

of foliage. The depression varied from twenty to thirty-five feet in depth, and was the channel of the Maquassie River, now swollen by the heavy rain that had accumulated from the neighbouring heights, which bear the same name as the stream. The banks are steep, and the river-course stony, and every now and then there are scraps of picturesque scenery ; but during some of the winter months the flood is reduced to a few mere ponds ; these, however, being deep and rocky, are often tolerably full of fish. The more rugged parts of the shore are the haunts of otters, wild cats, weasels, genets, and other small beasts of prey, water lizards also being occasionally to be met with.

At the ford, which, on account of the steep declivity of the banks, is always awkward to cross—we found the water about three feet deep. Standing on the right bank were some transport waggons laden with goods weighing the best part of three tons. The drivers, fearful of crossing in the present swollen condition of the stream, had left them and made their way to a neighbouring canteen to await the subsiding of the flood ; but I came to the conclusion that we might venture to cross at once, and our waggon reached the other side safely, with no other damage than a slight injury to our cooking apparatus.

It was not midday when we reached the southern slope of the Maquassie heights, that extend hence towards the north. It was a spot where the mineralogist no less than the botanist might find a fine

field for research, excellent specimens of porphyritic quartz being frequently to be secured. Hares and bustards abounded on the plains; and in a pond belonging to a farmer who had settled at the foot of the hills were quantities of black moorhens, divers, wild duck, ibises, and herons.

We received a visit in the course of the afternoon from the farmer's son, who quite astonished me by the dexterity with which he handled my revolver, making shot after shot at a mark with unerring precision.

Towards evening we left the neighbourhood of the farm and crossed a plain on which the grass was some two feet high, affording a safe shelter for game. We had only advanced about six miles since noon; but a steady downpour of rain having set in, we not only thought it best to halt for the night, but were so struck by the abundance of game, that we agreed to stay for a whole day.

The sound of firing roused me betimes in the morning. It seemed to come from the south; and the origin of it was explained by the arrival, while we were at breakfast, of two Dutchmen, mounted on small wiry ponies, and making inquiries about the Bas, the master of the house close at hand. Finding us unable to answer their questions, they drove on to the thatched house, and asked neighbour "Ohm" (the ordinary designation of a Dutch farmer) to lend them a waggon, to carry to their own farm, some miles away, a dozen springbocks and blessbocks that they had killed that morning.

It is the common custom of such farmers as live near towns to leave the heads and the entrails of what they have killed for the jackals and vultures, and to send the carcasses whole to market. Those, however, who reside in more out-of-the-way districts, generally flay and cut up the game into joints, laying the skins out on the ground to dry.

After being dried, the skins are most frequently merely cut into squares, and sewn, ten or twelve together, to make carpets; but in the manipulation of them the farmers are far surpassed by the natives. One use to which they are also put is to make the mountings of the giraffe-hide whips. There is a primitive kind of tanning often practised, the tan being the bark of several trees that grow on the hills, such as the waggonhout-tree, or, failing that, the bark of the common mimosas from the river banks. Those who make a trade of tanning purchase the undressed skins from the hunters; a blessbock skin, which costs three or four shillings, as a rule selling after the operation is complete for about half a sovereign.

Some of the farmers' relatives residing with them manufacture what they call field-shoes, which are extremely comfortable for South African travelling. The soles are made of half-tanned gnu-skins, and the upper leathers of the skins of blessbocks, koodoos, or hartebeests. They may be bought of the makers for about seven shillings, but from the tradespeople in the towns they cannot be procured at less than double that price.

The flesh of these animals is cut into long strips, and either slightly salted, or dried by exposure to the sun; it is brought to table quite hard; when pounded and soaked in butter it has a very delicate flavour; its price varies from sixpence to a shilling a pound, and it is often brought to market in considerable quantities.

Quitting this halting-place, we proceeded to the east. The district that we traversed on our way to the Estherspruit was, if possible, more abundant in game than that which we had left. I counted in various directions no less than twenty herds of springbucks and blessbucks. A short distance from our path a swarm of vultures had settled on a blessbuck that had been shot, the very numbers of the birds being a proof that they must have continual opportunities for a similar repast.

The spruit lay in a kind of trench extending towards the south. As we approached it we could see a white-washed farmhouse peeping out from some mimosas on its margin; we subsequently made the acquaintance of its owner, a kindly middle-aged Dutchman, named Rensburg.

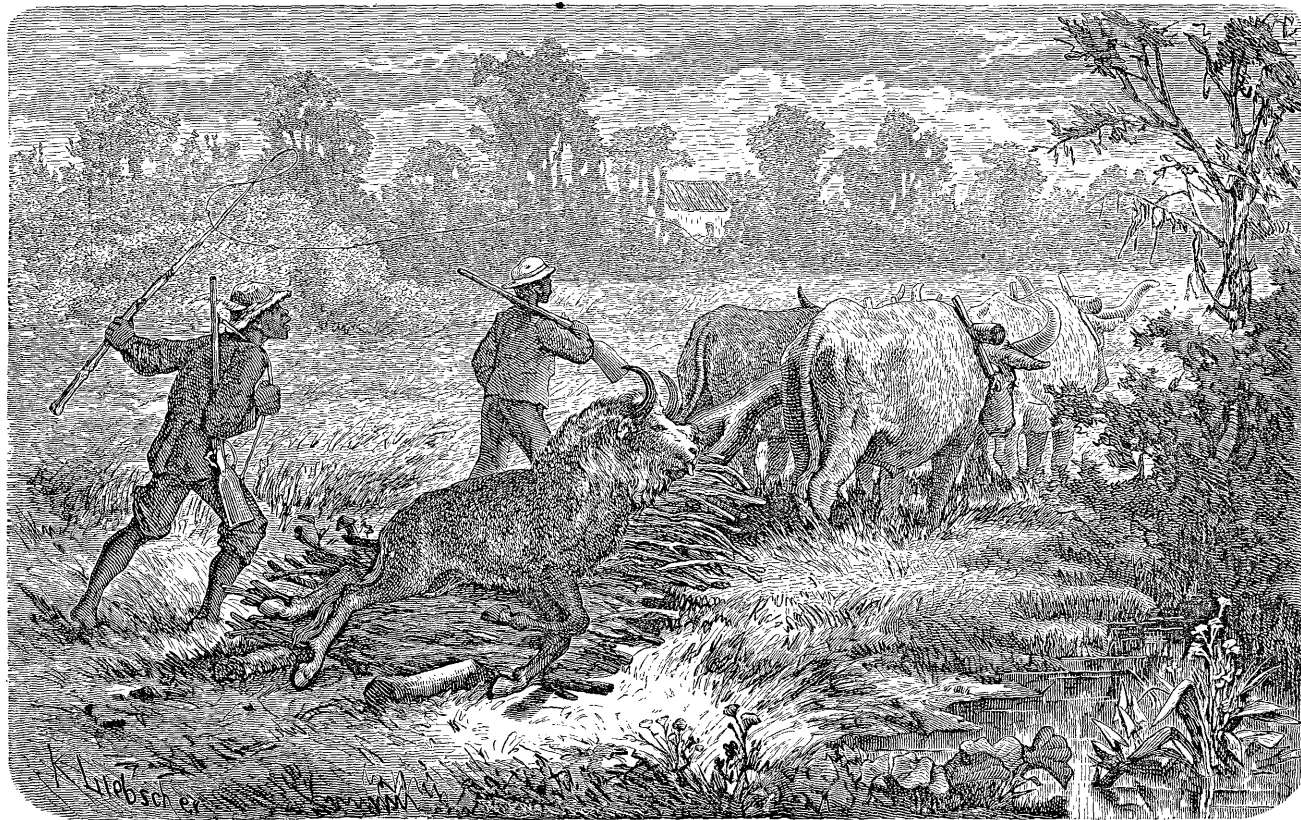
As far as the Estherspruit we had found the road singularly good; but suddenly we were now launched upon a marshy plain, from the mire of which our oxen seemed perfectly unable to drag the waggon. With much reluctance we had to consent to stay in this unhealthy situation till the next morning. Towards midnight the atmosphere became

so clear that we could distinctly see the jackals prowling almost close to us. I was much tempted to have a shot, and to endeavour to get one of their handsome skins. Rensberg, however, had warned me that any firing would be only too likely to frighten away the game, so that I deemed it more prudent to abstain.

On starting next day, we had only proceeded about two hundred yards, when we came upon the Klipspruit, now reduced to a few insignificant pools, although after heavy rain it becomes a stream of scarcely less than a hundred yards in breadth. We crossed without difficulty, and at once made up our minds to encamp for at least a day or two upon the further bank.

It was a scene to rejoice a sportsman's heart; the early morning hours never failed to exhibit many a herd of gnus and antelopes, some hardly a quarter of a mile away, others so far in the distance that they were comparatively specks on the horizon which opened out to the south, east, and west.

The springbocks always grazed in groups; the blessbocks in rows, either side by side, or one behind the other. The prolonged notes of the bustards could be heard on every side, and every nook seemed teeming with animal life. As I looked around me with admiration I almost fancied that I should like to be the owner of some vast enclosure, where the game could find a happy retreat from their relentless pursuers; ample room would be requisite, as it is not so much the climate as the limited space in



RETURN FROM THE GNU HUNT.

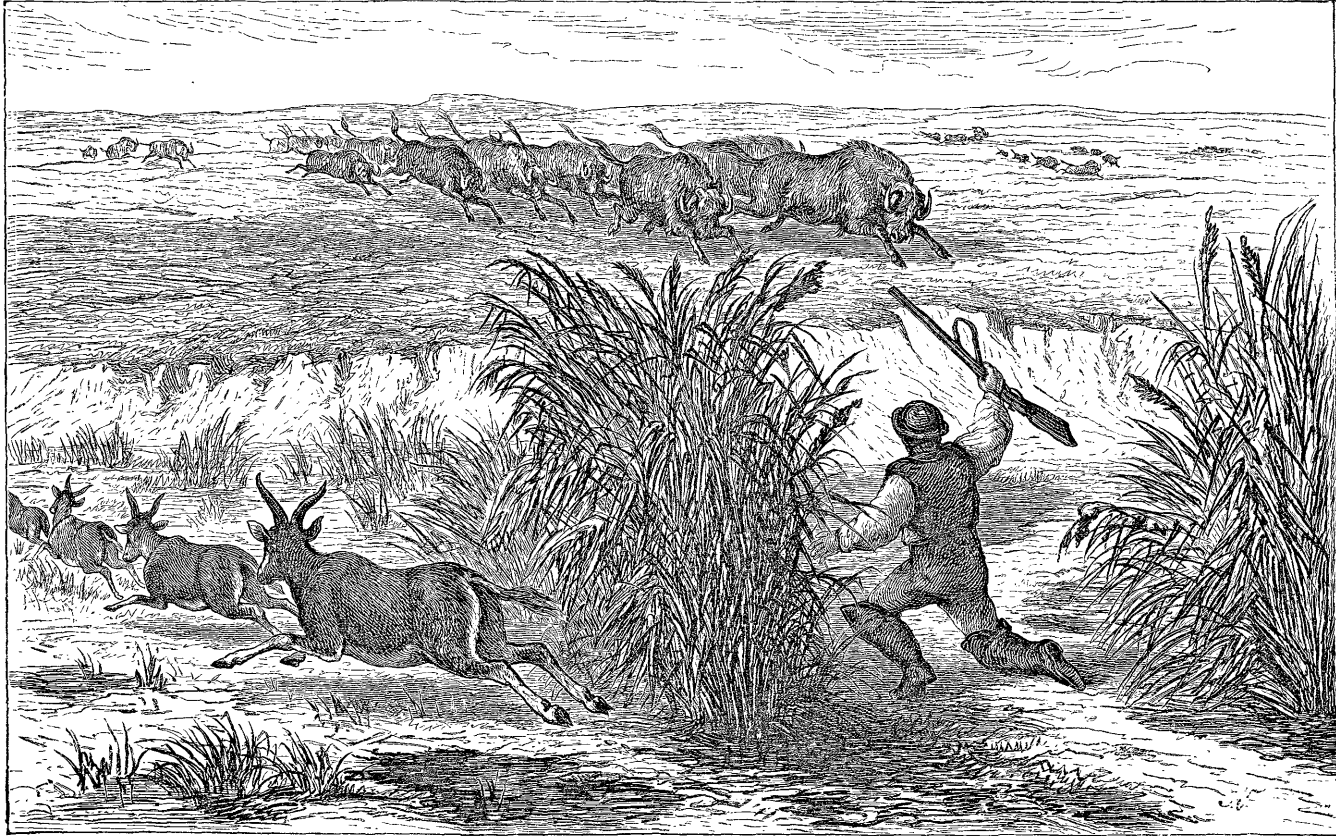
zoological gardens that causes so many animals to languish and die in their confinement; but the mortality in gardens is small in comparison with what it is in the travelling menageries, where the imprisonment is necessarily so close that it is to be hoped, for the honour of humanity, that they will soon cease to be supported.

We remained on the Klipspruit from the 23rd to the 27th. Our attempts at sport were by no means successful, and on the last day I determined to make another effort, in hopes of better luck. In going down the spruit I had noticed a spot in the broad part of the bed that had every appearance of being a resort of the game, and the footprints both ways across the channel showed that gnus and other animals were accustomed to pass along that way. Here I resolved to take up my position, and await a favourable chance for a shot.

Shortly after sunrise I left the waggon, and made my way very cautiously along the valley for about two miles; it was necessary to go stealthily, a matter which was sometimes by no means easy, as the river-bed was in places very shallow, and my movements were likely to be observed by the game on the heights; it was consequently past ten o'clock before I reached the selected spot; the place, as I have said, being broader and flatter than elsewhere, and the track overgrown with rushes. After waiting about an hour in the broiling sun, I heard the sound of some shots in the far distance, and being still partially concealed, I peeped out in the

direction whence the reports proceeded; nothing, however, was to be seen but a few herds scattered about, all grazing quietly. Still, it became clear to me that one of the herds of gnus, still feeding, was gradually coming nearer to me; and in the expectation that they might approach within gunshot, I crossed to the other bank, and cocked my gun in readiness; but they were slow in their movements, and scarcely advanced at all. Happening to turn my eyes in another direction, I was taken by surprise. Galloping hard towards me from the quarter where I had heard the shots was a great herd of blessbocks; they were coming so much closer to me than the gnus which I had been watching, that I considered they were giving me the better chance. I had no time to make my way back to the other bank, and had to content myself with gaining the middle of the bed and lying down flat upon the ground. After a few seconds I raised my head, confident that the herd would be now within reach; but I was destined to be disappointed; they had evidently caught sight of me, and were making off in rapid flight. In the rear was a doe with her little fawn that could not keep pace with the rest, and I could not help longing intensely to take them alive; with this design I sent a shot into the right leg of the dam, but although she reared and limped at first, she soon recovered her speed, and made off to rejoin the rest.

Hoping still to succeed with the gnus, I went



STARTLED BY A HERD OF BLACK GNUS.

back to my former place, and again stooped down to wait. I reloaded my gun, but had only just put in the bullet, when I was startled by a great snorting and puffing close above me; the whole herd, with lowered heads and tails erect, was rushing towards me like a whirlwind; another moment and I should have been trampled under their feet, but having no desire to come within reach either of their horns or their hoofs, I jumped up, shouted aloud, and brandished my gun. The effect was to bring them at once to a standstill; they waited a moment with their shaggy heads all turned towards me. I lost not an instant in firing. The foremost antelope bent down its head, brayed aloud, swung round twice in a circle, and then galloped off followed by the entire herd. It did not, however, make straight away, but after retreating some ten or twelve yards it made another circle, still followed by the others, and this manœuvre it repeated several times, until finally, the herd, erecting their white tails, and still bellowing wildly, scampered off to a distance.

While they were making their second circle I took aim at an animal that seemed to be about half grown. My shot was well directed and took effect on the shoulder. I heard the ball strike, but the creature kept on its way just as if it were untouched; so sure, however, was I that I had hit my mark, that I kept on in pursuit, in spite of the intense heat of the sun, for the best part of four miles; my exertions all proved to be fruitless, for although

my victim was probably lagging on behind the herd the distance between us continually increased, and at length, weary and disappointed, I was fain to give up and make my way back to our quarters.

But I was not contented. After resting a little while and taking some refreshment, I started off with Gert, determined, if possible, to track out the wounded gnu. We followed on beyond the spot where I had turned back, and made our way for about another two miles, when we came upon the half-eaten carcase of a young gnu bull. Within five hours after receiving my shot it had become the prey of the numberless vultures that hovered about, and had been so mutilated that it could not be removed.

Disgusted at my failure, I broke up our encampment immediately, and set out once again towards the interior of the Transvaal, where I contemplated making the caverns of Wonderfontein the limit of my present journey, after which I should commence my return to the diamond-diggings.

During our stay by the Klipspruit, I had made a good many additions to my collection, notably a pretty young water-lizard, several kinds of insects and fish, some scolopendra, and various grasses, besides some interesting specimens of greenstone.

It was quite late at night when we next halted for our rest, though we were scarcely more than four miles north-east of the ford. The night was fine and tolerably clear; and as we sat talking over the chances and mischances of the day, we could

hear the bellowing of the male gnus, varied ever and again by the heavy thud that was caused by the clashing of their horns as they met in angry conflict. From midnight to dawn the howl of the jackal and the yell of the hyæna showed that while game was in abundance there was no lack of beasts of prey.

The country through which our next day's journey carried us showed no falling off in the quantity of game. The depressions of the spruits became deeper than we had heretofore seen, and were in some places covered with bushes that were the haunt of the guinea-fowl which are common everywhere, from the southern coast to the further side of the Zambesi.

This breed of wild poultry is undeniably one of the most interesting features of the African bird-world. Hunted perpetually, it is nevertheless ever on the increase. Most frequently it is found in flocks varying from ten to forty in number, in bushy or wooded places near rivers or standing water. It is distinguished from our guinea-fowl by a horny membrane on the forehead.

On the Vaal and its tributaries the best time for hunting guinea-fowl is about two hours before sundown, when they leave the bushes in the plains to drink, previously to roosting for the night in the trees by the banks. This hour may on an average be taken to be about four o'clock in the afternoon, and as the birds nearly always use the same approach to the river, a sportsman, who has con-

cealed himself hard by, will see a cloud of dust gradually coming nearer to him from the land; this is caused by their repeatedly stopping on the way to scratch up seeds and insects from the sandy soil. When in thick grass they continually raise their heads to look around them, and where the grass is over three feet in height I have seen them at intervals run out of it for ten or fifteen yards and fly, or rather spring into the air, that they may be able to look above it. Should they happen to catch sight of man or beast, or anything that has to them a suspicious appearance, they give a loud cackle, and dart off with incredible swiftness. I know few birds that can run so quickly, and when they have once taken to flight, a sportsman unacquainted with their habits has little chance of catching sight of them again that day. An experienced hand, however, will either chase them with dogs, or conceal himself so as to confront them as they rise suddenly from the ground, when their flight is so awkward that they afford a mark which the most unpractised shot can hardly fail to hit. Like other feathered game, guinea-fowl have not much to fear from the natives; the only people that I saw making any attempt to get them were the Korannas, who first make them rise by the aid of their dogs, and then pelt them down with the hard stones of a small edible fruit known as the "blue-bush."

In the afternoon we reached the Matheuspruit, which in spite of the rain was nearly dry. Near

the road a small dam was placed right across its bed, and formed one side of a pond.

From the Matheuspruit the road was in a wretched condition, and where it was not stony the soil was so soft that we were in momentary dread of sticking fast. On the evening of the 29th we reached the Jagdspruit.

The following morning was warm and bright, and the rising sun lighted up the eastern slopes of the Klerksdorp heights, some of which had a conical shape, and stood isolated and bare on the bank of the Schoenspruit, others being covered with bushes, and joined together in ridges. Between us and the hills lay a shallow depression, about two miles wide, that appeared to open into the narrow valley of the Schoenspruit a few miles lower down. We were told that Klerksdorp, the oldest settlement in the Transvaal, was close on the other side of a chain of hills that stretched right across our path.

Tempted by the genial weather I went out for a stroll on the plain, which afforded me ample scope for botanizing. Amongst other plants worth gathering I found a cinna growing rankly as a weed, bearing one or more brick-red or rose-coloured blossoms on stems that varied from four to ten inches in height. From a clump of bushes on the left I took a number of beetles, some small bright ones (*Buprestidæ*), some leaf-beetles (*Chrysomelidæ*), and some Longicorns (*Cerambycidæ*); also several black and yellow-spotted spiders, that, like our cross-spiders, had spun their webs from bush to

bush, and from tree to tree. Two duykerbocks sprung up at my approach, and vanished quickly into the thicket.

Having crossed another depression we soon entered the actual valley of the Schoenspruit, which might fairly claim to be a river, as it is only in exceptionally dry seasons that it ceases to flow regularly, and assumes the characteristics of a "spruit." Altogether it may be considered one of the most interesting valleys in all the South African table-land, being one of the most fertile, as well as the most highly cultivated. Its banks are one continuous series of farms; and both here and in the Mooi-valley the excellent pasturage on the slopes greatly enhances the value of the land. With a little energy and rational manipulation of the soil it might be made even ten times more prolific than it is.

At this period, in 1873, Klerksdorp, or Klerksdorf, consisted of a single street, in which, I believe, I counted five-and-twenty houses. It has since greatly increased, and bids fair, like Potchefstroom, to be one of the most important towns in the south-western Transvaal. Each house had its garden, with peaches and orange-trees, and the hedges were made of quinces and pomegranates. The site of the town is well chosen, being at a spot where the valley is narrowed by hills on either hand, and where the supply of water is abundant; it is likewise partially protected on the side looking up the river by an isolated chain of hills.

Potchefstroom, for which we made a start the

next day, is really the most populous town of the Transvaal. On our way thither we crossed three dry spruits within a distance of thirty-four miles. These were named the Kockemoer, the Matchavis, and the Bakenspruit, and all ran parallel to each other, from north to south, towards the Vaal. The country we passed was more undulating than it had been between Bloemhof and Klerksdorp; all the valleys, whether deep or shallow, appearing very fertile. Before arriving at the Kockemoer we had to cross a tract of land so marshy that our progress was once again a matter of considerable difficulty. The sight of two waggons, already sunk hopelessly in the mire, was a warning to us that we must use every precaution; and in several places, which appeared especially bad, we shovelled out the mud, and filled up the cavity with stones; thus extemporizing a hard road, over which, by dint of much shouting and whipping, we made our bullocks drag their load. Very often, however, it was requisite to make long détours, and even then we found the broad tires of our wheels cutting into the soil as though they were the sharpest of knives.

As we passed next day at the foot of a chain of lofty hills I could not do otherwise than admire the scenery, which seemed the most pleasant of any that we saw throughout the journey. In the shallow glen of the Bakenspruit a large flock of grey cranes was busily hunting for locusts, and we noticed a few springbocks grazing quietly among them.

Thousands of swallows had settled on the swampy spot where we crossed the spruit. The South African swallows are even more confiding and fearless of men than our own swifts; not only will they build in the passages of houses that have continual access to the air, but I have known them take up their abode in dwelling-rooms when these have happened to be left open for any length of time. Their nests are more elaborate than those of the European *Hirundo*, and are entered by a passage sometimes straight, but occasionally slightly curved, a foot or more in length, woven into the nest itself, the whole being affixed to a horizontal roof. Their number, too, as well as the number of the goat-sucker tribe (*Caprimulgus*), is greater than that of the European species, but their notes are neither so strong nor so agreeable.

We were now approaching the valley of the Mooi River, a perennial stream, bounded for some miles on either hand by chains of hills or by isolated eminences. As we turned from a grassy hollow, we saw Potchefstroom lying before us, looking, at first sight, smaller than it really is, the effect of its being built on a level in the form of a long parallelogram, in such a way that it is overshadowed by the trees that line its streets. It is one of the most important places in South Africa, and will probably retain its high rank, as it remains the chief trade-centre of the country, and is hardly likely to be ousted from its prominence, unless it should happen to be affected by the construction of the Delagoa and Middleburgh

Railway from Pretoria. When I was there I estimated the population at about 4000, a total that would be much increased if it were made to include the inhabitants of old Mooi-Riverdorp, a name given to the series of farms that, commencing at the north end of the town, extends for some miles up both sides of the river valley.

The Mooi River encloses the town on the east with a tolerably strong stream and some rushy shallows; the water is clear, and contains many of the same fish as the Vaal, besides numerous crabs; otters, wild cats, and water-lizards are found on its banks. An aqueduct from the river, as well, I believe, as from the hills on the west, is carried round the western side of the town, and from this a good supply of water is conveyed to the houses and their gardens.

In the summer-time grass grows freely in the less frequented streets, and even in the dry season the place with its flat-roofed or gabled houses, all neatly white-washed, rising among the foliage of the foreign evergreens, the cypress, the eucalyptus, and the ivy that have been acclimatized, has all the appearance of one large well-cultivated garden, and offers a striking contrast to the dead yellow of the dried-up grass in the surrounding valley; but when, as on the occasions of my two visits in 1873 and 1874, the adjacent hills and plains are rich in verdure, and the river-banks are brilliant with white and red and yellow blossoms, then is indeed the time when Potchefstroom, arrayed in all its glory,

fairly vindicates its title of the "Flower-town" of the Transvaal.

The streets are straight, dividing the town into rectangular blocks, and at the places where they intersect, open squares are left, the most spacious of which is appropriated for a market-place. The little English church, all overgrown with ivy, is very picturesque, but with this exception none of the public edifices rise above the level of the ordinary style of building. The town is the residence of a magistrate, and of the Portuguese Consul, and it contains several elementary schools. It carries on an active trade with the diamond-fields and Natal, some mills and *tan-yards* being situated on the outskirts. The produce sent to the diamond-fields consists chiefly of corn, meal, meat, and tobacco; that sent to Natal being tobacco, cattle, skins, and a small supply of ostrich feathers and ivory. It should be added that a large proportion of the goods despatched to the interior from Natal and the diamond-fields has to pass through Potchefstroom on its way.

Although the town has no pretensions to architectural beauty, yet the places of business are thoroughly commodious, and the private residences are often quite elegant villas. The great charm, however, of them all, even of the most modest, lies in the well-kept orchards and gardens with which they are surrounded, the hedges being gay with myriads of roses, with fig-bushes, and with the bright leaves and fiery blossoms of the pome-

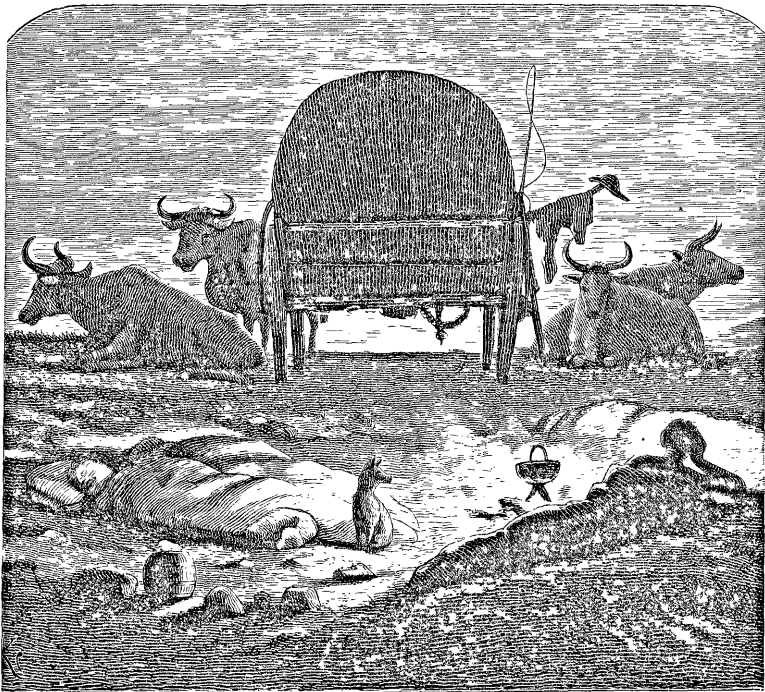
granate, which turn to their large and luscious fruit. The whole atmosphere seems pervaded with colour and fragrance, and for many consecutive months of the year a tempting supply of fruit hangs in the hedgerows, so that the owner may gather in their produce without depriving his plot of ground of its ordinary aspect of a gay and enjoyable flower-garden.

Overhanging the brooks that ripple in gutters along the streets, are fine weeping willows, that afford a refreshing shade from the glowing sunbeams; their light green leaves and slim drooping boughs stand out in elegant contrast alike to the compact growth of the fruit-trees, to the dark foliage of the eucalyptus, to the pointed shoots of the arbor vitæ, and to the funereal hue of the cypress.

It was evening when we next started, taking an east-north-east direction, to proceed towards the Mooi. We had scarcely left the town behind us when we began to experience the greatest difficulty, on account of the mud, in making our way over the few hundred yards that led to the primitive bridge across the river.

Our route next morning lay through a wide valley, open in most directions, in which was a farmstead consisting of several buildings, and carefully enclosed by its own fields and well-kept garden. Having here obtained some gourds, we proceeded nearly east, and soon reached a table-land, bounded on the south by a chain of hills partially covered with

trees. In other quarters we had an uninterrupted view of the river-valley with its numerous farms, to be recognized everywhere by the dark patches of cultivated land ; in the extreme distance were ridges



NIGHT-CAMP.

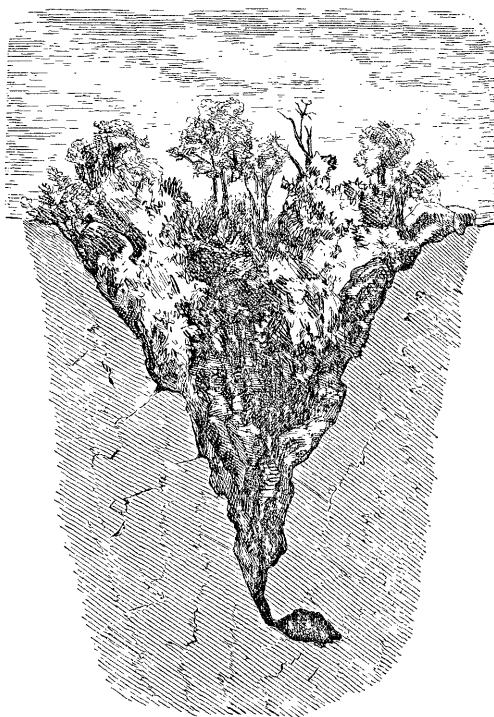
of hills and isolated heights, and the slope of the Blue-bank plateau ; while on the northern horizon we could just discern the outline of the Magalies mountains. It was the finest view I had hitherto seen.

On the table-land that we were crossing, I noticed

some funnel-shaped chasms in the soil, varying from twenty-five to forty feet in depth, distinguishable from a distance by the thickness of the growth of the trees. I afterwards learnt that similar chasms are by no means uncommon in some parts of the Transvaal, between the Harts River and the Molapo, as well as between the Lower Molapo and the Vaal in the Barolong and Batlapin territory; they are found likewise in Griqualand West. These crater-like openings are characteristic of the vast bed of superficial limestone that lies, sometimes indeed only in thin layers, but ordinarily some hundreds of feet thick, covered in some places with sand or chalk, and in others with blocks of granite or slate; they are caused by the union of several deep fissures in the rock far below the surface of the soil. This limestone-bed has a clearly defined stratification; it bears external marks of the action of water, and throughout its extent of hundreds of miles is full of cracks, but so hard is its substance, and so huge is its mass, that in nine cases out of ten the convulsions of nature have not made any appreciable displacement; it is only in these chasms that the effect is at all apparent.

The underground fissures, sometimes several miles long, serve as subterranean channels for the streams, which after a while force themselves out through little rifts into the valleys. This is the case with the Upper Molapo, and in the same way does a portion of the Mooi flow below the surface of the ground, disappearing entirely in places, to reissue

further down the valley. Where, however, several fissures are concentrated at one point, they result in the formation of the craters to which I refer. At the top, these funnels are sometimes as much as 200 or 300 yards in circumference: at first sight they have the appearance of being circular, but



FUNNEL-SHAPED CAVITY IN ROCKS.

on investigation they nearly always prove triangular, or, less frequently, quadrilateral. The interstices of broken rock with which their inner surface is lined are filled up by the surrounding

earth, which thus forms a luxuriant bed for the roots of trees and shrubs, which tower up above, and become conspicuous upon the generally barren plain.

Where the fissures that radiate from the bottom of the funnels are sufficiently wide at the top, it is quite possible to descend perpendicularly for a short distance and to trace their course sometimes for several hundred yards. Many of them are full of water clear as crystal, and one that I saw subsequently, on my way back from my third journey on the Upper Molapo, was full to the depth of 140 feet, so that I might almost feel justified in describing it as a miniature lake.

Although I have not seen Herr Hübner's "Klipdachs-Schlucht," I imagine it must be included in the category of these formations. I found, too, that many small streams in the district of the Vaal, the Harts River, the Molapo, and the Marico, as well as in that of the Upper Limpopo, had their origin in similar hollows in the rock, where the water could not immediately run off, but collected in the funnel until it forced its way through. At most of the farms near such streams we noticed how the supply of water issued from a marshy spot, perhaps a mile or so higher up, and how in the very midst of the springs there was frequently a cavity, perhaps fifty feet or more in depth, that had all the appearance of having been bored in the rock.

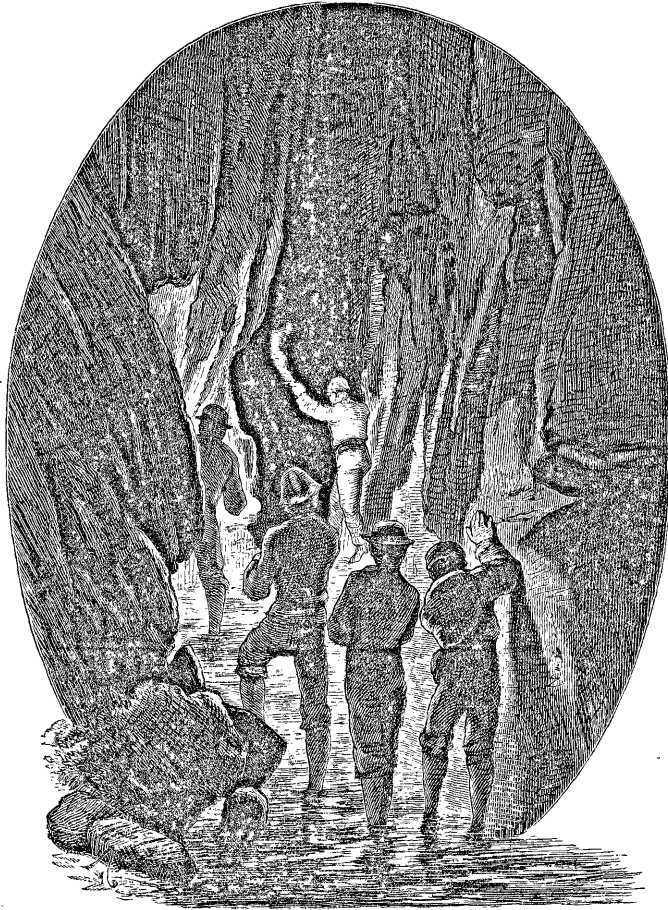
In every place of this character, even where the

water had only a subterranean outlet, I invariably found that there were none but the same species of fish. I know a reedy pool on a plain between the Harts River and the Molapo, abounding with fish and birds, which appears to have no outlet whatever; and having ascertained that its greatest depth is near the middle, I have no doubt but that it is an example of these open funnels in the rock. In the limestone where these singular formations exist, besides veins of quartz and quartzose mineral, there are to be found particles of tin, copper, iron, and silver.

It was on the third day after leaving Potchefstroom that we arrived at Wonderfontein. This is the name by which the Boers distinguish the caves and grottoes of the district, and which does not belong as usual to a single farm, but to a series of farms that with their separate pasture-lands lie along the valley of the Mooi River. The farm-houses are chiefly built of stone, and are buildings of good elevation, each being provided with a waggon-shed, and with one or more rush-huts for drying tobacco, which is universally cultivated in this part of the country. The particular farm to which we were now directing our course was in the immediate vicinity of the "wonderful" caves, and might be termed Wonderfontein proper.

Fed by numerous streams that flowed from both directions, the Mooi River was here of comparative importance; its banks in places were swampy, and overgrown with masses of reeds, yielding an unfaul-

ing source of interest to the ornithologist; and so confusing was the chorus of whistling, twittering, cackling, and singing, that we could hardly fail to be



GROTTO OF WONDERFONTEIN.

puzzled as to where we should give our attention first.

By the permission of the farmer we made our camp

under some weeping willows that overhung his peach-garden. We made many inquiries about the grottoes, and were told that as it was quite easy to find the entrance it was equally easy to miss the way inside, and to fail to find an exit; it was therefore advisable to be provided with guides. This office, we were soon informed, could be undertaken by the two sons of the farmer for the remuneration from our party of 1*l.* a head. Exorbitant as I felt the demand was, yet having come to Wonderfontein for the express purpose of visiting the caves, I submitted to the exaction without a murmur. Some relations of the farmer, who were staying with him on a visit, proposed to join us, and we started without much delay, the two guides each carrying a bundle of tallow candles.

Having crossed the little river by a ford, wide but quite shallow, we had to clamber up the right bank, which was very rocky, and covered with bushwood. A quarter of an hour brought us to a chasm in the rocks, opening almost perpendicularly downwards, and which was manifestly another of the funnels which I have been describing. The entrance to the cavern was a clear illustration of the rending of the rocks, but I must own that I was considerably disappointed with the interior. I had expected to find fossil remains of the late geological period, and thereby perhaps to supply a gap in the geological records of South Africa; but I found nothing to gratify my anticipations.

By the help of the rocks projecting from the sides

of the funnel, we managed to descend to the bottom, which had gradually contracted until it was only a narrow passage slanting down towards, or it might be below, the river-bed. Here we entered upon a perfect labyrinth of fissures, at first so small that we could only creep in one after another on all fours, but increasing till they were frequently ten feet high; they terminated above in mere clefts, from which the water kept dripping, and formed stalactites that were not exceptional in character, either of form or size; they had nearly all been damaged by previous visitors, and the ground was covered with their fragments.

The very multiplicity of the underground passages through which we were conducted, was in itself a proof that the rock had been rifted in all directions, and in many places where the two clefts came into connexion, a sort of vault was formed overhead, somewhat higher than the passages, but presenting no other remarkable feature. The sides were dark grey, generally bare and smooth. The little brook, of which we could hear the sound as soon as we entered, rippled through the caves from east to west, and covered the breadth of the passage, making it necessary for us to perform the best part of our excursion barefooted. As we went onwards, either to the west or north, the water became considerably deeper; we caught sight of some stalactites, glistening and undamaged, just before us, but were prevented from securing them by our guides, who refused to advance a step further.

It would not be a matter of much difficulty to widen the narrow places between the entrance to the cavern and the broader clefts in the interior, so that a miniature boat might be introduced; it would at least make it possible to penetrate to the end of the passages, and might probably be the means of discovering loftier and more spacious grottoes. To me it appeared that away from the river the passages were mere rifts, but that closer to the river they were invariably wider, thus confirming the impression that the water in making its way along them had gradually washed out for itself a larger outlet.

We were not in the caves very long, but found them thickly tenanted by bats, that kept on following us up to the very entrance. Our guides held the fluttering creatures in such abhorrence that nothing would induce them to touch them; they were accordingly much surprised when I captured two of them as an addition to my collection of mammalia, and as a memorial of my visit to the wonderful grottoes.

Wonderfontein is one of those places in South Africa where an explorer may advantageously spend a considerable time, ever finding an ample reward for his labours; the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral world are all well worthy of his best investigation. My own visit on this occasion was necessarily limited to three days, so that I could obtain nothing beyond a cursory glance at the neighbourhood.

Larger quadrupeds have all been exterminated for the last fifteen years, but on the plains towards the north I found numbers of *Catoblepas Gorgon*, *Antilope albifrons* and *Euchore*, whilst the handsome yellow-brown rietbocks, their short horns bending forwards in a hook, were occasionally to be met with, either singly or in pairs, in the long grass or among the rushes on the river.

Our farmer friend was very courteous, and invited us to join his sons on their hunting excursions. Holes recently scratched on the ground bore witness to the existence of jackals, proteles, and striped hyænas; very often porcupines, jumping-hares, and short-tailed pangolins might be seen; and amongst the rocks I found several genets, and a kind of weasel with black stripes.

Once when I was out strolling with one of my people along the far side of the river, we had put down our guns against a rock, and were watching a flock of finches; suddenly my attention was drawn off by a great splashing in the water, and looking through an opening in the rushes, I saw four otters swimming rapidly one behind the other up the stream. Before we had time to get our guns, they all disappeared in the sedge. The brown otters of the South African rivers are shorter and more thick-set than the European species, and their skins are of inferior value; they are to be found in all reedy and flowing streams, as well as in the pools of spruits.

In rapids, and especially in the deep pools

left in the dried-up river-beds, which never fail to abound in fish, they thrive wonderfully, being rarely hunted, except when they are enticed by the sound of poultry to venture near human habitations ; this is of rare occurrence, but when it does happen, they are sure to be attacked and killed by the dogs. They are scarce, however, in all places where the natives have settled close to the river, and find their safest retreat in the south-central, the western, and the northern districts of the Transvaal, where the valleys are marshy and rushes plentiful. I have noticed that they seldom remain stationary, but seek their prey over extensive tracts of country, hunting fish and crustaceans in the shallow pools, rats and mice in the grassy banks, and birds in the morasses and reedy parts of the rivers.

Amongst the clumps of reeds we observed the hanging nests of sedge-warblers, of the bright red, black-spotted fire-finch, and of the handsome long-tailed king-finch (*Vidua Capensis*), one of the largest of the finch tribe. In winter the king-finch assumes a brownish hue, but in the summer its plumage is a rich velvet-black, to which an orange spot on each shoulder stands out in brilliant contrast. The change of plumage is not the only transformation with which Nature during its period of luxuriance endues this charming bird ; its tail, that during the winter is of no unusual length, increases in summer to a bush of feathers eighteen inches long, which so seriously impedes its flight, that in gusty

weather it can only fly in the same direction as the wind.

Like all the other reed-finches, it is a lively little creature, and may perpetually be seen swinging and peeping about on the tops of the reed-stalks, or fluttering over the morasses; and when it seems to consider itself unobserved, it settles down and twitters cheerily among the rushes. If, however, it is alarmed or excited, as it may be by the appearance of another finch invading its nest, by any attempt to capture it, or by the approach of a snake, it becomes perfectly furious; its throat becomes inflated, it spits like a cat, its beautiful neck-feathers bristle up into a perfect ruff, and it prepares to use its sharp beak to good purpose. There are few more interesting birds than this in the whole country.

Long-eared owls, the true owls of the swamps, sometimes flew up as we came near them; but, after a short flight, they would soon alight again on the edge of the marshes. There were a good many kinds of water-birds to be seen, both swimmers and waders; and we noticed several varieties of sand-pipers, bitterns, small silver herons, common grey herons, and purple herons; as well as a sort of ruff, some moor-hens, wild ducks and divers. Whilst one of a party in a boat searches for nests and eggs, another may very readily shoot at the birds that are disturbed.

The rich blossoms that abound in the moister parts of the valleys naturally contribute to the

generation of innumerable insects; and as a consequence insectivorous birds, as well as graminivorous, sun-birds, bee-eaters, and swallows swarm about the shrubs both of the gardens and the woods. The multiplicity of insects, however, did not prevent their capture from being a matter of pain and grief; the mosquitoes not only tormented us in the evening, but even stung our faces and hands badly in the daytime.

Snakes, no doubt, were abundant, and I caught one of a variety that I had never seen before; it was dark grey above, and sulphur-coloured underneath, about two feet long, and quite as thick as my finger.

The worthy farmer who owned the place seemed immensely proud of his "wonderlijke chate;" he treated us hospitably, and had always coffee and biscuits ready whenever we called upon him. In the course of conversation he told me that the caves had been visited by a colleague of mine named Mauch, who had stayed a considerable time. He seemed to regret that we spent so much time in collecting vermin, which he called "det slechte chut," when he would have liked to be chatting about the diamond-fields, "Duitsland" and "Osteriek;" but he did what he could to gratify my eagerness to collect any birds peculiar to the locality. He recommended me to conceal myself behind his waggon-shed, and take a shot at a "besonderlik Vogel," that would be sure to settle on a half-dead tree close by; and, taking his advice,

From Likatlong to Wonderfontein. 181

I had the satisfaction of getting a specimen of a small bird of the darter tribe.

Many of the farmers distil a kind of spirit from peaches, which is known in the Transvaal as peach-brandy; it is similar in character, but considerably weaker and cheaper than that prepared from grapes in the western part of Cape Colony, and known by the name of cango.

CHAPTER VI.

RETURN JOURNEY TO DUTOITSPAN.

Departure from Wonderfontein—Potchefstroom again—A mistake—Expenses of transport—Rennicke's Farm—A concourse of birds—Gildenhuis—A lion-hunt—Hallwater Farm and Saltpan—A Batlapin delicacy—Rough travelling—Hebron—Return to Dutoitspan—The Basutos.

AFTER much enjoyment of the natural objects associated with the place, and with very pleasant recollections of its kindly-disposed owner, I prepared to quit Wonderfontein, which I had determined should be the limit of my first excursion, and to make my way back to Dutoitspan. As far as Bloemhof, I determined to take the same route by which I had come.

Being anxious that it should be by daylight that we recrossed the marsh which we had experienced to be so perilous by the bridge over the Mooi, at Potchefstroom, I resolved to push on all night, with the exception of a brief interval of rest.

During the period of the short halt, I was sitting almost lost in reverie, when I was roused by hearing what struck me as some peculiarly rich notes. One of my people drew my attention to a couple of large

birds, not a hundred yards off. It was too dark to distinguish what they were; and before we could creep near them they had taken alarm and had risen high in the air; but I am tolerably certain that I recognized the deep long-drawn notes, as they re-echoed in the stillness of the night, as the warning cry of the South African grey crane. Notes of this full, resonant character, that seem to reverberate as if from a sounding-board, so as to be audible at an unusual distance, are peculiar to a few kinds of birds, including the swans, which have a hollow breast-bone, through which the wind-pipe curves before ascending to the throat.

On the evening of the fourth day after quitting Wonderfontein, we re-entered Potchefstroom, and made our encampment at the same spot as before.

Several of the residents, with whom we had already made acquaintance, came and paid us a visit in our waggon. They told me that Mauch had stayed several times in Potchefstroom, and had found a liberal friend in Herr Fossmann. In the course of conversation they mentioned that dendrolites and other petrifications were to be found on the mountains that we could see towards the east; and, in answer to my inquiries about the interior of the country, they said that several times a year waggons laden with ivory, ostrich feathers, and large quantities of skins came from Shoshong, the town of the Bamangwatos, on their way to Natal. These waggons came down by the Limpopo, crossing it just above its junction with the Marico. They were the pro-

perty of two brothers named Drake, with whom, on my second journey, I made acquaintance at Shoshong, being called to attend one of them professionally. Among other bits of information that my visitors gave me, I learnt that two men were now staying at Potchefstroom, who had just returned from elephant-hunting in the Matabele country.

I had finished all the sketching that I wanted to do on my way up the valley, and consequently had ample leisure on the return journey for hunting, and for seeking to add to my scientific collection. As we crossed the plain, I took my good pointer Niger with me, and walked on one side of the waggon, at a distance of some three hundred yards. Niger was always of great service to me, and never off his guard in our foraging expeditions. I had brought him from the diamond-fields, on my baboon-hunting excursion. Whilst I kept my distance on one side, one of the rest of us marched along at about the same interval on the other, in the same way as a couple of scouts. The larger bustards (*Eupodotis caffra* and *kori*) were too shy to allow us to come near them, but we had some good sport amongst the grey and black lesser bustards, partridges, sand-grouse, plovers with red legs and speckled wings, and hoplopteri, which seemed to abound chiefly in the more marshy places.

A little incident that amused us as much as anything that transpired on the journey had the effect of detaining us a short time on our way between the Baken and Matschavi spruits. Gert was seated

upon the box of the waggon, and spied out a dark object, about two miles in advance to the left, which, as we approached nearer to it, was acknowledged on all hands to be an animal of some kind or other. Gert and the other native insisted that it was only a cow; but as there was no cowherd in charge, and no other cattle near by, the rest of us came to the conclusion that it could only be one of those old gnus, which, on account of their combative propensities, are from time to time banished from a herd, and thrust out to an isolated existence. We were all of one mind that the animal was of no service where it was, and that it had better find its way to some European museum. Accordingly, I started off, quite intent upon securing the prize. I was beginning to approach with the profoundest caution; but I very soon found that any delicacy on my part was quite superfluous; for before I got within three hundred yards of it, the brute had caught sight of me, and was tearing towards me at full speed. It was a great bull that came rushing onwards, with its huge horns lowered to the ground. I did not lose my presence of mind, but fired a couple of blank shots, which made the animal first pause and then retreat. I had to return to the waggon, somewhat chagrined, it is true, but compelled to join in the general laugh, and to own that the European eyesight was far outdone in keenness by that of the Korannas.

Without any mishap, we crossed the ford over the Schoenspruit, and made our camp on the open sward

between the stream and the aqueduct leading to Klerksdorp. Close beside us were two other waggons belonging to a Transvaal "transport-driver," who came to have a talk with us; and as we were taking a cup of coffee, he joined us at our repast. He told us that to the best of his belief the goods he was conveying included casks of French wine and brandy, jars of hollands, boxes of English biscuits, besides a variety of pickaxes, shovels, and other implements. Altogether his load weighed nearer six tons than five. The waggons had been loaded in the diamond-fields, and the driver's business was to take them to the gold-diggings. He informed us that, after paying all his expenses, he hoped to clear 140*l.* by this journey; so that we inferred that, including the dues paid for unlading at Port Elizabeth, the total cost of the transport of these goods thence to Pilgrim's Rest, in the Lydenburg district, could not be less than 300*l.* It is true that the distance between the two places, *via* Hope Town, Kimberley, Christiana, Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Pretoria, and Middleberg, can scarcely be less than 1100 miles; but even for this the charge seems very exorbitant. Generally speaking, the transport-drivers no doubt make a good thing of their business; and it would seem to be only in exceptionally bad seasons, or when winter snow-storms on the paroo plains prove fatal to their oxen, that they ever suffer any serious loss.

Next morning we quitted Klerksdorp, proceeding towards the Estherspruit. It had not rained for

some days, and we were sanguine of finer weather ; but the nights were very sensibly colder than when we first started on our expedition.

Our mid-day halt was made, on the following day, beneath the shade of some of those many-stemmed dwarf trees, the branches of which, in complicated twinings, bend downwards to the ground. Immediately below them the soil was almost bare of verdure, and was penetrated by many mouse-holes ; but beyond there were slight depressions in the earth, where the grass grew luxuriantly.

Arriving early next day at the flowery valley of the Estherspruit, I devoted some hours to a search for insects, knowing that many of the smaller coleoptera would abound on the umbelliferous and liliaceous plants. We afterwards all went off in a body, armed with our guns, pincers, and the waggon-whip, to the rocks on the left of the valley. One of the results of this excursion was the capture of two snakes ; and, to judge from the width of the traces that I noticed, I should conclude that there were a good many puff-adders in the neighbourhood. It was precisely the place where they would be likely to thrive, as being haunted by reed-rats—the smaller of a brown colour, the larger of a grey hue with black stripes—as well as by swarms of the striped mice which build in the bushes. Reed-rats are venturesome creatures that from their shape might almost be called jumping-shrews. The largest of them are about the size of a common rat. They live in holes underneath rocks, their food consisting of

insects and larvæ. They are always on the alert, and move very nimbly; but when pursued, they have a habit of stopping to look round them, and this generally results in their being caught.

Although it was late in the afternoon when we reached the Matjespruit, we went on for another three hours before stopping for the night. The first halt next morning was at Klipspruit, where, about a mile and a half above us, we observed a waggon standing, with some horses grazing by its side. Behind the waggon was a tent, and I hoped that we should find we had come across a party of Dutch hunters, from whom we might obtain some fresh meat, in case our own sport should prove unsuccessful. My expectation was not disappointed, and we soon ascertained that the waggon was the property of the landowner, whose farm residence was higher up the valley, but who had brought his family out in this fashion for a holiday, to enjoy a little hunting. Not far from the waggon a number of boughs were stuck into the ground, attached to each other by festoons of bullock-thongs, on which were hanging long strips of meat undergoing the process of being converted into "beltong." On the ground was the carcass of a bull gnu, which a young Koranna was in the act of skinning.

Game seemed to be abundant in every direction. We saw a fight between two gnus. They charged each other with prodigious vehemence; but when they caught sight of us they obviously recognized us as common enemies, and making a truce between

themselves, scampered off with the rest of the herd.

After we had passed the Lionspruit and the Wolf-spruit, the following evening brought us to Rennicke's farm, the owner of which had not been over-courteous to us on our outward journey. Now, however, he not only raised no objection to our hunting in his woods, but sent his young son to act as our guide. Conducting us to the edge of the forest, the lad bade us stoop down and follow him quietly. About sixty yards further on we came to a low bank; it was not much above five feet high, and dotted over with a number of dwarf shrubs. The youth crept on very cautiously, and having looked down, motioned to us to follow him noiselessly, and to peep through the bushes. Pointing with his finger over the embankment, he whispered in my ear,—

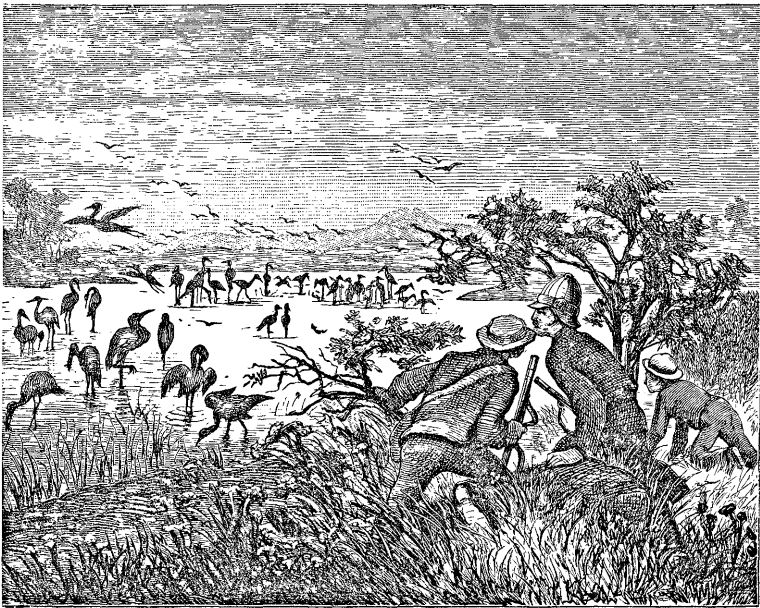
“Kick, ohm!”¹

I shall never forget the sight. I only wish I could have thrown a net over the whole, and preserved it in its entirety.

The bank on which we were crouching was the boundary of a depression, always overgrown with grass and reeds, but now full of rain-water. In the pool were birds congregated in numbers almost beyond what could be conceived; birds swimming, birds diving, birds wading. Perhaps the most conspicuous among them were the sacred ibises, of which there could not be less than fifty; some of

¹ “Look, uncle!”

them standing asleep, with their heads under their snow-white wings; some of them striding about solemnly, pausing every now and then to make a snap at a smaller victim; and some of them hurrying to and fro, dipping their bills below the water in search of fish. On the far side, as if utterly obli-



A BIRD COLONY.

vious of the outer world, a pair of grey herons stood motionless and pensive; from amongst the weeds rose the unabated cackle of the wild ducks, grey and speckled; mingling with this were the deep notes of the countless moor-hens; while an aspect of perpetual activity was given to the scene by the

nimble movements of swarms of little divers. At a spot where the embankment descended sharply to the pool, several ruffs (*Philomachus pugnax*) were wandering backwards and forwards, uttering their peculiar shrill whistle; and large flocks of sandpipers were to be noticed, either skimming from margin to margin of the water, or resting passively just where they had alighted.

The explanation of this enormous concourse of the feathered tribe was very simple. A storm of unwanted violence had washed down from the plain above into the hollow beneath myriads of worms and insects, lizards, and even mice, and so bountiful a banquet had attracted the promiscuous and immense gathering which had excited my wonder.

I suppose that one of us must have incautiously allowed himself to be seen or heard, for all at once a whole cloud of the birds rose above us in the air. Taken aback at the sudden flight, I fired almost at random, and was fortunate enough to bring down one ibis and one moor-hen. As we returned along the edge of the swamp, another of our party shot a wild duck.

On getting back to the waggon, I learnt from one of my people who had not joined us in the excursion to the bank, that the farmer had sent me an invitation to go and visit him. Although he did his best to be kind and hospitable, I found the arrangements of his house, which was built of brick, of the most simple and unpretending order. He complained bitterly of the losses he sustained every year

from the disease that broke out among his horses ; his own saddle-horse had not escaped the infection, and he was anxious to know whether I could give him any advice that might be serviceable to him.

We left Rennie's farm in time to arrive about dusk at "Gildenhuis Place," a farm which I have previously mentioned as lying on the southern slopes of the Maquassie Hills.

À propos of these Maquassie Hills, I may mention that on my third journey into the interior, two years subsequently to the present, I met an elephant-hunter, whose home was on their northern ridges ; he was a brave fellow, and told me of an episode in his career which I may be allowed to repeat, in association with my own experiences in the neighbourhood.

His name was Weinhold Schmitt, and he had spent his youth on one of the farms at the mouth of the Maquassie River. The northern passes of the hills were being terribly ravaged by four lions, that none of the Boers would venture to attack. At last, one day, a farmer's son, having gone out to fetch home three of his horses, came riding back in great excitement, with the intelligence that he had found their carcasses all lying half-eaten in the grass. The footmarks all around left no doubt that the lions had been the perpetrators of the deed.

The announcement stirred the Boers to action, and they determined to make up a party to hunt them down. Accordingly the farmer and six others, of whom Schmitt was one, mounted their horses ;



LION HUNT IN THE MAQUASI HILLS.

the son who had discovered the remains being elected leader. The lion-track was soon found; it led through a valley, across one hill, then another, and finally on to a level plain, where, not only was the grass very short, but the soil was so hard that the vestiges of the beasts could be no longer distinguished. After some hesitation, it was agreed that there was no alternative but to abandon the chase; and it is very probable that most of the party had found their ardour somewhat abated by their exertions, and were quite content to acquiesce in the proposal to return home. They broke up close to Schmitt's house, one of the party remaining behind for a minute to talk. All at once, to their vast surprise, they spied out, close to the farm, a lion and lioness, evidently lurking in ambush. Without losing an instant they rode towards them, their horses behaving bravely in the presence of their natural foes. In order to get a better aim at the beasts when they rose, Schmitt dismounted and led his horse a few steps by the bridle, then raising his gun to be ready to fire, he called to his partner to do the same. On turning his head, however, he found that his friend, instead of following him, had retreated for a good fifty yards, so that here he was alone confronting a couple of lions, with very likely several more in their rear. What could he do but retreat also? As he retired he kept his eye fixed upon the lions, who kept steadily following him, till just as he joined his companion, they suddenly turned tail and made off towards one

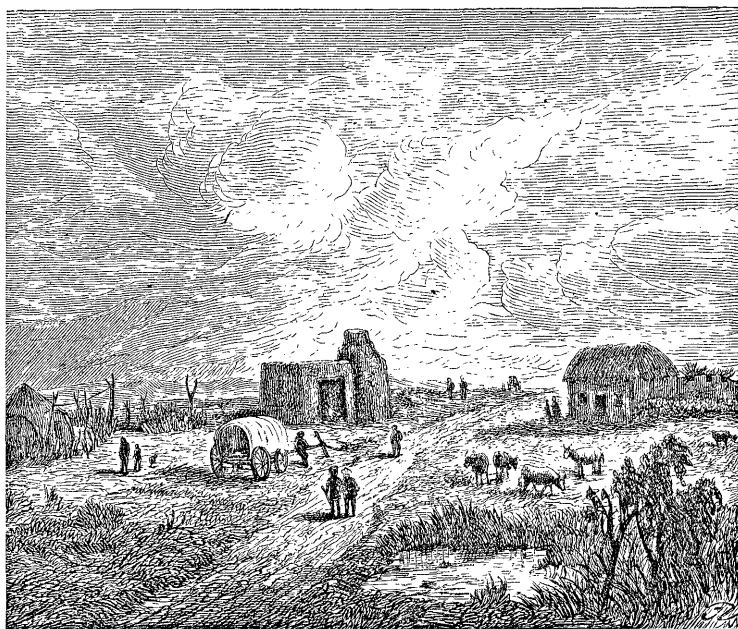
of the rock-funnels where the bushes were very thick.

The rest of the party had hardly got out of ear-shot, and were soon summoned back. Off they started, and determined to surround the hollow, taking especial care to watch the side nearest the hills for which the lions were almost sure to make. After a continuous holloaing and throwing of stones, the lioness was ultimately roused from her retreat. She did not rush straight towards the hills, as had been expected, but took a devious course, which, however, happened to bring her within range of no less than three of the pursuers. Simultaneously three shots rang in the air. Despite her efforts to escape, the lioness very soon sunk to the earth. Every shot had taken effect.

To my inquiry what became of the other lions, Schmitt replied that they withdrew to the district of the Barolongs, and were not heard of again for a long time ; but he concluded by saying that even now, in very dry seasons, they will occasionally return from the far west.

It was at no great distance from the Maquassie River that we camped out next day, under the shade of some lovely acacias. The current, which we had found considerably swollen when we crossed it a few weeks before, was now reduced to a mere thread. On the same evening we arrived at the bank of the Bamboespruit, where we spent the night, as we did not care to cross the ford in the dark.

Our progress on the following day led us over the grass plains that I have already described, and past the two farms known as Rietfontein and Coetze's, both situated on the edge of salt pans. Arriving next day at Bloemhof, we stayed only a



HALLWATER FARM.

short time, starting off again for the Hallwater saltpan, thence to take a short cut to Christiana.

In 1872 the saltpan of Hallwater became notorious throughout South Africa, in consequence of the supposed discovery of the ruins of Monomotapa, a town situated in a district of the same name that existed two centuries ago. Old chronicles relate that it

was a domain that included pretty well the whole of South and South-central Africa; and that the population, through the medium of the natives on the coast, kept up an active trade with the Dutch and Portuguese. It was said that Portuguese missionaries from the east had worked amongst the inhabitants, and traditions from the same source represent that the towns were for the most part built near the gold-diggings, and that in the immediate neighbourhood of Monomotapa alone there had been no less than 3000 mines. Discoveries had now been made near the saltpan of some stone fragments of columns and mouldings, evidently bearing the marks of human labour; and as the distance between this spot and Cape Town corresponded accurately with what the records stated was the distance of Monomotapa from Cape Town, the inference was generally accepted that the true site of the ancient town had been revealed.

As the place was only a few miles to the north of my route, I was unwilling to pass it without a visit. It was near the Vaal, and nominally in the Transvaal Republic; but although I found an old Dutchwoman living there with her daughters, I learnt that it was virtually under the authority of the Korannas at Mamusa, a power which they retained until the beginning of 1879. It was just at the southern corner of a triangular tract of country that had its base towards Mamusa and the Harts River, and was claimed by the Batlapin chiefs, Gassibone and Man-kuruane, at that time both independent, by old

David Mashon, the Koranna king of Mamusa, and by the Dutch. Amidst the perpetual disturbances that arose between these various claimants, the Dutch farmers who had settled on the land were invariably made the scape-goats.

Producing the best cooking-salt in the Bloemhof



KORANNA.

district, the saltpan yielded an income over and above that derived from the pasturage; so that the old woman who resided in the red-clay cottage with its roof thatched with grass, besides pasturing her cattle, employed several servants in collecting salt. There were a few huts close at hand, and two

holes about twelve feet deep opened the way for a spring, which was conducted by a trench to an artificial pond that supplied the people with their water. The pond, when I saw it, was filthily dirty; there were some red-legged and spurred plovers on its margin, but it was a spot where only tortoises and frogs could lead a contented existence. The foregoing sketch, which gives a fair view of the cottage and the huts, was taken two years afterwards, when I was on my third journey.

Soon after my visit, the white people took their departure, leaving the collection of the salt to the Korannas. To any traveller on his way to the interior, I should give the advice to lay in a good stock of salt at Hallwater; it is an indispensable article for preserving meat, and for preparing skins; there is none so good to be obtained elsewhere; and its price is something over a penny a pound. The Korannas who reside here support themselves chiefly by breeding bullocks and goats, but they find it worth their while to keep a few tumble-down wag-gons in which they may send salt to Potchefstroom, Bloemhof, and the diamond-fields, where they ordinarily sell it at the rate of 1*l.* for a "mute" of 200 lbs.

If a low dam were constructed close to the saltpan, just above the place where the dry channels open, a reservoir could very easily be provided, which would amply serve to irrigate their fields; it would, however, demand something more than Koranna energy to carry out any such scheme,

and it is very unlikely to be put into execution until the natives are debarred from the chance of indulging in the fire-water that paralyzes their faculties.

I had an opportunity during our short stay here of tasting the favourite national dish. Some Batlapins were passing through the place, and were roasting some locusts over red-hot ashes. As soon as they were sufficiently cooked, a good many of the men took them and devoured them entire; others pulled off the feet and the wings; the more fastidious stayed to take out the insides, and it was in this condition that they were offered to us. After partaking of the luxury, I think I may recommend a few locusts to any *gourmand* who, surfeited with other delicacies, requires a dish of peculiar piquancy; in flavour I should consider them not unlike a dried and strongly-salted Italian anchovy. It is only the true South African locust that is available for the purpose of food. I found that I could make a good use of them as fishing-bait, and that they answered much better than earth-worms. Thousands out of the swarms either fall into the rivers where they are greedily devoured by the fish, or are captured by birds of all sorts and sizes, from the tiny fledgling that can scarce hold them in its claws, to the great cranes and eagles that can consume them wholesale.

Anxious to investigate the district as thoroughly as I could, I proposed to reach Christiana by a short cut, and then, turning towards the west, to