

regain the road near Hebron, thinking thus to traverse the chief part of Gassibone's territory from east-north-east to west-south-west. There was, however, no proper road in the direction in which I wanted to go, and the bushes not only obstructed our view, but were interspersed with large clumps of prickly acacias. I had no alternative but to acknowledge that my little scheme was frustrated, and to make my way to the Vaal as rapidly as I could.

On our way we saw a good many pairs of the fawn-coloured lesser bustards, and some duykerbocks and steinbocks; the duykerbocks were grazing quietly, the steinbocks only visible when startled from the bushes. There were traces of hartebeests, and of the larger gnus, probably the striped gnu (*Catoblepas taurina*, *Gorgon*), which led us to hope that the animals themselves might not be far off; but we were hardly in the mood either to be very keen upon the game, or to appreciate the beauty of the forest scenery as we otherwise should, because we were undergoing the inconvenience of a total want of water.

We came upon a Batlapin settlement, and, according to the advice of some of the residents who entered into conversation with us, we were to follow a certain footpath, which would lead us to a plain, whence we could make our way without difficulty. During the twenty minutes we rested, we noticed the women making a new hedge of thorns to protect their goats, and the men sprinkling some damp earth

on a couple of roughly-tanned hartebeest skins, to render them supple enough to make up into a dress.

The route we took on leaving seemed to be the most abundant in small game of all parts of Gassibone's territory. Most prominent were the pretty little steinbocks; but we came in sight of



BATLAPINS RETURNING FROM WORK.

three springbocks, which took flight without allowing us to come anywhere within gunshot of them, and a couple of secretary-birds, that were stalking up and down, devouring snakes and lizards, as if it were a solemn duty. Partridges, generally in pairs, were the most plentiful among the birds.

Although I felt the necessity of now traveling on as rapidly as possible, I could not resist the temptation, while I was still in the neighbourhood of the Vaal, to take one day's fishing. We had scarcely chosen our station, and lighted our fire, when the owner of a farmhouse, about half a mile off, came bustling down, and told us that he could not allow us to spend the night there; by quitting the road we had rendered ourselves liable to a fine of 5*l.* to the Republic. I made no remonstrance, setting off at once on our way; but brief as had been our halt it had enabled one of my companions to catch a sheatfish, weighing nearly three pounds, which at our next meal made an agreeable variety to our ordinary *menu*.

We reached Christiana about midnight, and were all disposed to enjoy a cup of tea after our long day's wanderings; but, to our great disappointment, we found that somehow or other the cooking apparatus had all been lost. To myself the loss was especially vexatious, as my money was so nearly exhausted that I could not afford to replace it. One of my friends, however, was good enough to relieve me of my difficulty.

Having spent the forenoon at Christiana, we spent the rest of the day in making our way to the little native kraal that we had passed as we came from Gassibone, after leaving Klipdrift. Hence to the diamond-fields our route would be over an entirely new district, the most interesting part of

which would be in the middle, amongst the hill-ridges by Hebron.

Right to the foot of the hills the country was flat. We passed several saltpans which, though small, had retained their water to a later period than usual, and were even now frequented by wild geese (*Chenelope*) and cranes. The river took a wide circuit towards the left, and it was a stiff two days' journey by which we traversed the secant of the curve. The magnificent grass plain that we crossed belonged already to the Transvaal; that on the other side, which was covered tolerably well with bushwood rising above the tall grass, was at that time claimed by Gassibone; but now both alike are included in the Transvaal. We saw, I think, more bustards than at any place I ever visited in all my travels; before us, behind us, in every direction, far and near, they seemed to swarm.

Taking Gert with me, I went into a wood adjoining our road in search of insects, and found some goat-chafers, as well as two kinds of bark-beetles (*Bostrichidæ*). Here and there we came across some skulls of gnus, sufficient in number to convince me that until quite recently they had frequented the district, though now they have retreated into the interior, and remain in the more northern plains between the Harts and Molapo Rivers, and in the plains of the Klipspruit, which, being more open, are far less favourable for antelope-stalking.

From Bloemhof we had been travelling nearly

parallel to the Free State shore, which, as far as Hebron, is higher than the opposite bank, and studded over with numerous farms. Rather more than eighteen miles from Christiana we came again upon the river, near a canteen where the goings-on seemed more than sufficiently wild and lawless. Here the road divided, one branch leading down the river to Hebron, the other crossing the stream by a passage known as the Blignaut's Pont, being the shortest and consequently most frequented route between the diamond-fields and the Transvaal. Wanting to explore the Hebron hills, as well as the deserted river-diggings adjacent to them, I chose the longer road, aware beforehand that it was also the rougher. Between Blignaut's Pont and Delportshope, near the confluence of the two rivers, there are, both in the main valley and in the valleys running into it, several insignificant villages and detached farmsteads, occupied by Korannas, who are English subjects; the men were to be seen everywhere, either lounging about in tattered European clothes, or sauntering with their dogs among the bushes, while their half-naked children were looking after the meagre herds.

Passing the canteen, we found the country beyond it rather more interesting, as we ever did when we approached the Vaal, where a practised eye will rarely fail to find plenty of sport, and a naturalist is sure to feel himself in an ample field for his studies. At the foot of the hills we came to a building, half hotel, half store, built partly of brick, and partly of

wood and canvas; it stood immediately on the Vaal, which here parts itself into several channels, and flows round a number of islands. It is really a picturesque spot, and is called Fourteen Streams. The Hebron heights commence here, and extend down the Vaal as far as Delporthope, having branches that stretch out towards the north, north-west, and north-north-east, in the direction of the Harts River, one ramification terminating in the Spitzkopf already mentioned, others reaching towards Mamusa and the hills that surround Taung, Man-kuruane's residence. All the range is thickly wooded, and it is intersected by the boundary-line between Griqualand West and the Transvaal; it commences about eight miles above Hebron, a former mission-station in the midst of the diamond-diggings. The formation of the hills consists of what is known as Vaal-stone, being greenstone containing almond-like lumps of chalcedony, covered with quartz-rubble and ferruginous and argillaceous sand. The bottom of the channel is so rocky that the river forms numerous rapids, so that the view upwards from Hebron is very charming; a wide panorama lay open before us, and we could see the hills on the horizon far away in Griqualand West and the Orange Free State, as well as the Plat Berg, a hill 800 feet high, with all its streamlets, pastures, and farm-lands.

But if the scenery was exquisite, the roads were execrable. The only pavement that nature had provided was huge blocks of stone, between which

the rain had washed away the soil and left deep gullies in the path. The waggon was in imminent danger of being overturned every few minutes, and it may be imagined that a progress under such circumstances was little to the advantage either of the baggage or my collection. As for ourselves the jolting was far too violent to allow any one of us to ride inside the waggon. The last hill into Hebron seemed to bring the peril to its climax; so steep was the descent and so sharp the curves that it made, that it was only by our combined efforts that we saved the waggon from being jerked completely over, or the oxen from rolling down the incline.

It was early on Easter Day that we were arriving at Hebron; the weather was cold and ungenial; the sky was overcast by leaden clouds drifted along by a keen south-west wind; it was just the morning to throw a chill over the most cheerful heart. Nor did the aspect of the remains of the once important diggings and station tend to enliven the spirits; ruins they could not be called, for the materials employed were of too transitory a character to allow the dwellings that were constructed to become worthy of such a description. The prospect would have been dreary at the best, but seen through the mists of a dank autumn morning, it was depressing in the extreme. Of the once populous Hebron, all that now remained was a shop or two, an hotel, a smithy, a slaughterhouse, and a prison. Crumbling, weather-beaten walls of clay were standing or falling in every

direction, the chaos, however, being of such extent as to demonstrate how large the settlement at the diggings formerly had been. Hundreds of shallow hollows in the ground contributed their testimony to the number of workers who once had busied themselves in searching for the precious crystals. Thousands of tons of rubble were left that had once been grubbed out by mere manual labour, and still attested what must have been the multitude of hands that had sifted and resifted it in eager expectation of a prize; and yet out of the host of diggers perhaps scarcely two succeeded in making a fortune, and hardly one in a dozen did more than cover his expenses.

Not only did Hebron fall to decay as rapidly as it arose; its decline was even more rapid than the fall of Klipdrift, and many other diamond-mines. Its true geological character had been misunderstood. In the alluvial deposit where the diamonds were found, there was to be discerned a variety of particles washed down from the surrounding hills, or from districts higher up the river; besides fragments of greenstone, both large and small, there were bits of quartz of various kinds (milk-quartz, rose-quartz, quartzite, and quartzite porphyry); and besides these again there were peculiar oblong cakes of clay-slate of a yellow or pale green colour, covered with a black incrustation, probably caused by the decomposition of the outer surface; these clay-slate blocks, when broken, exhibited some beautifully-marked colours ranged in concentric bands, and were

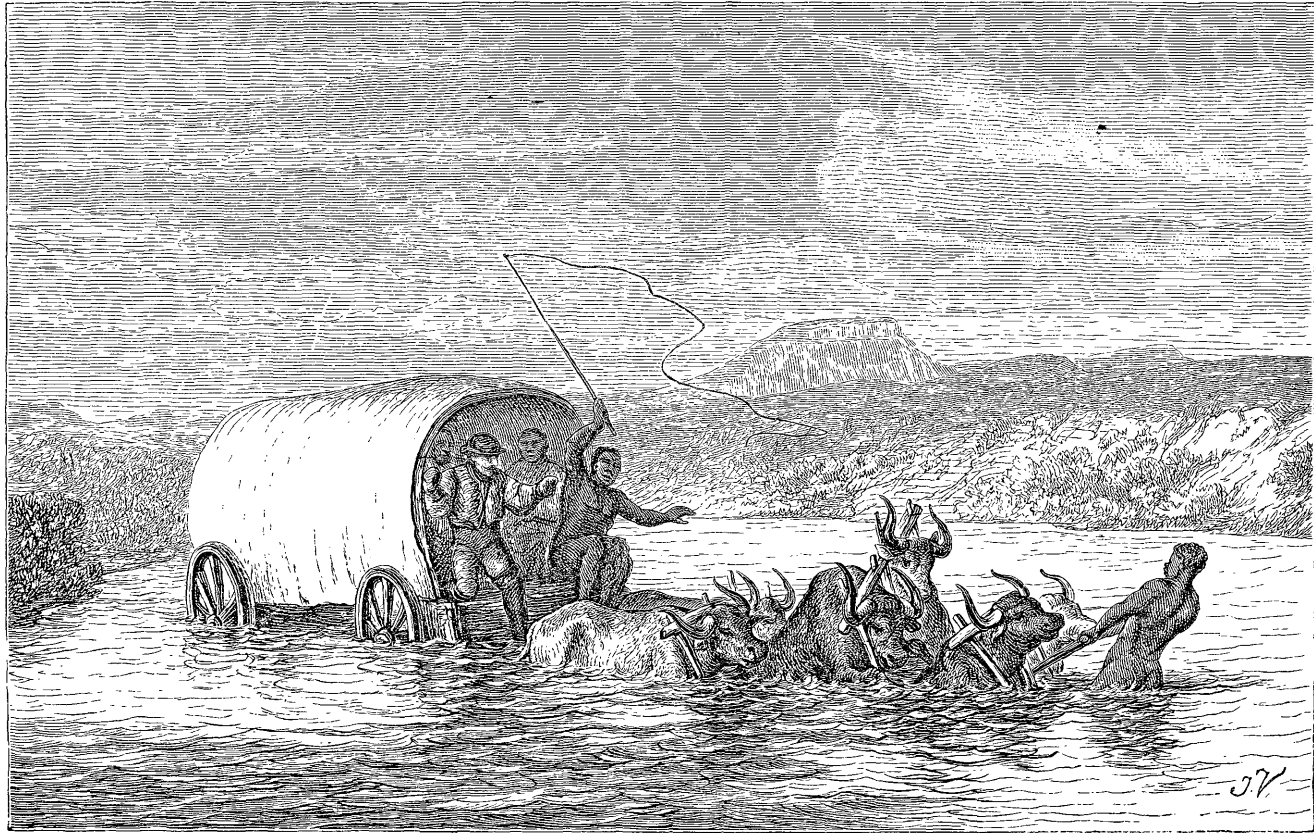
erroneously supposed to be the mother-earth of the diamond.

After making some necessary purchases at one of the shops, I found that I had spent all my money except about sixteen shillings ; this was the whole sum with which I was to get back to Dutoitspan, whither it was consequently indispensable for me to make my way without losing an hour. Because it was a holiday, the ferry-man refused to take me across the Vaal himself, and all his men were tipsy ; accordingly, I resolved to try my luck at crossing the river by a ford.

I sent out one of my companions to explore, and he soon returned with the intelligence that he had discovered a practicable fording-place, about two miles lower down the stream. Forthwith we started off.

The proposed passage, as it was lighted up by the rays of the setting sun, looked favourable enough ; but the appearance was deceptive. Though the water was shallow, the current was strong ; the river-bed, too, was covered with rocks, which even in the open road would sorely have tried the strength of our oxen. Before we had got one third of the way across we found ourselves carried considerably below the ford, and our position rapidly becoming critical.

Our black drivers exerted themselves to the uttermost. They shouted, they flogged, they pulled ; but quite in vain ; the oxen were utterly unable to stir, and distressed by the strength of the current,



EASTER SUNDAY IN THE VAAL RIVER.

they began to be restive and to pull at their yokes and bridles. This caused the foremost pair to sink deeper and deeper, and it seemed only too certain that they must be drowned. Prompt action was necessary. I had hurt my hand, and was incapacitated from rendering much help; but I sprang from the waggon, followed by one of the rest; and although we could do nothing to rescue the vehicle from its situation, we succeeded in unharnessing the oxen, who struggled to the opposite side with the greatest difficulty. By the most arduous exertions, we went backwards and forwards, carrying the most valuable part of my collection ashore; but the waggon itself we were obliged to leave, with a large portion of its contents, in the bed of the river, until further assistance could be procured. Our labour entailed such fatigue that before darkness came on we were all ready to drop.

The uncertainty about our waggon and property made us pass an anxious night, and it was a great relief in the early morning to hear a distant cracking of whips, announcing that aid was at hand. Four Koranna waggons, drawn by six or eight pairs of oxen, soon appeared, and made their way quickly to our side of the river. A bargain was concluded, by which our waggon was to be brought to land for the sum of ten shillings, and the manoeuvre was accomplished without difficulty or further accident.

On the third day after this exciting adventure I re-entered Dutoitspan. I had been away for two

months; but, in spite of having exercised the strictest economy, my journey had cost me 400*l.*; in fact, rather more. As matter of course, my absence had involved the loss of half my patients; many families had chosen another medical man, and many more, particularly the Dutch farmers, had left the diamond-fields and gone to the Free State. My attendance, however, was very soon called in to some severe cases of sickness, and I began at once to recover my position; and it was not long before I repaid the loan advanced to me for the cooking apparatus by my friend, who very shortly afterwards left Dutoitspan to settle in the colony.

The great object of my journey I conceived to be happily accomplished. I had wanted to gain experience as to the best mode of travelling, and to get some insight into the character of the country, and into the domestic habits both of the natives and of the settlers. I was anxious to acclimatize myself for future journeyings, and the ungenial damp and stormy season had put my constitution to a very fair test. The heavy rains had involved the loss of a good many objects of interest, but I had nevertheless succeeded in bringing back thirty skeletons, about 1500 dried plants, one chest of skins of mammalia, two chests of birds' skins, more than 200 reptiles, several fish, 3000 insects, some fossils, and 300 specimens of minerals, not to mention a number of geological duplicates, which I procured chiefly from the river-diggings to present to several museums and schools in Europe.

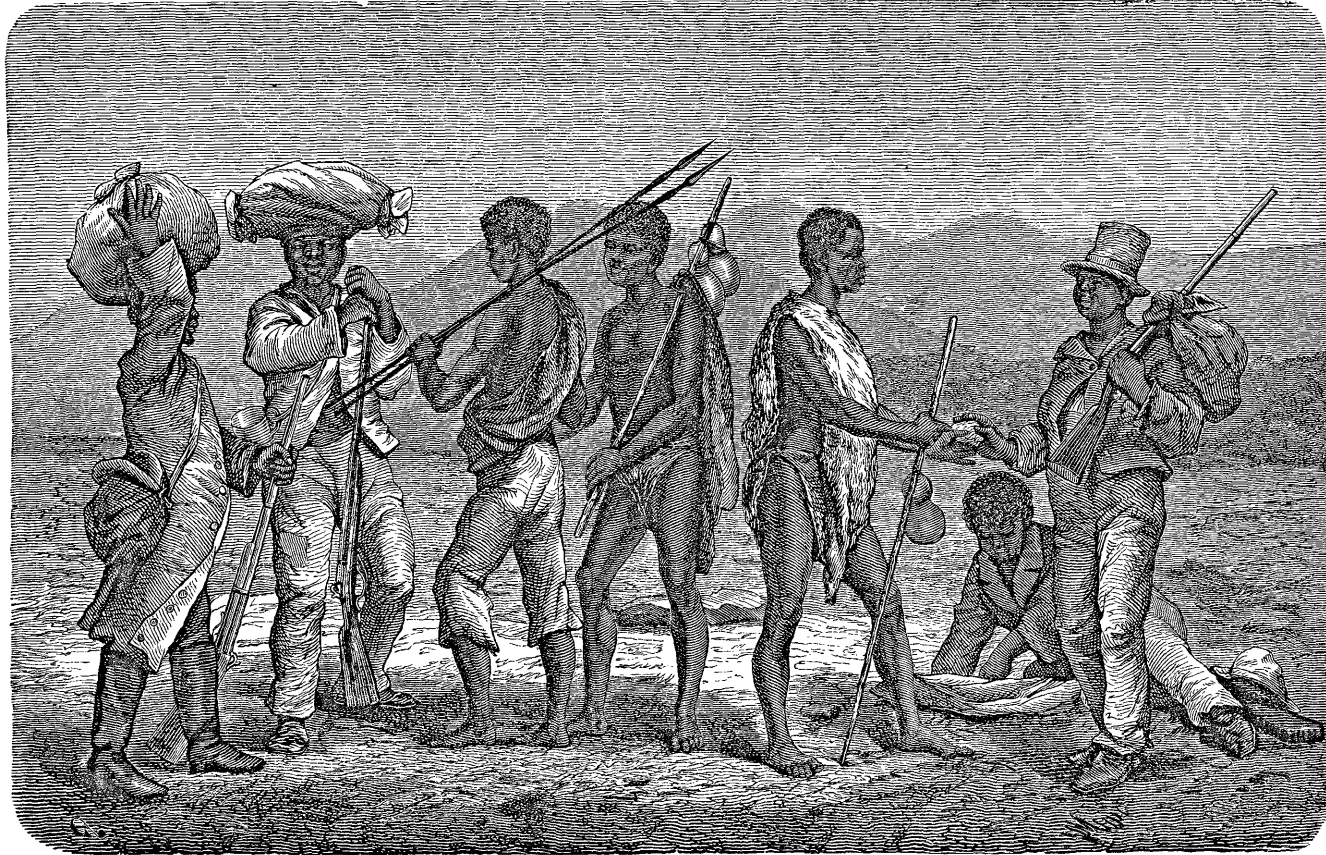
It is almost needless to add that on this trial trip I gained many useful hints. In the first place, I learnt that a saddle-horse was indispensable for any future and more prolonged excursion. Continual occasions were ever arising when its services would be most acceptable, either in driving back the draught-oxen that had strayed away, or in exploring points of interest at a distance without bringing the waggon to a standstill, or in getting readily within reach of game. And another thing my experience taught me—I must have much more efficient weapons for my use.

Before setting out, I had made arrangements to retain my little tent-house in Dutoitspan, opposite the court of justice, and thither I now returned. The waggon was pushed up against the back of the house, and the oxen were sold. They brought in enough to discharge my two months' rent, which amounted to 10*l.*, to pay 3*l.* for my servants' wages, and to leave me a little money in hand for my immediate personal necessities.

For the next six months I settled down hard to my practice; and it was a busy time for me. There are very few places in the world where a doctor does not, more or less, become the intimate friend of his patients, and thus finds continual opportunities for an interesting study of character; but in such a sphere of work as the diamond-fields, in their early days, these opportunities were unusually many. Where invalids were often confined to the most limited space—families of tolerable means frequently all

living in a single tent—a medical man, whether he would or no, was brought face to face with the details of domestic life, not only in its brighter, but in its more trying aspect; and in such cases he would ever and again have to become an adviser, an advocate, and sometimes an arbitrator. At times it seemed almost easier to face a wild beast than to speak the proper word of counsel or caution to some self-willed grey-headed man. Prague, with its hundred towers, and the richest practice it could offer, would have failed to give me in years a fraction of the experience that I gained in this brief interval.

Of the thousands of black men who at that time acted as servants in the diamond-fields, the majority belonged to the Basuto, Zulu, and Transvaal Bechuana tribes. They earned from 7*s.* 6*d.* to 10*s.* a week, and rarely stayed more than six months at the diggings; for as soon as they had saved enough to buy a gun—which would seldom cost more than 4*l.*—and about 5 lbs. of powder at 3*s.* per lb., a few bullets and caps, a woollen garment or two, and perhaps a hat, they considered themselves quite in a position to return to their own homes and buy themselves a wife. A servant had to be bound to his master by a certificate drawn up by a proper official, and this had to be renewed at every change of situation, a penalty being imposed when the document was not forthcoming. Whenever a servant wished to complete his engagement, and to return home, the employer, if the man's conduct had



MEETING BETWEEN BASUTOS RETURNING FROM THE DIAMOND FIELDS AND OTHERS GOING THITHER.

been satisfactory, would give him a certificate to the local authorities, that he might be permitted to buy a gun. The certificate was practically equivalent, therefore, to a gun licence; and thus it had been brought about that many hundreds of natives, both in the colony and in their own independent states, were in possession of fire-arms, with liberty to use them.

As the Basutos, whom I have just mentioned, formed in 1872 and 1873 the larger contingent of the coloured labourers, I should like to say a few words about them, thus including them in my general survey of the family of the Bantus.

I divide the natives of South Africa into three races—the Bushmen, the Hottentots, and the Bantus. To the first belong the Bushmen proper; to the second the Hottentots proper, the Griquas, and the Korannas; whilst the third includes the colonial Kaffirs, Zulus, Basutos, Bechuanas, Makalakas, and other tribes, about forty in all; besides which there are transition types between the races, as, for instance, between the Bushmen and the Bantus. It is a subject, however, upon which I have no scope to enlarge here.

Of these tribes, we have already made some acquaintance with the Korannas and two tribes of the Batlapins. The Basutos reside chiefly on the Cornetspruit and the Caledon River, extending thence to the Drakensbergen; they consequently occupy the country bounded by the Free State, Cape Colony, Nomansland, and Natal. Their lan-

guage is called Sesuto. Since their war with the Orange Free State they have lived under English jurisdiction, whilst their neighbours on the west, the southern Barolong, another branch of the Bantus, have become subjects of the Orange Republic.

In agriculture, the Basutos have advanced more than any other tribe. Next to them in this respect come the Baharutse, in the Marico district in the Transvaal, of whom I shall have to speak subsequently, in the narrative of my second journey. The Basuto farms are very small, but they produce hundreds of thousands of bushels of corn, and abound in horses and cattle. There is no doubt that both the Basutos and the Baharutse are yearly increasing in affluence.

Not long ago, when the most southerly of the Basuto chiefs collected all the unruly spirits he could find—runaway servants, thieves, fugitive Gaikas and Galekas, the residium of the last Kaffir war—and attempted to plunder, and to revolt from British rule, all the rest of the Basutos remained faithful, and voluntarily sent 2000 armed horsemen into the field on the side of the English.

With a few unimportant exceptions, the structure of the Basuto huts, and the general character of their work, correspond with those of the Bechuanas, and in their handicraft they are about up to the average of the Bantu tribes. In one respect they differ from the rest of their kin: they manufacture carved wooden fetishes, painting them red and black.

Thaba Bosigo is their most important kraal; Thaba Unshee being that of the Barolong in the Free State. They have penetrated as far north as the confluence of the Chobe and the Zambesi.



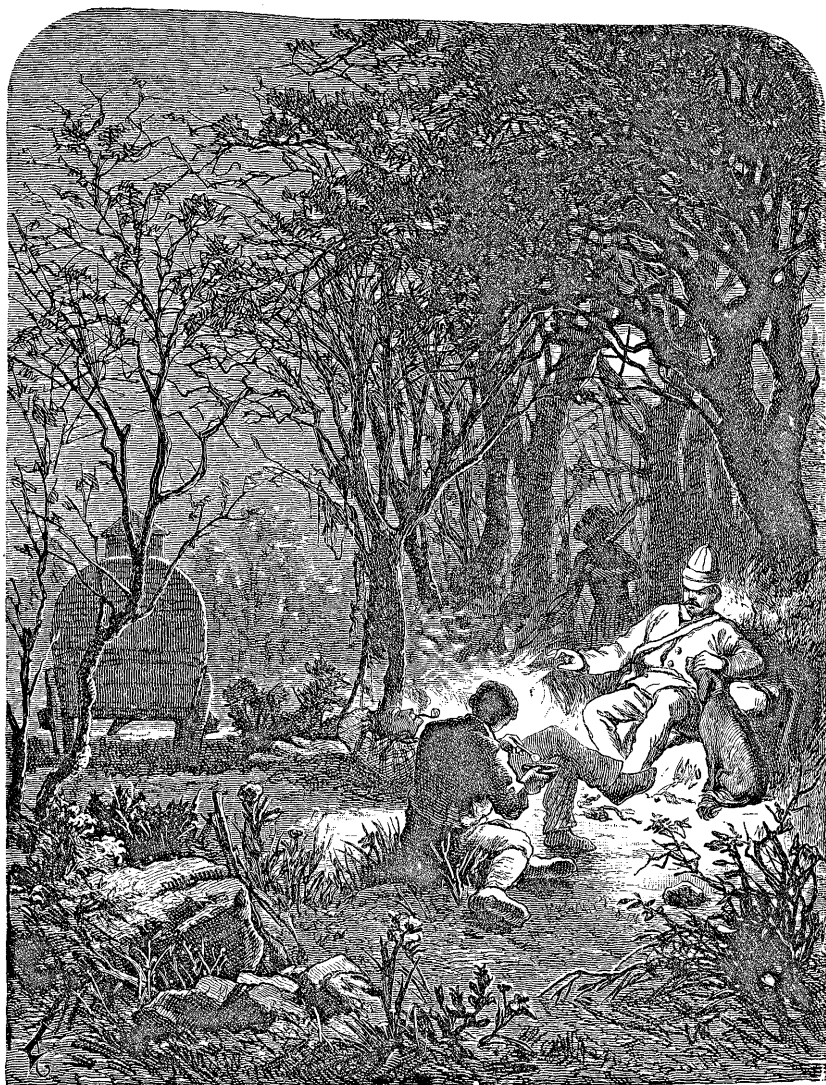
CHAPTER VII.

FROM DUTOITSPAN TO MUSEMANYANA.

Preparation for second journey—Travelling-companions—Departure—A diamond—A lovely evening—Want of water—A conflagration—Hartebeests—An expensive draught—Gassibone's kraal—An adventure with a cobra—A clamorous crowd—A smithy—The mission-station at Taung—Maruma—Thorny places—Cheap diamonds—Pelted by baboons—Reception at Musemanyana.

IN the course of the six months that I now spent in Dutoitspan, I made acquaintance, amongst my patients, with three German families, all nearly related, who were of great assistance to me in my preparations for my second journey into the interior. It was, in fact, owing to the kindness of the head of one of these households that, after I had got together all but 120*l.* of the 900*l.* that the expenses of the expedition would require, I was enabled to procure on credit from one of the mercantile houses of Dutoitspan goods to the amount of 117*l.*, for which I should otherwise have had to pay ready money; thus I was in a position to start four weeks before the time that I had originally contemplated.

My friend Eberwald, after trying his luck as a



A MOONLIGHT EVENING IN THE FOREST.

diamond-digger in the Old de Beer's mine with indifferent success, had returned, and expressed his willingness to accompany me again. He said that he should like to see a bit more of Africa, and would assist me in any way he could. I offered him what he had undertaken before—the supervision of the waggon, an office which he executed conscientiously and well.

It was not by any means my intention that this should be my chief journey. I rather regarded it as a second trial trip, on a more extensive scale than the first. I contemplated making it cover half the distance between the diamond-fields and the Zambesi, but I meant it to be only a further preparation for an expedition right away into Central Africa.

Amongst my patients I had come across a young man, a native of Silesia, who seemed a likely man to assist me, and who professed himself quite ready to accompany my party. He was considerably involved in debt; but in order to secure his services, I became security with his creditors. Finding, however, his obligations all wiped off, he suddenly disappeared altogether. At the time when the diamond-fields were full of doubtful characters, such incidents were by no means uncommon.

There was my other young friend, F., who was quite in the mind to go with us again. My experience of his character rather made me hesitate at renewing any engagement; but yielding to Eberwald's intercession on his behalf, I consented to

give him another chance of showing whether he could be relied on.

As a third associate Eberwald introduced me to a friend of his, Herr Boly, a Hanoverian, of whom he spoke in the highest terms. I was quite ready to attend to the recommendation, and I am happy to add that I never had the least cause to regret admitting him of our number.

A liberal friend had kindly provided me with a team of eight oxen and a Griqua driver, so that on the whole I was far better equipped than on my previous journey. I had also procured a sextant, the use of which was explained to me by an old ship's officer, but unfortunately I was unable to turn either the instrument, or the instruction I had received about it, to much account, as I was baffled in all my inquiries to obtain a copy of the Nautical Almanack.

It was on the 3rd of November, 1873, that our party left Dutoitspan : it consisted of myself, Eberwald, Boly, F., and the Griqua, besides nine dogs, including my faithful Niger, my saddle-horse, and the eight oxen.

I made my way to Klipdrift by the shortest route, designing thence to travel up the Vaal Valley to Hebron, whence I intended to turn off short to Gassibone's town, and continue my journey on to Taung, the residence of the Batlapin king Mankuruane, which I had been unable to reach before. In this way I should explore the right-hand bank of the Vaal in parts that would be new to me,

and I should cross Gassibone's district from south to north, whereas previously I had traversed it from the west, somewhat towards the east.

Our first day brought us to Old de Beer's farm. On the following morning we came to some dilapidated remains a few miles from the site of the mission-house near the station at Pniel, to which I have already alluded. Before beginning to descend to the river, I noticed a depression in the plateau, now transformed into a lake nearly square, and about half a mile across; a number of black storks and cranes were enjoying themselves at the edge of the water. We went on by the road recently hewn by the convicts through the rocks, thus avoiding the loose sand that had given us so much trouble on our previous journey, arriving at night at the spot where, in February, we had endured so much discomfort. To my surprise I found the roads in a much better condition than they were then, and after about six hours' travelling, we reached the bank of the river next morning; but we had somehow or other sustained the loss of two of our dogs.

The water was so low that the ferry-man declined, on account of the weight of the waggon, to take us across the river in his boat, but pointed out to us a ford lower down, by which we could cross. We did not forget our experiences on Easter Day, and accordingly set about our proceedings very circumspectly. The river was now reduced to a channel scarcely twenty feet wide and hardly more than

two feet deep, but although on either side the bed was full of great boulders of greenstone as large as one's head, it was here smooth and sandy, so that we crossed with perfect ease, and made our halt near Klipdrift, on the other side.

While we were resting, Pit, our Griquaman, surprised me by bringing me a diamond weighing about a quarter of a carat. During the time the oxen were grazing he had been lying on the ground rummaging over some sand that had been left as sifted by the diggers, and his trouble had been rewarded by the discovery of the little stone, which I was very pleased to accept as an addition to my collection; but some time afterwards I was grieved to find that I had lost it, when or how I could never tell.

Starting again the same evening, we travelled on till it was quite late, leaving the Vaal, which took a bend to the south-south-east, on our right. The road lay over bushy heights, covered with rocks and crowned with alluvial flats often a mile in length, and separated by tracts of soil of the same character, sloping down towards the river.

About four o'clock on the afternoon of the 7th we arrived at Hebron, but passed on without stopping, as I wanted, while it was still daylight, to reach the spot where we should have to leave the Hebron and Christiana road, and turn off towards Gassibone. Even in the few months since we were here the town had manifestly gone still further to decay. The bad state of the roads compelled us to

stop sooner than I intended, and we did not start next morning until we had met with a young Batlapin, who agreed to act as guide. At noon we took our rest under the shade of a spreading mimosa, after which we made an unusually long march, and encamped for the night in the open plateau.

A landscape of peculiar beauty lay outstretched around us. The Hebron heights and their dark spurs veiled in purple haze bounded the horizon to the south and west, whilst to the north and east the vast plains were shrouded in the distance by a deepening tint, a sure token that the night would be one of those that in South Africa are ever to be remembered for their splendour. A soft air was swaying the flowery grass, of which the seeds had been sown by the wind and imbedded in the soil by the feet of the game. A beautiful tint began to tinge its surface, and soon a gorgeous stream of sunlight broke forth, its golden rays illuminating the far-off east. Was not that the direction of my cherished home? Was it not irradiating the very scenes of my childhood and beaming on the dwellings of my kindred? I sunk into tender contemplation, and our camp, the plain, the watchfire, Gassibone, nay, Africa itself, were all forgotten! It was a peaceful evening, followed by a peaceful night, as if to fortify us for the anxiety which we little expected on the morrow.

The figure of our black driver passed between me and the glowing light, and recalled me to myself.

It was time to retire; the oxen that had been grazing at a distance had returned, and of their own accord had reclined on the ground close to the waggon; spreading out our coverings, all of us lay down upon the grass, and sheltered by its stems and breathing its fragrance, we were soon enjoying our well-earned slumber.

In good time next morning we were again on our way. Judging from what the guide told me, I reckoned that the distance to Gassibone's quarters must be about thirty-five miles, but I was somewhat disconcerted on hearing that on our way we should find water extremely scarce. It was some satisfaction to know that we had a sufficient supply for our midday meal, but any intermediate draught to quench our thirst between times, was not to be thought of.

Proceeding east by north we soon came to a region where we could well believe our guide when he told us that not a drop of rain had fallen for months, and the further we advanced the more parched and yellow did the grass become; though the spring was coming on, we saw but few sprouting blades, and as we went on we found fewer still; the young leaves of the amaryllis, too, that had sprung up here and there, were quite withered by the drought.

A gradual ascent led us up a small plateau, vegetation still becoming more and more scanty. A light breeze swayed the tall dry grass-stems like a field of corn and was hailed by us with delight as

it moderated the heat, and gave a sort of freshness to our fevered lips. The oxen had not tasted water for thirty hours; their languor was excessive, and up hill they could only climb at a snail's pace. For two hours we patiently followed the footpath, our guide informing us that when we reached the highest point of the ascent, we should have to bend a little to the right, and should then come upon some wheel-tracks made by the waggons loaded with wood, which the morena (king) would generally allow to pass through his territory to the diamond-fields. By following these tracks, always keeping to the left, and travelling without stopping, we might perhaps reach some native huts in the course of the night. It could not be said that the communication was very encouraging.

We were obliged to take a short rest, and while we were looking about us, we noticed a thick cloud overhanging the plains. Every one, natives included, settled that it was a huge swarm of locusts. I was occupied with my own matters, and soon forgot all about it. A sudden cry from one of the people in the waggon very shortly afterwards recalled my attention to what we had seen, and on looking again I beheld a sight that could not fail to fill me with amazement and alarm. The plain right in front of us, over which we were on the point of passing, was one sheet of flame. The cloud that we had observed turned out to be a volume of smoke rising above the bushwood, that was all on fire. The conflagration was perhaps five miles from us,

but it was exactly across our path, and we might well feel dismayed.

The first among us to regain composure was our temporary guide, who pointed out that the waggon-tracks of which he had spoken were hardly twenty yards ahead; at least, we could reach them. We looked to the right; we looked to the left: on the right the ground was level, but it only led to a chain of hills, the base of which was already licked by the flames; on the left was a hollow which was just beginning to catch fire, and beyond it a little hillock some forty feet high. Our perplexities seemed only to increase; the oxen were too weary to allow us for one moment to think of retreating; they could not hold out for a mile; and yet something must be done; the fire was manifestly advancing in our very face. We discussed the possibility of setting fire to the bushwood close in front of us, and thus, as it were, forestalling the flames; but the scheme was not to be thought of; the waggon, which contained some thousands of cartridges, 300lbs. of gunpowder, besides a quantity of spirits, was already so heated by the sun that we could scarcely lay our hands upon it; a single spark of fire would in an instant involve it in complete destruction, and the risk was too great.

My eye still rested upon the little hill. I saw that the wind was blowing the flames in a direction away from it, and aware that delay would be fatal, and that some action must be taken, I gave my



THE PLAINS ON FIRE.

decision that at all hazards we must make for it. Every one agreed that I was right, and, rushing to their posts, did what they could to urge on the bullocks without a moment's loss of time. Mounting my horse, I hurried on in front, but on reaching the hollow that had to be crossed before the place of safety upon the hill could be gained, I almost gave a cry of despair on seeing its character; it was not only overgrown with bushwood and very steep, but was strewn in all directions with huge blocks of stone: if only the waggon-wheel should strike against one of these, who could doubt the consequences?

With all his might, Boly cracked his whip and shouted vigorously, and succeeded in making the oxen drag the waggon with unexpected speed; they were all flecked with foam as they pulled their oscillating load behind them; every moment it seemed as if it must overbalance. At the bottom of the hollow it was absolutely necessary to take a rest; the beasts must have time to recover from their exertions; they were all more or less torn by the bushes, and my friends, too, were much scratched about the hands and face. The heat was becoming intense. My horse was not naturally a nervous animal, but it trembled till it could hardly stand, and the hardest part of our struggle had yet to come.

A flake of fire fell within fifteen yards of us, and warned us that it was time to be on the move. "Hulloh an! Hulloh an!" roared the driver, and

the bullocks once again strained themselves to their work. Scarcely, however, had they gone ten paces, when the smoke puffed against their eyes, and all bewildered, they swerved into a track where the waggon must inevitably have been overturned; it was a critical moment, but happily one of my party, who was walking at my side, saw the danger, and, rushing at the heads of the leaders, turned them by a desperate effort into the right direction. The instinct of self-preservation now redoubled every one's efforts; onwards we pushed, through clouds of smoke, amidst falling ashes, amongst fragments of red-hot bark, till we were within fifty yards of the place of safety. So heated was the atmosphere, that I momentarily expected to see the canvas of the waggon break out into a blaze.

The bullocks once more gasped and tottered beneath their yoke; with painful toil they made their way for another thirty yards; it was doubtful whether they could accomplish the remaining twenty.

One more moment of rest, followed by one more frantic paroxysm of exertion, and all was safe! Just in time we reached the hill that overlooked a hollow, beyond which was the expanse of black burnt grass. I ungirthed my horse, my people all flung themselves exhausted on the ground; their faces were crimson with heat; their limbs were bruised by their frequent falls; their eyes seemed starting from their sockets. Poor Pit, who had scrambled along

with the front oxen, had his shirt torn from his back, and his chest was smeared with blood from many a wound, but fortunately none that was very deep.

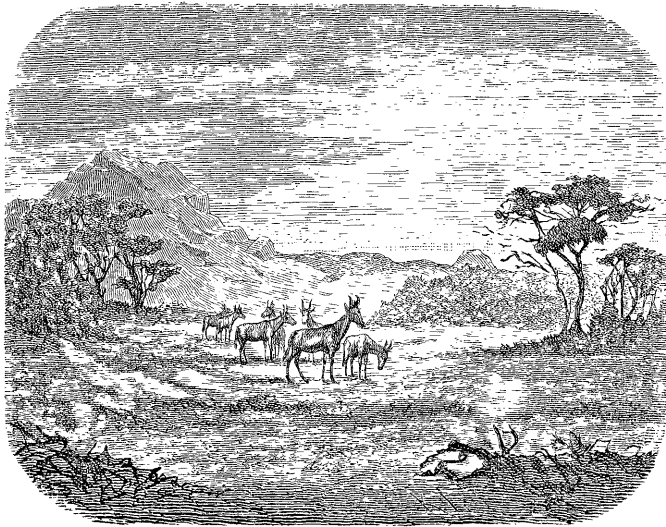
The fatigue and excitement that we had undergone demanded some repose, but the miseries of the thirst we were enduring did not permit us to wait long. As soon as possible we started off again; we had no difficulty in finding the proper tracks; and fortunately for our worn-out team, which had to pause about every hundred yards, the ground was quite level. Evening began to draw on; to alleviate our sufferings we were obliged to moisten our burning lips with vinegar; we were too depressed to speak, and kept a moody silence. Once Pit broke the stillness by calling out to us to look to the right; we raised our eyes just to notice that three hartebeests were almost in the road before us; but so excessive was our languor that no one seemed to care that they were there.

While I was in Africa three kinds of hartebeest antelopes came under my observation. The common hartebeest, found throughout South Africa, as far as the Zambesi, but most frequently in the bushy parts of the southern and central districts; the sesepi, or Zulu hartebeest, which is found in the same districts, but north of the Zambesi as well; and a third species, which appears closely allied to the common hartebeest.

I shall have occasion hereafter to refer to the

sesephi, which in various respects resembles the buntbock; but I may here say a few words about the hartebeest proper.

From the effect of its elongated head and angular horns, the common hartebeest may perhaps be pronounced the ugliest of all the antelopes. I myself found it most frequently between the Vaal and the Soa Salt Lake, though I was told that it is quite



HARTEBEEST.

common in the east and north-east of the Transvaal, and in the northern parts of Cape Colony. Being less timid than other kinds, it is more exposed to destruction; it lives in small herds, often inhabiting the same districts as the striped gnu. The probable reason of its comparative rarity in the more northern regions of Central South Africa is that the Baman-

gwatos are especially partial to its skin for their dresses, and it has consequently been much sought for, till its numbers have diminished.

In places where trees are not too numerous, it is generally hunted on horseback. When pursued, its motion is very awkward, probably on account of the



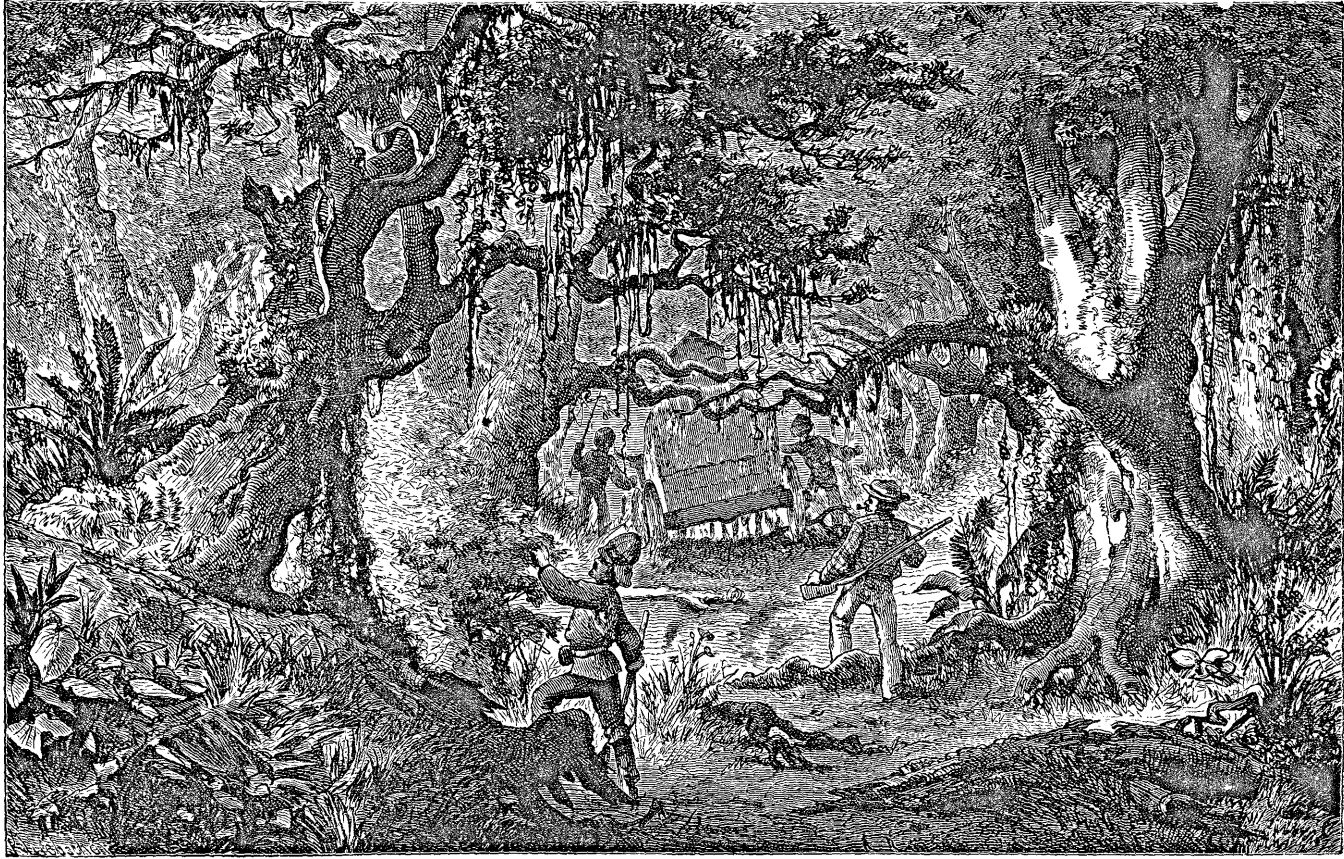
HEAD OF THE HARTEBEEST (*Antilope Caama*).

unusual height of the shoulders. Although this species of hartebeest (*Antilope Caama*) is the commonest of the three kinds I have mentioned, I am under the impression that it is a rarity in European menageries; indeed, I am not aware that the trans-

Zambesi kind has ever been represented there at all. In the country of the central Bechuanas, and in the forests, they are approached under cover of the foliage, and are usually found on the borders of glades, and anywhere where there is a tolerably open range for their view. By white hunters they are often chased promiscuously with elephants, ostriches, and other wild game.

So obscured were all the waggon-tracks by the ashes left by the fire, that it was a matter of no little difficulty for our guide to distinguish the proper way towards the native settlements. The trials of the day seemed never coming to an end. Our thirst became more and more painful, our throats being parched, and our tongues cleaving to our mouths. Our sufferings enforced a melancholy silence. Any hope we had entertained that the heat would moderate as daylight waned, proved quite fallacious, as the evening was exceptionally hot, and the breeze that had been blowing was completely lulled. At last, however, the distant baying of some dogs caught our ear, and never was any sound more welcome; and when, soon afterwards, the monotonous chant of the native girls, accompanying themselves on their wooden castanets, could be distinguished, it was as music unsurpassed in sweetness. Here at length was the promise of relief from our tortures.

Lights from the hut-fires were soon visible. Leaving the waggon standing unguarded where it was, every one of us, guide included, rushed im-



WOODS AT THE FOOT OF THE MALAU HEIGHTS.

patiently to the huts. A lot of yelping curs ran out to meet us; the singing of the women ceased, and one solitary man advanced in our direction, evidently astonished that a waggon should be passing at such an hour. Seizing him by the arm, I shouted in his ear, "Meci, meci;" startled by my vehemence he uttered a loud cry, probably of alarm, for our black guide burst into a fit of laughter. However, I had made him understand me, and he went into his hut, whence he soon returned, bringing a huge horn full of stinking stuff, which he declared was his entire supply of water, and for which he demanded half-a-crown. Neither in quality nor in quantity did this suffice us, and after some further parleying, we made him comprehend what we wanted, when he and two of his wives brought us out some bowls of milk, which we speedily emptied. After our thirst was thus quenched we began very shortly to have a sense of hunger, and lost no time in kindling a good fire and getting a leg of mutton, which we watched while it was roasting. We sat and talked over the steppe-burning, and our happy deliverance from our alarming predicament. To the south we could still see the glow in the sky, which made it certain that the fire was not yet subdued in that quarter.

These fires occasionally arise from accidents, and from carelessness, but in districts where there are few shrubs and trees to be injured, the farmers in dry winters not unfrequently purposely set fire to the

steppes, with the object, they say, of promoting the growth of the grass. It is known, too, that ostrich-hunters were formerly in the habit of causing these conflagrations so as to get a crop of tender-sprouting grass, which is always attractive to the birds, who delight in the young herbage. Fires of this kind are likewise to be seen from time to time amongst the low scap- (sheep-) bushes, rarely exceeding eighteen inches high, on the plains both in the Colony and the Free State, and on dark nights the glowing streaks that mark the heavens are thus accounted for.

We had hardly travelled half an hour next morning before we discovered that the waggon-tracks that we had been following had brought us into the same road that we had used on our previous journey from Gassibone to the Vaal. Our good-natured guide here took leave of us, and we descended one of the passes leading to Gassibone's kraal. The defile was wide, but became much narrower at the farther end; the sides, although they were covered with luxuriant vegetation, yet permitted the terrace-like stratification of the hills to be distinctly traced. The flat parts were overgrown with wild mimosas, and had an aspect not unlike the cherry-gardens planted on our own hill-sides in Europe.

It was about noon when we reached the kraal. Passing through it, we encamped under some trees in a hollow close to the bed of a torrent. The ground was covered with a rich sward

that on account of its sheltered situation and its proximity to the water had retained a pleasant freshness.

Proceeding along one of the passes beyond the settlement, we ascended some high land, whence we could see that dark clouds were beginning to gather. Pit told us that the rain for which we had longed so much was certainly now coming, and after a short consultation, we decided to halt at once, and unyoked our oxen about three miles after starting. Pit was right enough; the clouds rolled on in rapidly increasing masses, and before another hour had passed the rain came down in such a deluge as I have rarely seen before or since. We would have given much for such a downpour on the previous day.

The storm lasted for about two hours; it took some time for the water to clear off; but when it ceased to foam along in torrents, and began to trickle down more gently from the hillsides, we thought we might venture to proceed another stage, though it was getting on towards sundown. The defile along which we passed was quite narrow, except in one or two places where it opened out into a plain. Niger, my dog, was on in front; he was foraging in the long grass, when suddenly he started off in pursuit of something that we could not see. There was a strangeness in his movements that perplexed me; he kept springing forwards, and as suddenly retreating, and I was curious to find out what was disturbing him. I stopped the waggon,

and when I approached the dog I found him in front of a great tubular ant-hill, barking furiously. The other dogs began to bark in concert. I soon saw the cause of the animal's excitement; a great yellow cobra-capella, nearly seven feet long, was



NIGER AND THE COBRA.

winding itself round the ant-hill; its neck was all inflated, and it was hissing vehemently. A moment was enough for me; I put a charge of small shot clean into the reptile, and had the satisfaction of dragging it out from the bushwood, a notable addition to my naturalist's collection.

In the course of the evening we came to the

broad valley which had been described to us as the shortest route to Taung, and, leaving the main pass, we turned into it towards the north, and settled ourselves for the night.

The day following the storm was dull and chilly. Our road lay first across a hollow, with some Batlapin huts on one of its bare slopes; then through an opening in the hills to a dense wood, and thence into another hollow, split up into about a hundred little allotments about fifty yards square.

It took us the best part of an hour and a half to get over this ground; but when we mounted the high ground beyond, we found ourselves in sight of the Harts River valley, which was right before us. The hill-ridges round Taung seem to form a sort of network. None of them rise more than 800 feet above the level of the river, but the scenery which they form is rather attractive. To reach the ford we had to skirt the first ridge, and then bend northwards.

After a former ruler, Taung is also called Mahura's Town. It lies under the shelter of a rocky height, a short distance from the right bank of the river, where a rush of yellow water was streaming down the bed, which in many places was overgrown with reeds.

As we wended our way down the slope, we came within view of another native village. The mere sight of our waggon served to put its population into a state of extreme excitement. A whole crowd

of men, in tattered European clothes, except now and then one in a mangy skin, followed by as many women, all naked except for little leather aprons, and by a swarm of children as naked as when they were born, came shouting eagerly towards us. They were nearly all provided with bottles, or pots, or cans, and cried out for brandy. "Suppy, suppy, bas, verkup Brandwen!" they repeated impatiently. They had brought all manner of things to barter for spirits. One man held up a jackal's hide, another a goat-skin; another offered us bullock-thongs; yet another had brought out a bullock-yoke; and some of them had their home-made wooden spoons and platters to dispose of to us. It was a disgusting scene. We tried to treat the whole matter with contempt, and to take no notice of their demand; but when we attempted to drive on, their importunities waxed louder than ever. They caught hold of the bridles, and pushed the oxen back, becoming ever more and more clamorous. One of the men made what he evidently imagined would be an irresistible appeal, by offering me a couple of greasy shillings. They next tried to bribe us with some skins of milk, which the women were made to bring out from the huts, and they were driven to despair when they found that the offer of a goat that they dragged forward was not accepted. Their screechings and shoutings were of no avail; not a drop of fire-water was to be extorted from me. We had almost to beat them off before they would allow us to proceed. A few persevered in following



MOBBED FOR SPIRITS.

us to the ford, and made a final effort to secure one bottle by a private negotiation, out of sight of their neighbours. They confidentially offered five shillings for the bottle; but I was inexorable.

The entire width of the river was here about sixty yards, but it had a rocky island in the middle, so that practically there were two streams to cross. The current, after the rain, was still so strong that every one seemed to think it would be prudent to delay the passage for a little longer. I did not share the apprehension, but was quite willing to acquiesce in the universal opinion. Under a large acacia, a short distance from where we were waiting, stood a waggon and a couple of huts, which we could see at once were occupied by a white family; some broken wheels, some old iron, and some blacksmith's tools lying about, betokened the occupation of the owner. He was one of two smiths who resided in the place. He had taken up his quarters here close by the ford, the other having settled near the entrance of the glen, by the mission-station. He complained that the diminution of the population, and the general impoverishment of the place, had seriously interfered with his business; but he had nevertheless succeeded in getting together a goodly herd of sheep and cows. The other smith might have done equally well, but he had spent all his earnings in brandy. Naturally, there was not much good feeling between the rivals.

In answer to our inquiries about the ford, we were told that all the traders, giraffe and ostrich-hunters,

missionaries, or any one who wanted to take the shortest cut through Kuruman, crossed by it; but, somehow or other, nearly every third waggon managed more or less to come to grief. The chief was disinclined to do anything to improve the ford; nor, if he had been disposed, would it have been of much good, as the stream, every time it was swollen, brought down such accumulations of sand, soil, and stones, that the character of the channel was perpetually altering.

Acting under the advice of the blacksmith, who pronounced the ford perfectly safe, we crossed in the afternoon, reaching the opposite side without the least difficulty, and after a short rest went on to Taung. Without pausing in the native quarter, we proceeded to the mission-house, a stone building, with a gabled roof thatched with grass, standing in a nice little garden. On entering we found ourselves face to face with a gentleman about thirty years of age, with a long light beard. He looked at us at first with some surprise, especially at my friend F., who was carrying arms. He was the resident missionary, Mr. Brown. I soon introduced myself, and explained the object of my journey, and he at once gave us a very kindly welcome, apologizing for the simplicity and limited extent of his accommodation. He mentioned that he was engaged upon the compilation of a Sechuana dictionary, a work that has since been published. After ascertaining that we intended making a short halt at Taung, he invited me to bring the waggon into his enclosure,

saying that I should thus escape being pestered by the natives for brandy. Even Mankuruane himself was often very troublesome to strangers, and the protection of the mission-house would be a shelter from annoyance. Just at present, however, the chief was not at home, having gone to Kuruman on a visit to another chief, named Mora. Mrs. Brown and her children were also at the same place; they had gone to spend a few weeks with the wife of the missionary there. The place altogether was very picturesque, being, both for its pleasantness and for its population, the foremost of all the Batlapin towns. It formerly contained nearly 6000 inhabitants, but by the year 1879 it was not so large by one-third.

We resumed our journey on the afternoon of the 12th. We took a north-north-east course, and at no great distance from the Harts River came to the Barolong kraal, called by the name of its chieftain, Maruma. The excessive rainfall must have been confined to a very limited area; for, although we had had it so heavily, the little river here was quite dry, and there was hardly any water at all to be had except in some holes that had been made for the purpose.

Next midday we left the valley, and after a short drive along some stony hills, arrived at a rich tract of pasture-land. Whilst on our halt, I killed a fine bird of prey (*Melierax canorus*), and a large lizard of the kind which I have before described.

Approaching now the north-eastern frontier of the

Batlapin country, I expected soon to enter upon the small territory belonging to the Mamusa Korannas. Turning our course due north on the 14th, we found ourselves on another extensive plain, overgrown with bushes. Several heavy showers fell, and at last induced us to make a halt; but the sight of a number of antelopes darting about among the marethwa-bushes was too tempting to be resisted, and I started out for a chase. This proved a more troublesome matter than I had anticipated. To avoid the bushes, I had to twist my horse about continually; and this I found so discouraging that I thought I might venture to change my tactics, and make a bold dash straight ahead. My horse had hardly begun to bound forward when he came to a sudden pause; failing to leap over a mimosa, he had plunged into the middle of it. I endeavoured to pull him back, but the sharp double thorns ran into him so much the more. The poor creature began to kick violently, and snorting aloud, only got more deeply imbedded in the prickles. My clothes began to suffer considerably in the struggle, and glad enough I was when the horse contrived to extricate its hind-quarters from the bush. I threw my gun upon the ground and managed to alight, and finally to drag the excited animal clear away; but my face, my arms, my neck, even my legs, were all smarting violently; and when I made my way back to the waggon, I was only to be compared to the triumphant hero of a cat-fight. I am not likely to forget my experience of that mimosa-

tree. Nature, like a cruel step-mother, seems to have banished some of the offspring of Flora, unendowed with fragrancy or honey, to the desert wilds of Africa, where they take their revenge on any unoffending mortals that come within their reach.

Soon afterwards we entered a shallow valley, nearly circular in form, and on the heights surround-



CAUGHT BY THORNS.

ing it we observed a few native farms. The valley itself opened on to a steppe, covered with tall, dry grass, where a herd of sprightly springbucks were enjoying their antics. We halted for two hours for dinner. Just as we were preparing to move on, we saw a Kaffir waggon approaching from the north. The owner, a Batlapin, wearing a long great-coat,

was recognized by Pit as a man he had previously known at Klipdrift. Once, Pit said, he had been poor, but now he was very rich, possessing two waggons and large herds of cattle. He increased his gains by travelling about amongst the Barolongs between the Harts River and Molapo, selling the commodities that he purchased in the diamond-fields. Having ascertained from Pit that I was the "bas" of



CHEAP DIAMONDS.

the waggon, he walked round it twice or thrice, and then, leering at me with his twinkling eyes, he put his hand to his hat and said, in most insinuating tone, "Sir!" Then producing from his pocket a little box, about two inches in diameter, such as were commonly disposed of to the natives for snuff-boxes, he gave a cunning grin, and began to rattle

it. I at once got an inkling as to the way in which he had gained some of his wealth. He jerked his finger towards his servants, and said that they had been working for him in the diggings, and here was the result of their toil. Opening the box, he showed me some twenty diamonds or more, the largest being of about three carats, and told me that I might have the lot for 30s. Feeling only too certain that they had all been stolen, I positively refused to be a purchaser.

In the course of the march during the afternoon I found a good many weevils under the leaves of a liliaceous plant, as well as several kinds of locusts that were new to me. It poured with rain in the evening, and we had to put up a canvas awning for a shelter.

We began our next march by passing over some plains of short grass that were swarming with myriads of large-winged ants. The rain had been so abundant during the last few days, that I did not doubt for a moment that we should find plenty of water everywhere. We did not take the trouble to procure a supply for ourselves, nor did we give the oxen a proper draught before starting; our disappointment was consequently very great when we ascertained that there was none to be had, and that once again we were to be exposed to the torture of thirst. A turn in the valley showed us the bed of a spruit not far off, and I felt certain that after such rain as we had witnessed there would of necessity be at least some water trickling along it. Accord-

ingly, I clambered down the sides, which were nearly perpendicular, and determined to investigate the bottom. A number of other defiles opened into the



SURPRISED BY BABOONS.

chasm, and the spot was most picturesque; but to my chagrin I found that there were no signs of water. Defeated in the object for which I had taken the pains to descend the ravine, I was turning

to leave it, when some stones came pattering down the rocks in my direction. I soon became aware that the stones were being designedly aimed at me ; and, looking up, I saw a herd of baboons perched among the trees. I had my gun with me ; and, not being in the mood to be pelted in this fashion, I fired into a tree upon which two of the baboons were sitting. It was only attached to a cleft in the rock by a single root, and my shot tore it right asunder. One of the baboons sprang wildly into the air, the other clung in alarm to the falling stem. An old male now appeared just in front, and began to pick up some stones ; a second shot, however, had the effect of putting him and the entire group to a speedy flight.

The hill that we next ascended bore all the appearance of having been occupied, though probably more than a century ago, by Makalahari or some other native tribes ; the summit was covered by a number of enclosures made of rough-hewn stones, and about two or three feet high, varying from fifteen to twenty-five square yards in area. Many of the Bechuana tribes declare that their own grandfathers occupied the site, but it seems unlikely that the abandonment of the position has been quite so recent.

From the top of the hill we could see the country round for some fifteen miles ; it sank gradually towards the north. Five miles ahead we made out a native village, and hastened on towards it, in the eager hope of getting water ; but on reach-

ing it we only received directions to make for a depression further on to the north-west, now partially hidden by the slope on which we were standing. We arrived at the place only to meet with fresh disappointment; and distressed as we were by our prolonged thirst, we were compelled to pass another night without any relief.

We lost no time in making a start the following morning, and, turning into a wide valley that ran northwards, we came in sight of a native village, consisting of about forty huts, the shape of which evidenced that they were the property of Koranna and Bechuana Barolongs. The village ran principally along the right bank of a little river-bed containing a number of small pools. Our bullocks soon sniffed the water, and quickening their pace, were making their way almost beyond control to the bank, when suddenly all further progress was blockaded by a dozen or more Koranna men, all dressed as usual in ragged European costume. Making violent gesticulations, and shouting aloud, they made me understand that no animals could be allowed to drink there for less than five shillings a head. Of course I repudiated a demand so exorbitant, and offered what seemed to me a more reasonable compensation. They refused to listen to my terms, nor could Pit, with all his powers of persuasion, induce them to swerve from their determination.

They had soon found out the desperate condition of thirst to which we were reduced, and had made

up their minds to make a good bargain out of our necessities; but I was not to be baffled; and, knowing them to be thorough cowards, informed them that, whether they liked it or not, I was resolved to have the water I required. Taking it for granted that my threat implied a recourse to fire-arms, they set up a piteous howl, and kept on bawling out some native word, which I was told was a cry for help. In answer to the appeal a number of the inhabitants came hurrying out, Korannas armed with muskets, Barolongs and Makalahari brandishing assegais. The Korannas who carried guns were for the most part women. Partly in their own tongue, partly in Dutch, the whole crowd, now nearly fifty altogether, broke out into the most savage invectives; the women shrieked out the most dreadful of imprecations, while the children, from behind the enclosures, yelled to the top of their voices; our own dogs, of course, were the reverse of mute, and the native curs yelped and snarled in chorus. Never was there a more complete pandemonium. I had come with the most peaceable intentions; yet, here I was, either by my own want of tact, or by their greed of alcohol, all but involved in a fatal contention with the natives.

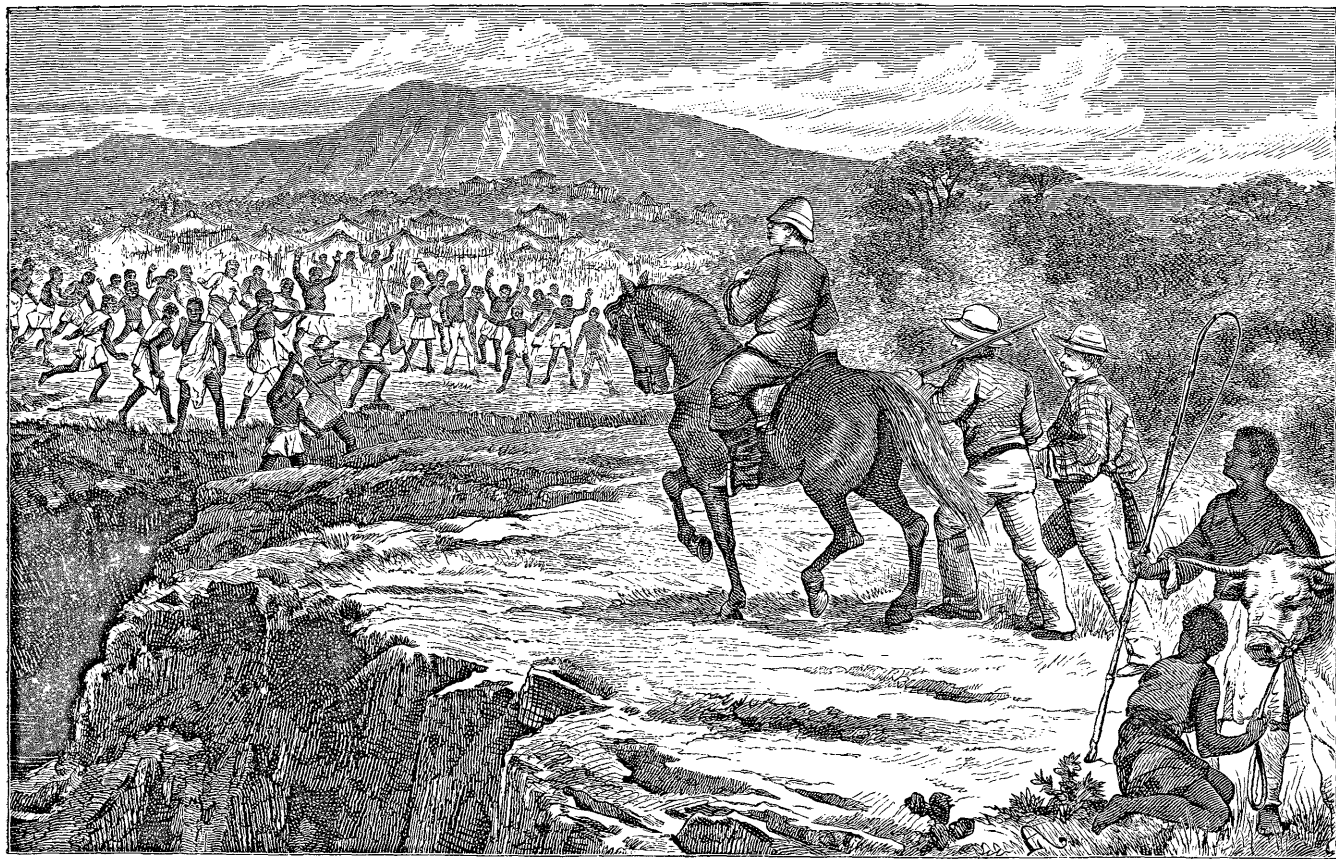
Seeing the threatening aspect of affairs, my people levelled their guns; this led to a counter-demonstration, and the weapons of our antagonists were pointed against us. My knowledge of the Koranna character came to my aid, and prevented me from

getting into a dilemma; I was quite aware that however much they might be urged on by a few care-for-naught leaders, as a rule they were the most abject of cowards. Upon this conviction I acted, and avoided any precipitate measures.

Leaving two of our party in charge of the waggon, I rode out quite alone towards the mob. They did not attack me; I did not suppose they would; but louder than ever they assailed me with the bitterest revilings. Steadily I advanced towards them, when all at once the foremost began to retreat; the rear quickly began to follow. In a moment the exultant voice of Pit behind me, shouted, "Det kerle lup! Det kerle lup!"¹

I heard the triumphant tone, and dashed off into a gallop. Had I been a field-marshal ordering my forces to retire, I could not more effectually have cleared the field. When I pulled up I could only burst into a fit of laughter; the comical way in which man, woman, and child had struggled to keep out of reach of my horse's heels was irresistible, none of them apparently feeling safe until helter-skelter they had reached the security of their own hedges; once within these, they turned to deliver their maledictions more vigorously than before; perhaps I was not the worse off for being unable to comprehend what was doubtless a tirade against the overbearing acts of the white man. There was no further opposition, and our famished animals were at once sent forward to enjoy a refreshing drink,

¹ "The fellows are making off!"



while we took care to replenish our own vessels with an ample supply of water.

As we quitted the village we were greeted by another storm of vituperation, which, as we did not condescend to take any notice of it, became more furious than ever; but so uproarious did the shouting become that the riot unfortunately startled our oxen, and caused them to swerve aside so suddenly that our front axle snapped in two. No more untimely accident could have befallen us, and we involuntarily raised a cry of dismay. I congratulated myself most thoroughly on not having come into overt collision with the people, for, in spite of their being cowards and the worst of marksmen, they might, by a stray shot from their old muskets, have done us a very serious mischief; moreover, to have come to grief amongst the Barolongs or Makalahari would have been a very different thing from finding ourselves helpless in the midst of an infuriated crowd of odious Korannas.

As it was, I relied very much upon the effect of my firmness with regard to the water, and was right in my conjecture that the natives would not try to take advantage of our misadventure. They no sooner saw what had happened than they hurried back from the enclosures to which they had retreated, and began laughing, hooting, and screaming around us; the children danced merrily at the fun. At a hint from me my people, who had been sitting on the front of the waggon with their guns on their knees ready for action, laid them aside, and joined