Batlapin chief, Yantje, who resides at Likatlong, three miles from the right bank, and now receives an annual payment of 200*l.*, as a dependent of the British Government.

Beneath some fine spreading trees at the bottom of the glen our eyes were refreshed by the verdure of a luxuriant sward, whereon we could watch the gambols of the jumping-hares, gazelles, rock-badgers, and wild ducks. The cackle of a *chenalopex*, a kind



BATLAPIN.

of goose, could be heard as it roosted in the foliage above our heads; and the rushing sound of a waterfall in the upper part of the glen enhanced the charm of this retired nook. The stream was almost hidden by the bushes, laden with berries, with which it was overhung; and its banks, which were of sand-

stone, with an upper stratum of limestone, were hollowed out into little grottoes. In the winter season, no doubt, it would be quite dried up, but now it contributed a beautiful feature to the landscape. My delight in finding this charming spot was complete when, at the bottom of the ravine, I discovered a thick layer of fossils of the latest alluvial period, amongst which I picked out a species of tiger-snail.

On one of the trees that overhung the glen I noticed an enormous nest, which at first I imagined must be an ape's; but I subsequently learnt that it belonged to the hammerhead (*Scopus umbretta*), one of the largest nest-builders of the feathered tribe. The bird is about eighteen inches high, and is distinguished by its fine brown plumage, and a long tuft at the back of its head. It generally builds in the forks of trees that overhang precipices or rivers, although it not unfrequently makes selection of the clefts of a rock. The nest may be described as a truncated cone, inverted. It varies very much in height, being sometimes a yard, although sometimes only half as much, from its lower circumference to its upper, which is often as much as six or seven feet. It is a structure equally commodious and substantial; it is entered by an aperture in the side, something less than a foot square, and its interior is generally found to contain a number of bones. Twigs are the chief material of its construction.

This exquisite little spot, so contrasted in its character with its surroundings, might almost fairly

be compared to a diamond hidden in rubble. It must be owned, however, that it was a paradise infested with snakes. I found no less than seven different species, amongst which were two of the cobras that are common throughout South Africa. The first of these I encountered as I was lifting a great stone in search of insects. I did not observe it for some moments, my attention being drawn to a mouse's nest that I had uncovered; but a sunbeam glanced through the foliage, and revealed to me the glistening body of the venomous reptile. Having no weapon at hand, it seemed to me that my most prudent course was to wait quietly for the cobra to make an escape, before I began rummaging the mouse's nest for insects. I had not to wait long, as, aroused by the warmth of the sun's rays thus suddenly admitted, it began to uncoil itself, displaying a body some four feet in length. It quickly caught sight of me, and, in the well-known cobra fashion, having erected about a third of its length it began to hiss violently, the dark neck all the while becoming greatly inflated, and the forked tongue quivering with ominous menace. However, it did not attack me; and something in my attitude, I suppose, making it forebode danger to itself, it presently turned away, and disappeared in the bushes.

Of all the poisonous snakes in South Africa I consider three of the cobras—a green sort, a black, and a yellowish—to be the most venomous. Instances have been known of the first two of these

species making an unprovoked attack upon human beings. One case happened within my own knowledge. A party of Kaffir children were playing near some bushes, about a hundred yards from the huts where they lived, when they caught sight of a cobra creeping towards them. Being aware of its venomous character, they ran away from the bushes with all speed into the road, where, thinking themselves secure, they slackened their speed. Suddenly one of the children uttered a piercing scream. Unperceived, the cobra had followed him, and bitten his heel; in a quarter of an hour the child was dead.

The dingy yellow cobra of the warmer and more northerly parts of Central South Africa, often to be seen in the mapani-woods of the Sibanani plains, exhibits the murderous propensity of its race in another fashion.¹ It will choose a spot where two mapani-trees with their bushy tops over-arch a track by which the wild cattle pass on their way to drink, and rolling its tail firmly round a bough, will let its body hang suspended, straight as an assegai, ready to make its attack at the proper instant. Unlike the green or the black species, its colour is so nearly identical with the tints of the foliage that it is very likely to be unobserved, and, consequently, Europeans may be exposed to a danger against which it is difficult to guard.

Just after my rencontre with the cobra in the glen, on the same day, one of the black boys, who

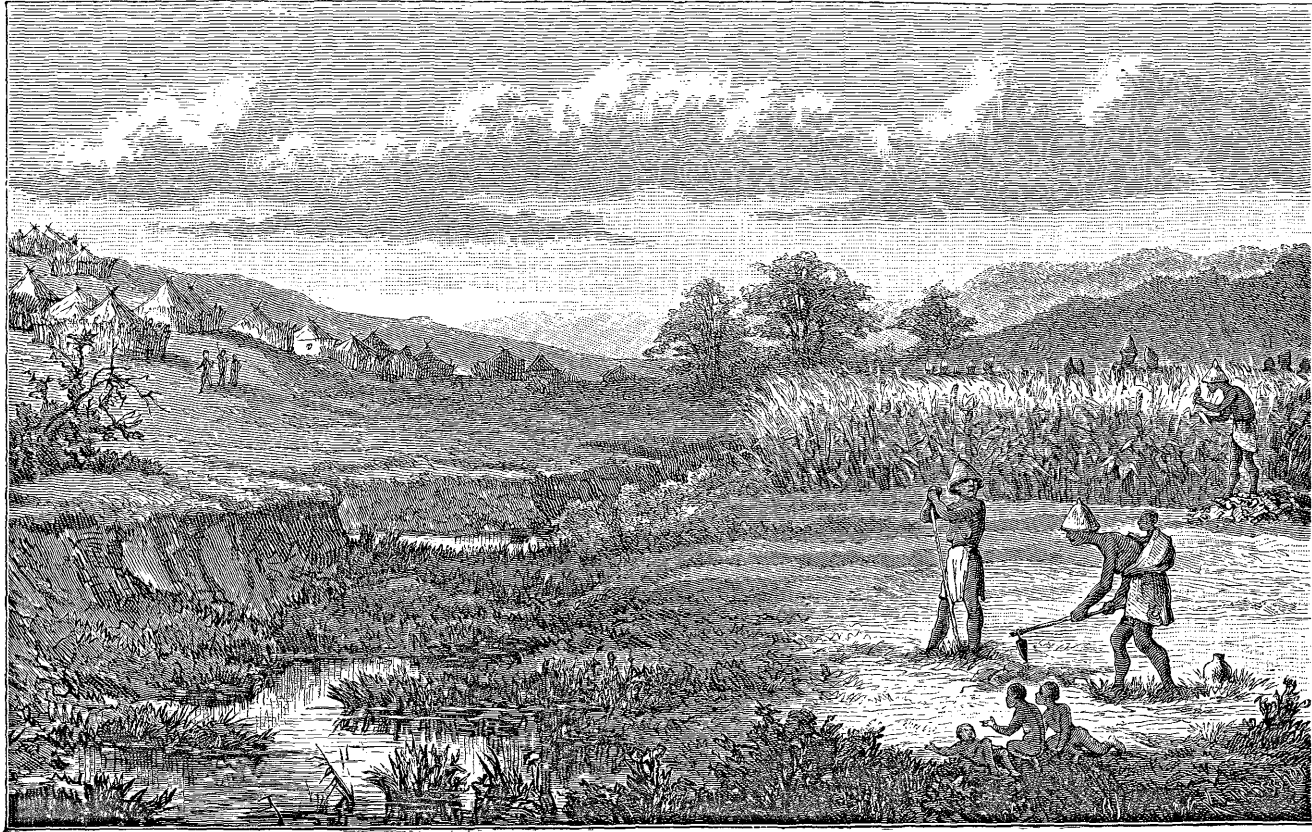
¹ I use the term "murderous propensity" advisedly, as the cobra is quite unable to devour what it has thus destroyed.

was looking for a dove which had been shot, came running to me in a state of great excitement, and calling out, "A slang, sir! a slang!" He had been startled by a cobra in the grass. All the natives, except the Zulu magicians, or "medicine men," are mortally terrified at these reptiles.

Two days afterwards, while I was again exploring the bottom of the glen, I shot one of the short black snakes that are known to the Dutch farmers as "ringnecks," on account of the white mark on their throat. When I told a storekeeper in the neighbourhood that I had done so, he related to me several anecdotes about the species, the particulars of one of which was confirmed by my own subsequent observation. He told me that a few months previously a farmer had noticed, when his cows returned to the farmyard after grazing by the river-bank, that one of them always came back an hour or more after the rest. As there was no danger from wild beasts, it was not usual to have the cows watched; but unable to understand what could be the reason of this habitual lingering of one of the herd, he sent a servant to look. The man soon came running back, shouting, "Bas, Bas, fat det rur!" (Master, master, bring your gun! a ringneck is sucking your cow!). The farmer called together some of his neighbours, and, hastening down to the river-side, witnessed the curious sight of the snake coiled round one of the hind legs of the cow, and while the animal continued to graze quietly, sucking greedily at the udder. It was almost satiated, and its body, like a

great leech, was gradually loosening its hold. Before the astonished spectators could take any measures to destroy it, it had dropped off and disappeared in the grass; but the next day the farm-servants managed to creep up, after it had had its fill, and killed it without injury to themselves.

In the interests of geographical science it was always my wish to ascertain the depth of the various rivers I explored. Having no boat, or other apparatus, my only resource in order to get the measurements I wanted was to wade right into the streams. I persevered in doing this wherever I could feel perfectly secure from the attacks of crocodiles, until an adventure befell me which gave me such a distaste for experiments of this kind that I abandoned them altogether. It was a hazard that almost cost me my life. I was anxious to find a fording-place for the waggon somewhere near our encampment by the Harts River, which, where we were, was some twenty feet wide. After I had found what appeared a suitable spot, where the shore was high and dry, and the water only eighteen inches deep at the edge, I undressed, threw my clothes across the stream to the opposite bank, and then proceeded to wade through the water. At my very first step my foot sank into mud, but I proceeded cautiously till I reached the middle of the stream. I there found myself standing in two feet of mud and two feet of water, and every farther step I took showed me only too plainly that the mud was getting deeper and deeper, and that I could not reach the bottom.



BATLAPIN AGRICULTURE.

I came to the conclusion that if matters should not improve, I must turn back again ; but when I tried to return I experienced unlooked-for difficulty ; I kept sinking lower and lower, till only my chin was above the level of the water. To cry for help was of no avail ; the waggon in the encampment was much too far away to allow me to be heard. I became quite aware of the peril of my position, but I had only my own exertions on which to rely. With a violent jerk I flung myself forward, spreading out my arms as if I were swimming ; the effort brought my body to the upper surface of the mud, but my chest and mouth were under water. I managed, however, by another spring to extricate one of my legs from the slime ; but as I was in imminent danger of being suffocated I had to pause, to raise my head above water to draw breath. There was not an instant to be lost if I were to maintain the advantage I had gained, and with one desperate effort more I succeeded in liberating my other foot. Happily I had just strength enough left to enable me to grasp the soil of the opposite shore, and ultimately to drag myself on to dry land. My state, both of mind and body, needs no description.

We remained in our halting-place for several days, before proceeding up the Harts River valley on our way to Likatlong.

CHAPTER V.

FROM LIKATLONG TO WONDERFONTEIN.

Batlapin life—Weaver-birds and their nests—A Batlapin farmstead—Ant-hills—Travelling Batlapins—An alarming accident—Springbockfontein—Gassibone and his residence—An untempting dish—On the bank of the Vaal—Iguanas—Christiana—Bloemhof—Stormy night—Pastures by the Vaal—Cranes—Dutch hunters—A sportsman's Eldorado—Surprised by black gnus—Guinea-fowl—Klerksdorp—Potschefstroom—The Mooi River valley—Geological notes—Wonderfontein and its grottoes—Otters, birds, and snakes.

LIKATLONG, the residence of the chief Yantje, is the capital of the most southerly of the Batlapin tribes. The name signifies "union," probably in reference to the junction of the two rivers. The town consisted of three groups of farmsteads, each farmstead containing from two to four huts, generally six feet high, enclosed by hedges made of dry branches. The huts in the central groups exhibited the greatest appearance of life and industry, and extended as far as the river. In the middle of them was an open space, marked by the ruins of a mission-house that had been burned down some years previously. A short distance from the mission-house stood the church, a long but insignificant-looking edifice, built

of unbaked bricks, with a gabled roof covered with dry grass. At the time of my visit there was no missionary there, but the London Missionary Society, in whose district it lies, have since sent out one of their body.

Seen from the right bank of the river, the town, with its groups of farmsteads arranged symmetrically in rows, looked very neat. The streets, as the open spaces between the enclosures might be called, were full of life; women were hastening down to the water with great clay pitchers on their heads, or toiling along towards their homes breathless under loads of dried grass or brushwood; while children, all naked, were either tending the cattle in the pasture-land, or playing in swarms upon the river's edge. To the activity and plodding industry of the women, the *dolce far niente* of the men offered a striking contrast; as a general rule, they were to be seen idly basking in the sun, like snakes recovering from the exertion of swallowing their last meal.

The jackets and stockings of many of the men were of European make, but some of them had garments of leather, imperfectly tanned; on their heads they had small hats, made of plaited grass or rushes. They were mostly of middle height, neither so tall as the Zulus, nor so powerfully built as the Fingos, their complexions striking me as remarkably clear and bright. Their features are spoilt by the excessive width of the nose—a disfigurement which is to be attributed very much to the use of an iron spoon

for the purposes of a pocket-handkerchief. Most justly they deserved their general reputation for idleness, as, in spite of the natural fertility of their country, they took scarcely any trouble to cultivate cereals, and rarely had any transactions at the Kimberley market.

In a moral point of view, the late war between the English and the Batlaros, a kindred tribe of the Batlapins, has had a very beneficial effect. Previously, especially at the time of the first discovery of the river-diggings, the arrogance of Yantje's demands knew no bounds; and his people were encouraged to make such repeated encroachments into the province, that the British rule on the Vaal River was never perfectly settled. The English victory, however, brought all these disturbances to an end.

After leaving the outskirts of Yantje's town we found ourselves in a part of the Harts valley which was much more lonely, there being no other native settlements of any importance for some considerable distance. The two next are Taung and Mamusa. Taung, not unfrequently retaining its name of Mahura's Town, after a former governor, is about seventy miles from the mouth of the river, and is the residence of an independent Batlapin chief, Mankuruane. Mamusa, the abode of an independent Koranna chief, is another forty miles higher up the river. I did not visit it on this journey, but I was told that the chief's name was Mashon, that he was called Taibush by the Boers, and that he was a very

old man—some saying that he was 112, others even asserting that he was 130 years of age.

Between Likatlong and Mamusa there are numerous insignificant native villages, nine out of ten of them being occupied by Batlapins; though above Taung there are several belonging to the Barolong people, the Korannas appearing only eastward of Mamusa. With the exception of the Koranna villages, they are generally found either on, or only just below the summit of the heights adjoining the river, and rarely contain more than eight farmsteads. Amongst the very few that lie in the valley is Mitzima, the largest of all, containing about thirty huts. The fields and gardens belonging to the people lie partly in the valley and partly on the hill-sides, the crops being kaffir-corn, maize, and sugar-cane, which grows seven or eight feet in height.

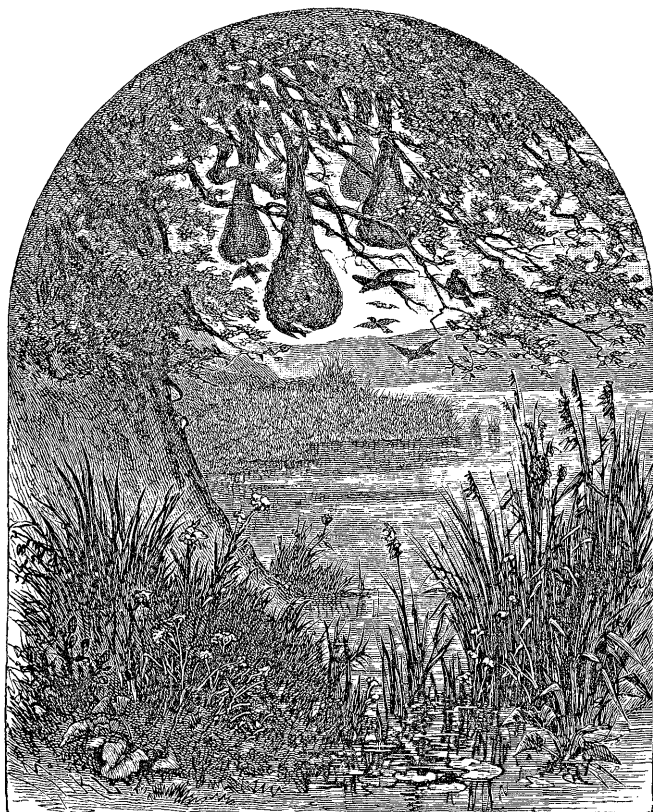
All along our way up the Harts valley the numerous defiles crossing our path had compelled us to make many deviations that involved considerable loss of time. We were halting for rest, not many miles from Likatlong, when we were visited by an old man and a youth, who wanted to do a little business with the "makoa," white man. The high prices that they demanded for their goods greatly surprised me, until I found that the natives even of these parts had learnt the value of English money.

As we went on we had several good chances of sport in the woods and long grass of the valley, and in the bushes by the river-banks. Near the river

we found four different kinds of bustards, the two smaller sorts congregating in flocks; the two larger, one of which was of unusual size, rising from the bushes in pairs; and, near the thorns, we saw several pairs of the great cape-partridge scratching up the ground. Sand-grouse, too, were basking on the sandy spots by the shore and on the slopes; the reedy places being haunted by wild ducks, of which we secured a plentiful supply. On the more open spots, where the river was overhung by mimosas, the lovely weaver-birds, yellow, with a black spot on the throat, had stripped off the leaves from the ends of the branches, and replaced them by their wonderful nests, that hung suspended like some curious fruit.

These nests were about four or five inches long, and were constructed in the shape of an elliptic cone, the small end of which was attached to the bough, the transverse diameter being between two and three inches in length. The aperture, on the flat side of the nest, underneath, was crescent-shaped, and only just large enough to admit one bird at a time. The material was blades of grass, collected fresh and pliant, and so cunningly woven together as to give the finished work all the appearance of the best-skilled art. The construction of the nests was so firm that they would defy the most violent storms, but yet they were hung so delicately that the gentlest breeze would put them in motion. As they swayed to and fro they made the prettiest of reflections in the mirror of the peaceful stream, darkened already by its carpet of tender water-plants—a picture ren-

dered still more striking when one of the bright little birds would issue from its home, and, hovering about, would seem to add the radiancy of some sparkling gem. The birds themselves did not show



NESTS OF WEAVER-BIRDS.

any timidity, and towards evening we found that we could take them in their nests, any that we had startled soon flying back and settling down in patient curiosity to watch our movements.

On the third day of our travelling we came in sight of a range of hills to the east of us, running from the south, and projecting some way into the Harts valley. I was told that they were in the district of the chief Mitzima, and that the point at the extreme end was called Spitzkopf by the Boers.

In various parts of the plains we were crossing there were patches of bright red, giving the effect of crimson carpets spread upon the ground. On closer inspection they proved to be masses of free-blooming lilies. Other spots were distinguished by a different species of lily, growing very luxuriantly, and having very dark green leaves, which were perpetually found covered with many varieties of weevils.

Near a sugar-plantation that we passed I saw four women at work; and as we wanted some milk I asked them if they could get some, without my waiting until we reached Mitzima. They all seemed pleased at being asked, and sticking their hoes into the ground ran off, laughing and shouting, to their huts, about 300 yards away. They were not long in returning, two of them carrying earthenware pans, and the third, a lean old hag, bringing a wooden bowl, all full of sweet new milk. The only remuneration they required was a lump of tobacco. I was rather surprised at the choice; but my man, Gert, who acted as interpreter, told me that they were very fond of snuff—an assertion which was confirmed by their taking the tobacco, and after rubbing it in their hands, stuffing it into their capacious

nostrils, chuckling out "Monati! monati!" (That is fine! that is fine!)

In the course of the afternoon we passed a farmstead composed of three huts, which in cleanliness surpassed anything I ever saw amongst the Batlapin tribe. They were built of strong stakes, and were very spacious. Beneath a shed formed of rushes stood a good substantial waggon, and in the courtyard was another smaller waggon, to which the farmer and his labourers were doing some repairs. Besides this I noticed—what was a great rarity in the Batlapin country in 1873—a good, useful plough. Half a dozen leathern milk-bags, too, were hanging in the cattle-enclosure. In the shed, two Batlapin men were busy making a waggon-tilt out of an old piece of canvas; and I do not remember ever having seen any of the tribe working so industriously. Fifteen little black children were playing merrily enough in the immediate neighbourhood of the farm, none of them having the least pretence to clothing beyond a narrow strip of leather serving for an apron; a few elder children were minding the cattle on the river-bank a mile away; and altogether the place had a singular air of comfort and prosperity.

Nearer and nearer we approached the heights that had opened before us in the morning. They were the most northerly branch of the chain of hills beginning near Hebron, on the right bank of the Vaal. I found the geological formation especially interesting, the rocks sometimes standing in up-

right blocks, ranged side by side in pillars almost like petrified human forms, and sometimes lying piled up horizontally, like the steps of a gigantic staircase.

Mitzima's village was on the nearer side of the Spitzkopf. We did not stay long, but started off again late in the afternoon. The number of the glens, however, that we had to cross delayed us so much, and tried the strength of our animals so severely, that it proved impossible for us to proceed far that night, and we came to a halt about a mile and a half short of the mountain-head, not far from three little Batlapin farms. A storm that seemed to be gathering at our back made us cautious in our movements, as we knew that a rainfall of even half an hour would be enough to convert any one of the defiles into a rushing and dangerous torrent. In spite of the evening being so far advanced, our arrival did not escape notice at the farms, and several of the occupants hurried out to pay us a visit.

The night spent here was bright and fine, although decidedly cold. The rocks on the hill-side cast long, deep shadows, falling like phantoms across the plain; the Spitzkopf, like a giant on guard, seemed to keep perpetual watch; while the shrill voices of the Batlapins, chanting their wild songs, echoed from the distance, and completed the weird effect of the general scene.

Next morning, after purchasing some gourds from the owner of one of the farms, we pushed on still to



BATLAPINS ON A JOURNEY.

the north. The further we ascended the Harts River, the more fertile we found the country. Nothing attracted my attention more than the small plantations of sugar-cane, but I was surprised to hear that the only use to which the natives put the prolific crop is to cut the lower and more juicy section of the stem into morsels that they can chew.

We had now to travel across a plain devoid alike of trees or shrubs, but where I noticed some ant-hills of a peculiar form. Instead of being of the ordinary hemispherical type, about four feet high, and with two or three apertures, such as may be seen by thousands on many of the South African levels, these were open funnels six feet high, with diameters ranging from three to ten inches long, and made of a kind of cement formed by grains of sand agglutinated by the help of the mucous saliva of the ant. Generally they stood in groups of not less than three, and the soil all round them was quite bare for several feet. Outside these, again, were funnels of the same design, but not yet completed, and consisting merely of a conical pile of earth without the aperture at the top.

About noon we made a halt near the river, but were disappointed to find that the only water we could obtain was from the pools, which were rendered disgustingly foul by the cattle driven into them day by day by the natives. It may well be imagined that the food we had to prepare for ourselves with this water did not prove particularly savoury.

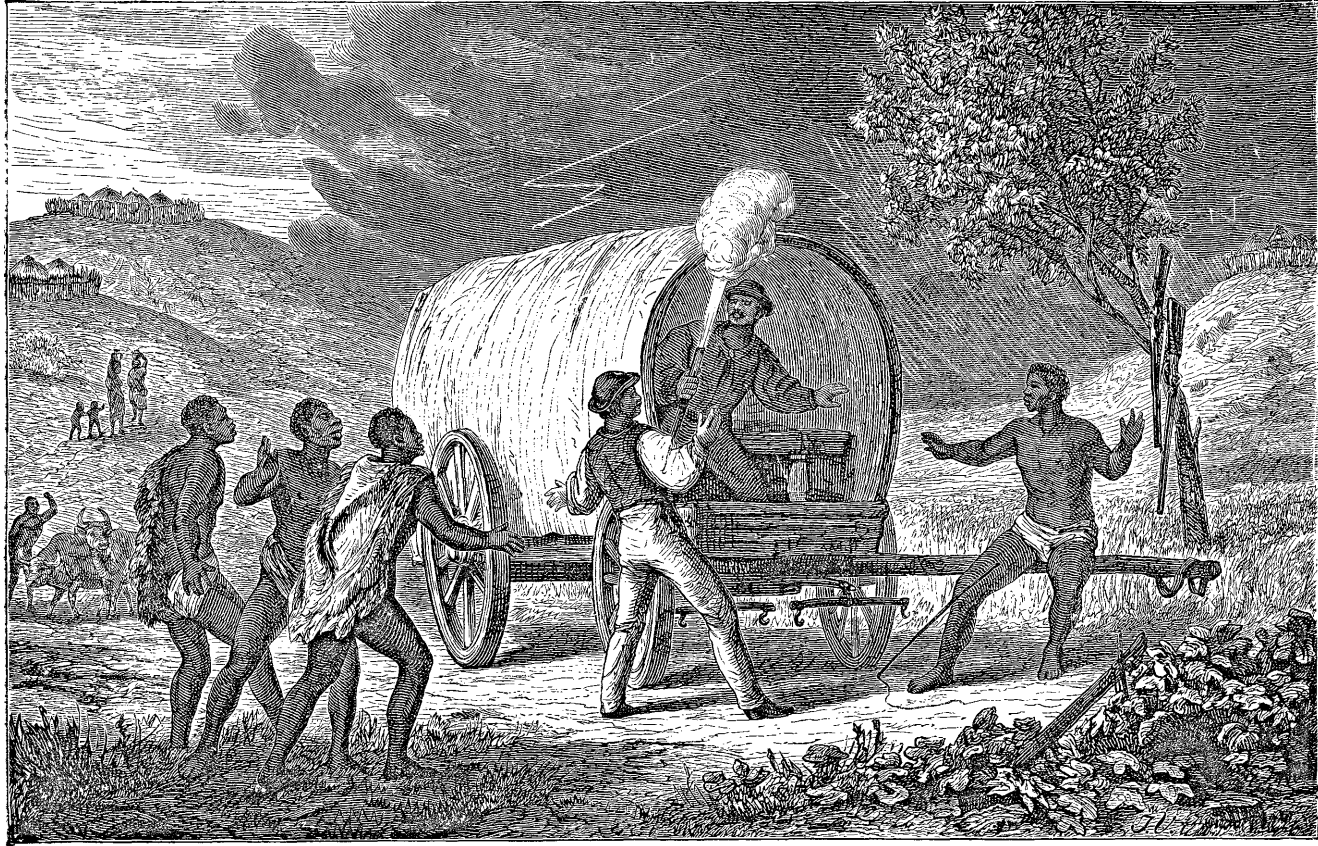
In the middle of our meal some Batlapins, from

the villages on the hills to our right, came riding up. They were mounted on huge oxen; but seeing us, they alighted, and came and sat down near our fire, making themselves at once quite at home. Their beasts, without being unsaddled, stood by perfectly still, as if rooted to the ground.

The appearance of these travelling parties of Batlapins is extremely grotesque. The oxen came scrambling along as if they were running for a wager. A stick is thrust through a hole in their nostrils, to each end of which is tied a thong about two yards long; this is the bridle; a sack or piece of leather girded on the back serves for a saddle; a pair of leather or iron stirrups, fastened to a strap, generally completes the trappings.

Our visitors were very friendly and disposed to be communicative. In answer to my inquiry how far it was to Springbockfontein, one of them pointed to the sun above our heads, and said, "Start your waggons at once, and before yon ruler sinks to his rest, you may draw your water from the stream where the springbocks quench their thirst."

In the neighbouring fields of gourds and maize, I found what seemed to me a good opportunity for enriching my entomological collection, but it ended in a misfortune. I succeeded in finding some fine specimens of tiger-beetles (*Cicindelidæ*), but I was so engrossed in my pursuit that I did not observe that a storm had been gathering, and was quite taken by surprise when the lightning flashed a few hundred yards lower down the stream, and the heavy rain-



ACCIDENT IN THE HARTS RIVER VALLEY.

drops began to fall. I was very soon wet through. Scampering back towards the waggon, I found three of the natives still huddling round the all but extinguished fire, but my own people gone to a little distance to secure some plants that had been left out to dry, and to bring in the guns that happened to be outside against a tree close by. I jumped into the waggon, and almost immediately my friends returned. They handed me the plants all right, and were just passing me the guns, when a flash of lightning struck the ground close behind us; the crash of thunder that followed was terrific. In eager haste to hang my gun in its proper place inside the waggon, I had caught hold of the barrel with my left hand, but the shock of the thunder so startled my friend that he jerked one of the triggers, and the charge of hare-shot with which it was loaded went off. I can remember nothing beyond the glare and the noise and a momentary sensation of pain; stunned by the injury, I lost my balance and fell out of the waggon.

It was at first supposed that I was dead; and most providential it was that the wounds were not fatal. The shot had passed right through my left hand, and grazing my left temple, had pierced the brim of my hat, leaving the holes blocked up with my hair. For two days I was completely blind with the eye, and suffered from acute inflammation in it for more than a fortnight.

A native view of the occurrence should not be left without record. While my friends in the pre-

sence of the three Batlapins were discussing whether it would not be possible to reach Springbockfontein that night, another old Batlapin, who had witnessed what had happened, came up, and addressing one of the three, apparently his son, said, "Go, lad, and look inside that waggon; there lies a Bas dying or dead; he is killed for his wickedness; he was storming against his friends for being so slow in giving him his gun, and the great Morena struck him with lightning and thunder. He fell from the waggon. Never more will he eat his maize or suck his sugar-cane, if he is not dead already."¹

Although Springbockfontein was really at no great distance, my condition was such that it proved quite impossible for us to reach it that night; the suffering that I endured from the jolting of the waggon made us abandon our intention, and after two hours' travelling we halted for the rest which was indispensable. However, next morning, quite early, we accomplished the rest of the way.

Springbockfontein is a settlement of white men, consisting of nothing more than some tents and reed-huts, occupied by four Dutch families, who, apparently, had been driven by debt to flee from their former homes in the Transvaal. I found similar settlements in other Bechuana districts, the occupants supported partly by hunting, and partly by wood-cutting or leather-dressing. As a general rule they appear to lead a miserable existence, and may be said to be about the most uncivilized portion

¹ "Bas," a lord, a master; "Morena" ruler.

of the Dutch population of South Africa; being without the means of procuring medical assistance, their condition when attacked by sickness is very deplorable.

The Springbock streams were quite insignificant, and as they made their way towards the Harts River, they passed through a morass where I found large numbers of the common South African tortoise.

During the morning I had rallied considerably, and determined to proceed up the valley without delay. My plan was to pass through the district under the control of the Batlapin chief, Gassibone, at that time independent; but owing to the wrong directions given us by some Dutchmen at the springs, we wandered on till nearly evening, when two natives that we chanced to meet informed us of our mistake, telling us, moreover, that our only way to get where we wanted was by going right back again to the Harts River. All day long the toil had been very great, the soil in many places being so sandy that it was necessary to give the cattle continual rests to recover from their exhausting labours. The country as we advanced became more and more wooded, covered in many spots with small tracts of camel-thorns. To compensate in a degree for the loss of time, there was no lack of good sport.

Striking next, according to the directions of the natives, right across the woods to the east-south-east, we made for the chain of hills where the principal kraal of the chief was said to lie. The road, I

think, was even worse than any we had yet seen, and it required both skill and vigilance to keep the team from injuring themselves, and the waggon from toppling over. A monotonous bush country brought us to a mimosa-forest, where we met some of Gassibone's people, who took every trouble to explain the nearest way to their chieftain's home. We had to cross a depression in the hills, which brought us to a deep circular hollow; in the background of this, there was a meeting of mountain ridges, forming a number of valleys, in one of which the kraal was situated. As we entered the valley it could not but strike us how fairly it was cultivated.

But it was now growing late. The day had been long and unusually toilsome. We were all fatigued, and I ordered a halt for the night.

After allowing our bullocks to graze awhile, we started off in good time next morning for Gassibone's quarters. The women were already busy at their work; the children, as usual, driving the cattle to their pasture. With fine warm weather, our whole party was refreshed and in the best of spirits.

The full title of this chief is Morena Botlazitse Gassibone. Two years after this time, he voluntarily submitted himself to the Transvaal Republic, and since the annexation of the republic by the English, he has become a British subject. He is said to be addicted to many vices, of which drunkenness is not the least.

The houses in the place were very similar in

character to those at Likatlong, the population being about 2500.

My scheme was now to strike out towards the Vaal River, and thence to proceed north-eastwards into the Transvaal. Uncertain how to discover the best road, I resolved to send to the chief, and ask for a guide. I entrusted one of my friends with the



BATLAPINS SEWING.

message, and told him at the same time to try and procure us some milk. In return for a shilling the negro potentate willingly promised us as many pans of milk as we wanted, and in consideration of another shilling undertook to supply us with a guide, who should put us on our way upon the open plains.

His hut was cylindrical, about sixteen feet in diameter, with a conical roof, the highest point of which was about ten feet from the ground, and supported by a mimosa-stem in the centre. At the foot of this was seated one of the wives of the magnate, dressed in a gown of European calico, and holding on her lap a wooden platter full of a favourite Batlapin delicacy. By means of Gert as an interpreter, the chief invited my friend to partake of the dish, and he, in his desire to be courteous, accepted the proffered hospitality; but no sooner had he discovered what he had taken than he let it fall again; it consisted of dried locusts, the very sight of which was enough to disgust him. On his return, he vowed that nothing should induce him a second time to undertake the office of ambassador to a Bechuana prince.

The inside of the hut was lined with clay, the floor being smoothly cemented; hanging on posts all round was a variety of garments made of the skins of aard-wolves, grey foxes, jackals, and black-spotted genets; opposite the doorway on the main pillar hung an American breech-loader; and on the floor, close to the wall, were beds, formed in the most primitive way of sheepskins and goat-skins.

In the course of the conversation Gassibone expressed his regret that the gourds were not ripe enough to send me, and that he was unable to give me any meat, as on account of the deficiency of water close at hand he had sent all his own herds

to the pastures by the Vaal River. My own observation soon afterwards confirmed what he had said, and I found that there was really no water fit to drink between the Harts and the Vaal. In the settlement itself the stream was so reduced that the spring was always besieged by a crowd of women, waiting their turn to get what supply they could, and when my servant made his appearance they hooted him so lustily that he had no alternative than to make a retreat with his bucket empty. Our only resource was to purchase our water of the women, and to make good the defect by laying in a stock of a native fruit something like a medlar, by which we might at any time temporarily allay our thirst.

Only waiting to procure a stock of maize from some of the people, we were soon ready to proceed on our way. It was our wish to fill all our vessels with water before starting, but the guide provided by the chief assured us that there was no necessity whatever for this precaution, as there would be many available places where we could get plenty as we went along. Naturally enough, we took his word, but found ourselves thoroughly deceived; until we reached the Vaal not a drop of drinking water was to be seen, and for the whole of that day and the following we had to endure, throughout the burning heat, all the miseries of increasing thirst. The country between Gassibone's kraal and the river is an uniform table-land, partly covered with trees and bushes, and partly,

in damp years especially, overgrown with long grass.

Pointing to a tall acacia that stood out conspicuously over the plain to the south, our guide informed us that it was situated beside a rushy spot, which we should reach before sunset, and where there was no doubt we should find water. We did, indeed, reach the place in the course of the afternoon, but it proved a mere dried-up rain-pool, the only semblance of water which it contained being a thick green semi-fluid full of tadpoles, insect larvæ, and infusoria, and smelling strong of ammonia. The very look of it was enough ordinarily to excite disgust, but so intense was our thirst that we ladled out the stuff, teeming with visible and invisible life as it was, into a napkin, and tried to filter it into a tumbler. We managed to get about a glass and a half of slimy liquid which we divided amongst our whole party, but in spite of the craving for more drink, we were not induced to repeat the experiment.

We rested about two hours, and made another advance on our way before camping for the night. As we approached the Vaal, the trees and bushes disappeared, and the grass became shorter, forming excellent pasturage for cattle.

On the evening of the next day, just as the sun was beginning to set behind the Free State shore of the Vaal, a little Batlapin boy, who was tending a lot of goats on the plain, told us that the river was close behind some hills to which he pointed. Look-

ing in that direction we soon caught sight of the huts used by the cowherds who were in charge of Gassibone's cattle.

Beyond a question, the Vaal is one of the most treacherous rivers in South Africa; its banks almost to the very middle of the channel are so soft and slippery, that draught-animals going to drink are liable to sink so deep into the mud that it is impossible to extricate them; in such cases they have been known to die of starvation. Accidents of this kind are especially likely to occur with the aged beasts which, having got knocked-up on the way, are left behind to await their owner's return; this, if he has gone on a business journey, is occasionally delayed for months. I have myself experienced some mischances arising from this condition of the margin of the river.

My people lost no time in going to find out where the Batlapin cattle went to drink, and while they were making their investigation, I took my gun and strolled down towards the water's edge. It was getting dusk, and I was desirous, if I could, to shoot some wild fowl for supper. In order to make as little noise as possible, I walked on tiptoe over the firmer parts of the shore, and whenever the trailing branches obstructed my path, I stooped down gently to remove them. Before long there was a sudden cackling on my left, followed by a sonorous flapping of wings, and two of the wild geese (*Chenalopeæ*) of which I was in search were making their escape down the river. I dropped upon my knee, prepared to fire,

but all at once the feeling came upon me that to break the charming sweetness of the scene by the noise of a shot was almost like a desecration. The placid waters of the stream stretched out towards the west, forming a gleaming zone of beauty; the light of a distant hut came sparkling through the gloom; it could not be otherwise than that, in such association, my memory should recall the picture of another stream, in another land, far away, where I had dreamily passed many and many an evening fishing, and when the light of the window within view had sparkled with the welcome of home. I could not help asking myself whether it was not possible even then that loving parents were thinking of the wanderer who was thinking of them. I was by no means saddened at my reverie; I did not for a moment doubt of a happy return; but I became absorbed in my thoughts, and sat pondering on the past for an hour or more, until the trees on the opposite shore had become obscured in the gathering shades of night.

Darkness had so come on that I had no little difficulty in retracing my way to the waggon. I gave my head a succession of thumps against the projecting boughs of the willows, and kept stumbling over their protruding roots; but I held on my road. Ever and again there was some strange and startling noise; first a herd of monkeys, which had been resting on the tree-tops, disturbed by the owls, would break out into a frantic clamour that would gradually die away into weak

and single notes; and then a great water-iguana (*Polydædalus*) that had been lurking on the bank in search of mice, after creeping noiselessly to the brim of the water, would plunge in with a sudden splash.

These iguanas are huge lizards, over five feet long, that generally select their habitat by water which, if not always running, at least flows periodically; they are found quite as often near human habitations as they are in the desert. Their bite is not dangerous to anything that is too large for them to devour, but they have such singular power in their long tails and in their claws, that they are able to catch many aquatic as well as land animals. Motionless as logs, with their eyes continually opening and shutting, their dark brown scaly bodies, striped with green and yellow, being of a colour to escape detection, they will for hours await the appearance of their prey with scarcely a sign of animation. Their food consists of frogs, mice, insects, or any animals up to the size of a rat, or any birds not larger than a hen.

It has been said that they are fond of the crabs that are commonly to be found in South Africa, but I am inclined to think that it is only failure of other food that induces them to drag these crustaceans from their holes, although I have seen such an accumulation of the shells as serves to show that a great many crabs may be necessary to make an iguana's meal. No doubt they are immensely partial to eggs; and so pertinaciously do they visit hen-roost after hen-roost,

that by mutual consent the tenants of the farmsteads combine in declaring war against them. At the mission-station at Limkana, on the Matebe, my attention was called to the way in which, to gratify this predilection, they will climb up trees in search of nests, after the manner of the land-iguanas, which never frequent the water at all. From the southern coast to the Marutse district I found the water species everywhere. In streams infested by crocodiles they live in the rapids, which the crocodiles avoid.

In general appearance the land-iguana is similar to the *Polydædalus*, but it is broader, more unwieldy, and has a shorter tail. It is found on plains, both bare and grassy, in rocky districts, in bushes, and in the forests. It lives upon small birds, mice, rats, centipedes, and many insects, but its favourite food is birds' eggs. Ordinarily it chooses its abode at the top of a tree, and at the approach of danger will clamber rapidly to its elevated retreat, and lie concealed along one of the boughs; if it should be on the ground, it will creep into a deserted burrow, or failing this, it will stretch itself out as if lifeless; but only touch it, and every symptom of inanimation vanishes; it will start up, develop its full length hiss like a cat, and crawl along on the tips of its claws, its form, that appeared thick and stumpy as it was shrinking on the ground, becoming in an instant lanky and thin as a skeleton. In the abdomen of this pachysaurian there is found a

collection of lobulated fatty matter, in which some of the native tribes put great faith as a remedy for certain diseases.

It was very close upon midnight when I found my way back to my people in the waggon; they had been far too uneasy at my prolonged absence to lie down to rest.

A bath in the Vaal was the first business next morning, after which we started in a north-eastward course for the Transvaal. In two hours, a much shorter time than I had reckoned on, we came within sight of several erections on the right; one of these was a long building made of tiles, and covered with iron; another, apparently in danger of tumbling down, had been constructed of lath and plaster; the third was of bricks, with a flat roof. These, with a couple of tents, and thirteen Koranna huts, were all that in 1873 existed of the most westerly town in the Republic, which afterwards, during the disturbances in Gassibone's district, and amongst the neighbouring Korannas, became known as Christiana.

Since that time Christiana has changed greatly for the better, and at present is almost as important a town as Bloemhof, which in 1876 included at least thirty houses. Independently of its favourable position on the direct road between Griqualand West and the Transvaal, it has made a rapid development through the exertions of its chief magistrate, whose acquaintance I had subsequently the pleasure of making. It speaks well for the able way in which

this officer maintained his difficult position with the contiguous unruly tribes, that on the annexation of the Transvaal by the English he was allowed to retain his post.

The river-bank where we made our camp was somewhat elevated, and afforded us a good view of the islands and rapids, which were both numerous. The adjacent scenery is unquestionably very interesting, and a visit to the islands would, to an ornithologist, be well worth making. This was the most southern point where I observed the handsome long-tailed roller.

Leaving Christiana on the following day (March 13th), we proceeded up the river towards Bloemhof. The district between the two towns is one of the most dreary and barren in the Transvaal, and has quite the characteristics of a karoo-plain; it offers a striking contrast to the opposite shore on the Free State side of the river, where wide tracts of acacias and numerous farms are mirrored in the waters.

In the way of game we saw nothing but a couple of springbucks, a few of the very smallest of the lesser bustards, and in the more rocky places some ground-squirrels, and some rhyzœnas, the latter being in considerable numbers, as many as fifteen or twenty from a single burrow. Both of these animals had ventured some little distance from their homes; the squirrels digging for roots, the rhyzœnas for beetles, larvæ, and scorpions. At the sound of our wheels they made off, but at a pace so

moderate, that even with a good start they might have been overtaken by a dog. The ground-squirrels ran away very timidly, keeping their tails erect, and not venturing to look back at what had disturbed them until they reached safe quarters; the rhyzœnas were much bolder, stopping frequently to examine the intruders who had invaded their privacy, and pausing, with their tails uncurled, would snarl savagely, as if in defiance. I saw several varieties of rhyzœna, but only one of the ground-squirrel. Further north, where the prairie-like plains made way for more wooded country, the place of the earth-squirrel is supplied by a small yellow-brown kind that lives in the trees; the flesh of both is eaten by all the natives except the Hottentots.

On reaching Bloemhof, on the afternoon of the 15th, we found that it consisted only of a single street, its environs having a poverty-stricken aspect that was far from inviting; it is a place, however, that has latterly been considerably improved.

Ever since we had left Klipdrift the weather had been remarkably fine, with only a few occasional exceptions; but as we quitted Bloemhof we observed that the horizon was ominously heavy; and, as evening drew on, the rain began to fall, and it became so dark that it was quite impossible to see more than a few yards ahead. I regretted that I had not come to the determination of passing the night in the town.

For a while one or two of us tried to walk in

front of the team, to give confidence to the Koranna who was leading the foremost pair of bullocks by the bridle, declaring every minute that he could not distinguish the path from the ground by the side; but the rain was so drenching, and the wind so pitiless, that we were obliged to give up, and to get what shelter we could in the waggon. After slipping and sliding about for a hundred yards or so more, the bullocks all came to a standstill, and I could not help fearing that we had got on to a declivity, which would lead down to the river; and, knowing that further progress under such circumstances might be dangerous, I came to the conclusion that we must stay where we were until daylight.

Notwithstanding the pouring rain, I went out twice to reconnoitre our situation. The second time I went farther than before, and made a discovery which rather startled me. Not many yards in front of us I observed a large dark spot, which it struck me must be a deep hollow in the ground. I called to the driver to watch with me, and wait for the next flash of lightning, that we might ascertain what it really was. The lightning was not long in coming, and revealed close at our feet the bed of a rain-torrent, that of course went right to the river. Only a few more steps and the consequences must have been most disastrous; for when daylight came, we found that the walls of the ravine were not only very precipitous, but not less than sixteen feet in depth.

Nothing could be more uncomfortable than the night we spent. The rain ceased about midnight, but not till it had penetrated the canvas covering of the waggon, the keen wind all along benumbing our limbs, and making us realize that here, on the tableland of the Southern Transvaal, we were 4000 feet above the level of the sea. Except for the Koranna men, David and Gert, there was no rest to be had; but they were both utterly regardless of the rain-pools in which they were reclining, and slept on soundly till the morning.

The Free State shore of the Vaal is elevated; the parts where it is not entirely wooded being scantily dotted with mimosas. Many of the well-to-do farmers, resident on the south of the river, have purchased as much as 3000 acres of land hereabouts, for the purpose of grazing their cattle during the dry season. They complained bitterly of the number of their foals, calves, and mules that had been killed by the hyænas (*H. crocuta*), and said that they had been obliged to resort to strychnine in order to dispose of some of the rapacious beasts. The son of one of the farmers, named Wessel, told me that he had lost eighteen head of cattle of various kinds during the preceding winter.

One case that occurred was somewhat remarkable. A farm-servant, before turning out two mules, had, for his own convenience, fastened them together by a strap; not long afterwards they were found still attached to each other, but one of them was a mangled, half-gnawed carcass, whilst the countless

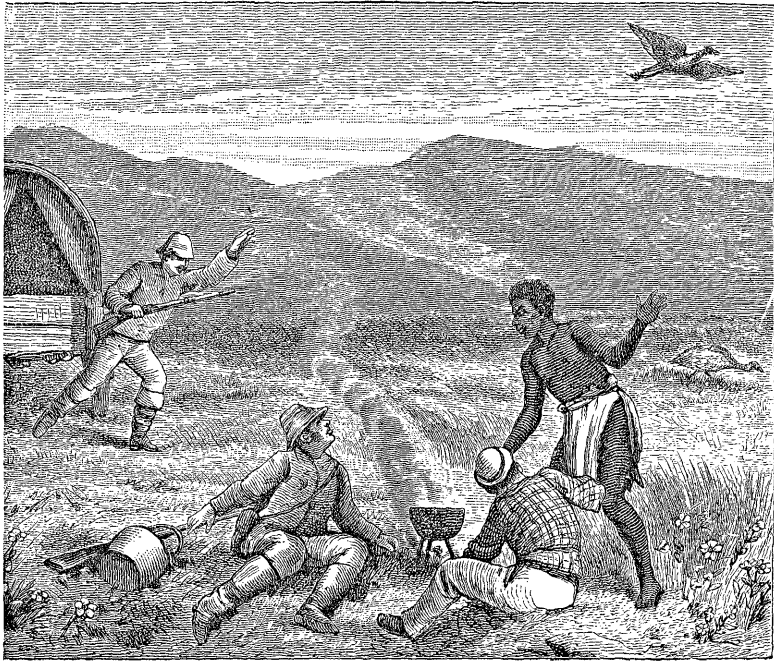
footprints in the ground showed what desperate efforts the surviving mule had made to get free from its ill-fated companion. Since then the owner had sent no cattle to the pastures, except cows and full-grown horses, unless they were guarded.

Some miles east of Bloemhof we came to a great shallow salt-pan, which we had seen glistening before us for a considerable distance. It was skirted by a farm, and, as usual, one portion of its edge was overhung by a hill, the adjacent grassy parts being of a marshy nature, that might no doubt be cultivated to advantage.

We now entered upon the south-western hunting district of the Transvaal, that extends in one unbroken grass plain from the banks of the Bamboespruit to the Schoenspruit, and is bounded on the south by the Vaal River, and on the north by the Maquassie heights; it is intersected by a river, and by several spruits that flow periodically, generally running from north to south, or south-east.

Before reaching the Bamboespruit, on the 18th of March, we saw several pairs of blossom antelopes, and then a whole herd of them; they are so called on account of a white spot (*blässe*) on their forehead, which sets off their red-brown skins admirably; their horns diverge backwards, and are by no means so graceful as those of the springbucks. Altogether, the creatures are more strongly built than springbucks; they do not make the same kind of spasmodic leaps, but on the whole they involve their pursuers in a more protracted chase.

In the long grass a number of cranes were pecking out locusts. As we approached them they made a short retreat without rising high above the ground, and uttering their sonorous note, which might almost be called stately, they alighted again only a few hundred yards away.



CAMP ON THE BAMBOESPRUIT.

Some heavy rain came on, and we were compelled to come to a halt quite early in the afternoon by the side of a pool, a very few miles east of the Bamboespruit. Partly from want of rest, and partly probably from the salt we had taken at the salt-pan which

we had just passed, a general lassitude seemed to have fallen upon our whole party; it was an unhealthy languor, that seemed absolutely to prohibit sleep; and the morning dawned before the rain ceased, and we were able to get a little repose underneath the waggon. To rest inside was impossible, as the evaporation from the damp made the atmosphere all but intolerable. Though jackals in plenty were to be heard quite close to us, we were disinclined to take our guns out of the cases, where they were safely protected from the wet, to get a shot at them; and besides it was very dark. After all, the sleep we obtained was very little, and we were all ready to start again while it was still quite early.

My people busied themselves in making a fire, and meanwhile I strolled to a little distance to get a general view of the plain, bounded by distant heights on the north. The sky was overcast, and the day threatened to be as dreary as the night. My attention was attracted by some very musical notes, uttered, as it seemed to me, by two cranes or storks that were fluttering some 500 yards in front of me. I made my companions listen to them, and they agreed in pronouncing the sound exquisite as the notes of an *Æolian* harp. It was a matter of considerable difficulty to get Gert, the Koranna lad, to leave his breakfast to attend to what was exciting our curiosity; and when he did come he declared at first that there was nothing to see, but after a moment or two he suddenly stooped down,

and seizing my hand, made me bend down to his own level.

“Yes, look!” he said, “look at those two birds settling there; those are the birds that made the noise. They would be great locust-birds, only they have red wings, and black heads and crowns—beautiful yellow crowns.”

This was an unusually long speech for Gert, and he had to pause and refresh himself with a quid of tobacco. He saw our surprise, and repeated the word “crowns,” adding that they were not made of feathers, but of long, stiff, yellow hair.

“In Africa,” he continued, “everybody knows them. The farmers, both in the Transvaal and the Free State, keep them tame.”

“What do you call them?” I inquired.

“Má-hems, bas,” he answered; but I could only conjecture that they were a long-legged species of the grey crane, until a few days afterwards, when finding three of them domesticated in one of the farms we passed, I ascertained that they were the crowned or royal crane (*Balearia regulorum*). When I returned to my own country I brought two of them with me, and had the honour of presenting them to His Highness the Crown Prince Rudolph, who placed them in the Imperial Zoological Gardens at Schönbrunn.

Scarcely had we been travelling two hours next morning when we came within sound of a rushing torrent, issuing from a depression that could be distinguished at a considerable distance by its belt