

feet deep at the drift ; and, although it was known to be full of crocodiles, there was little or no danger at the regular crossing. However, Key had primed Soltké with some gorgeous stories of hairbreadth escapes, intending to play a trick on him in the river.

‘It is quite a common thing for men to be carried off here,’ said the Judge ; ‘but white men are very seldom killed—not more than four or five a year—because of the boots.’

‘Boots !’ exclaimed Soltké inquisitively.

‘Yes,’ said Key, in half-absent tones. ‘Ef you kick properly, no croc’ can stand it.’

Soltké complained excitedly, and as though he had suffered gross injustice, that no one had told him this interesting phase of life on the road ; but Key snubbed him, telling him that men didn’t speak much of such matters, as it gave the impression of bragging.

Soltké, who was above all things desirous of conforming with the etiquette of the road, asked no more questions ; but Key, later on in the day, affecting to relent a little, got Soltké to sit straddle-legs on the pole of one of the waggons, and there, under his directions, practise kicking crocodiles.

The crossing was too difficult for one span of oxen, so we double-spanned, and put all hands on

with whips and sjamboks along the thirty oxen, to whack and shout until we got through.

Key placed himself behind Soltké and, just when the excitement was greatest, with his long whipstick and lash he made a loop, in which he managed to enclose Soltké's legs. One jerk took him clean off his feet, and down-stream he went, floundering and kicking for dear life, for he believed a crocodile had him. His kicking when he was head downwards and his legs were free of the water was remarkable. There were roars of laughter from everyone, as Key had passed the word along; but presently there was a lull, and the niggers stopped laughing and felt the joke fall flat, when Soltké, utterly unconscious of the real cause of his upset, waded deliberately back as soon as he recovered his feet, and, pale but undaunted, took his place, sjambok in hand, the same as before.

Among transport-riders the condition of the Berg—as the spurs of the long Drakensberg range of mountains are called colloquially—is always a fruitful topic of conversation. The Berg at Spitz Kop is worse than at any other point, I believe, and Soltké exhibited a growing interest in this much-discussed feature of the road. His enthusiastic nature led him here into all sorts of speculations about it, which were highly amusing to us; and the Judge egged poor Soltké on and crammed

him so that he undertook in our interest to devise some method for ascending this awful Berg whereby the then terrible risks to life and property would be minimized, if not entirely removed. The position, as Key explained it, was this: There was a long, steep hill to be surmounted, the grade of which varied between 30° and vertical, but the crowning difficulty lay in the 'shoot.' Here it was an open question whether the hill did not actually overhang; so steep was it, in fact, that it was not an uncommon occurrence for the front oxer to slip as they gained the summit, and fall back into the waggon, possibly killing both leader and driver, and doing infinite damage to the loads. Soltké faced this problem brimful of confidence in the subject and himself. After hours of keen discussion and diligent experiments, Soltké produced his plan. It was a system of endless rope on guides and pulleys, so arranged that by a top anchorage on the summit of this hill both oxen and driver would be secure. Soltké was triumphant, but Key extricated himself temporarily by pointing out that as we had not enough rope to try the scheme, we would have to take the old roundabout road and leave the 'shoot' for the next trip.

The joking with Soltké, as I have said, at times degenerated into common horseplay, and this led to the only unpleasantness we had. The young:

Mackay—Robbie—was a quiet, humorous, and most gentle-natured fellow, an immense favourite with everybody.

One night we were all standing round the fire, when something occurred which nobody ever seemed able to explain. Soltké had mislaid his pipe, and, thinking he had seen Robbie take it, asked him for it back. Robbie denied all knowledge, and Soltké, deeming it but another practical joke, said, 'I saw you taking it, you ——,' using a term which he, poor chap, had picked up without knowing the meaning, a term which among white men never passes unnoticed. Robbie's Scotch blood was aflame, and before one of us could stir, before he himself could think of the allowances to be made, before the word was well said, a heavy right-hander across the mouth dropped Soltké back against the waggon. Blank amazement and something like consternation marked every face, but none was so utterly taken aback as poor Soltké, who would have suffered anything rather than inflict pain upon a fellow-being. He only said, 'Robbie, what haf I say? I do not understand,' and, looking white and miserable, walked quietly off to his blankets and turned in. To us it was as though a girl, a child, had been struck, and no one felt this more than Robbie himself, as soon as he saw that the insult was not intentional. The

look on Soltké's face was that of a stricken woman, a look of dull, unmerited pain. He was not cowed — just dazed and hurt, but inexpressibly hurt. You will see men blink and shuffle under that look in a woman's face. You will see a master quail before it in a servant. You will see White go down before it in Black ; for it is God's own weapon in the hands of helpless right. As long as I live I shall remember that look. I felt as though *I* had done it !

We trekked as usual next morning at about three o'clock, and it must have been some time in the dark hours of the early trek that Robbie spoke to Soltké. Whatever it was he said, it relieved the awkwardness, and restored Soltké to something of his old self ; but he was never quite the same again, and for some days we did not get over the look in his eyes and the feeling of guiltiness it left in us.

Robbie did not speak of that early morning scene, but later in the day remarked incontinently :

'By God ! he is white, is Soltké—white all through.'

Soltké kept a diary, and kept it with the most marvellous fidelity and unflagging industry, and he also learned to shoot, and shot cockyolly birds occasionally, and was pleased to know their sporting and scientific names. There is a sort of bastard cockatoo in those parts which is commonly known

as the 'Go way' bird, on account of its cry, which closely resembles these words, and of a habit it is supposed to have of warning game of the approach of man. In Soltké's diary there should be an elaborate essay on the ancestry and personal habits of this bird, and the wonderful traditions of its family. He took these things down faithfully and laboriously from the Judge's own lips. The Judge had a copious mythology. Poor Soltké tried to stuff some of his dicky-birds, labelling them with such names as Key could always supply at a moment's notice. The result was unpleasant, as Soltké took to bestowing these ill-preserved relics in the side-pockets of the tents, in the waggon-boxes, and in a dozen other unlikely spots. It was only now and then that we could actually find them; but there was a constant suggestion of their proximity, nevertheless.

We took to calling Soltké the Professor, as it was a title which, we told him, seemed better to suggest an all-round efficiency than any other we could think of, and therefore suited him more than such purely departmental distinctions as Leatherstocking, the Engineer, or the Ornithologist.

I had forgotten to say that there was one thing on which we did not chaff poor Soltké. He played the zither. I do not know if he played it well or not, for he was the only one whom I have heard

play that instrument. To us, lying round a bright thornwood fire, in which the big logs burnt into solid glowing coals—to us, who lay back smoking or gazing up into the infinite depths of silent, cloudless sky, watching millions and millions of stars twinkling busily and noiselessly down at us, the music was a kind of dream.

As Soltké sat in the glow of the fire, and the unsteady flicker of shooting and dying flames threw lights and shadows on his face, it sometimes looked as though he was not quite what we took him for. His was a bright, intelligent face, lit up by quick, eager blue eyes; in fact, though it was a thing that we took no stock in, Soltké was really a very good-looking boy, and one naturally thought of him as some 'mother's hope and pride'; and the look of worry and grief that I sometimes fancied I saw was put down to home-sickness brought out by music. However good or bad his music was, he seemed to feel it, and we—well, we never talked much after he began to play; and when he stopped, we generally knocked our pipes out with a sort of half-sigh, and turned in for the night. It used to make me think of home as I remembered it when I was still externally respectable—before I took to flannel shirts and moleskins, and ways that were not home ways; and I expect the others felt that too.

We had passed the Crocodile River and the belt of 'Tsetse Fly' country. We had passed Josikulus, where Hart was murdered by the niggers, and we told Soltké the story of the dead man's sentry-go. We passed Ship Mountain, and pointed out the bush that hid the haunted cave, and told him the weird tradition of the old witch-doctor imprisoned by the rock slide, handling still as a skeleton the implements of magic he used in life.

All these things were noted in Soltké's voluminous diary; and a curious medley it must have contained, with the embroidered facings of Key and the solid square facts of Gowan intermingled with the author's own original remarks and reflections. Soltké, to do him justice, was clearly a person of some purpose. He had placed before himself an ideal, and he never lost sight of it. He was eternally qualifying for that pursuit which he called 'de prospect.' He would eat from choice the charred and blackened crust of an overbaked loaf or a steak that had slipped the gridiron and got well sanded; he also seemed to prefer the dregs of the coffee billy, which he swallowed black and unsweetened; he scorned to use a fork; and he always slept on the lumpiest ground; and all this was to fit him for the hardships and emergencies he promised himself as a full-blown prospector. His eagerness for knowledge of the flora and fauna was

equally remarkable: he had compiled a sort of dictionary of plants and animals, describing their virtues, medicinal or culinary, and I am sure that towards the end of our trip Soltké would have set out into the Bush with a light heart, armed only with his book, and fortified by a confidence which was absolutely phenomenal.

Looking back on it all, it seems a mean shame ever to have played on his credulity; and, indeed, most of us were, even at this time, keenly alive to this; but there were times when his eager questioning and intense earnestness about commonplace trifles made temptation irresistible, and seemed even to inspire one with ridiculous notions suited to Soltké's indiscriminating appetite.

It was on a Sunday morning that we came in sight of Pretorius Kop—a solitary sugar-loaf hill—and we lay by as usual during the hours of daylight. We knew it was Sunday, because Soltké had said so, and because we saw him in the early morning kneeling in the shadow of a big tree a few yards from the waggons, Prayer-book in hand, absorbedly following the prayers of the Mass. He was a Roman Catholic, and was as uncompromisingly particular in observing the smallest detail of his Church's ritual and teaching as he was by nature tolerant of the shortcomings of others. In the course of the morning's short excursion

Soltké had come across one of those crawling creatures known to children as 'thousand-legs,' the common, harmless millepede. It was the first he had ever seen, and words failed him in his quest for information. Key was the first he met on his return, and the Judge told him solemnly that the insect in question was 'that well-known and most ferocious of reptiles, the viper.' During breakfast Soltké absorbed whole volumes of information about this 'wiper'—its habits and uses, and as soon as the meal was over he betook himself to the side-pocket of the tent waggon, where the beloved diary was kept, and commenced to write up the new discovery. We were all spread about enjoying the morning smoke, or taking it easy in other ways. We had forgotten Soltké, but presently his face popped out, wearing a most worried, earnest, and intense expression.

'Joodge!' he called, 'Joodge, how vos dot wiper shpell?'

Key dictated calmly :

'W-h-y-p-e-r, whyper,' and Soltke with infinite pains put it down. But we heard him a moment later from his place in the tent of the waggon murmuring :

'Lieber Himmel ! dot vos un oogly name.'

He kept his diary in English, and many a perspiring hour did he spend in his struggles with our

language ; but he never quailed once, never even slackened, for he said it was 'goot to make him friends mit der English, and he can talk him when he shall coom on der prospect.'

Soltké could hardly have taken down the name of this new wonder, when the sight of a blue jay flying past—one marvellous blaze of gorgeous colour as its shiny feathers caught the sunlight—sent him into a perfect paroxysm of excitement. He had seen the honeysuckers, and knew them in the diary as 'birds of Paradise'; he knew the ordinary or cockyolly bird as the small 'pheasant of Capricorn'; he had shot dicky-birds by the dozen and stuffed them, and their noxious odours seemed to add zest to his ornithological pursuits; but he had never seen, never dreamed of, anything like this. For one spellbound moment Soltké watched the bird sail by, and then gasped out :

'Gott in Himmel! what woss dat? Christnacht, be shtill, und I shot him.'

Diary, pen, ink and blotter were thrust aside, and Soltké scrambled for the gun. We turned our backs on him to watch the bird. Soltké jumped from the waggon. The report of the two barrels was so loud and close that it made us duck; but the blue jay sat unmoved.

There was a curious silence that made several of us look round together. The gun had fallen, and

Soltké was standing above it, rigid and ghastly white, with one hand gripping a burnt and blood-spattered tear in his right leg. As we sprang to him open-armed he seemed just to sway gently towards us with closed eyes and a soft murmur of words in his own tongue. It sounded like a prayer.

I think he fainted then ; but we were never sure, as he was always so still with it all that one couldn't tell at times whether he was dead or alive. The medicines we had, and the remedies we knew, did not run to gunshot wounds and broken legs, but we made shift to fix him up somehow with a rough ligament.

It was here that Key came in. Quiet and self-possessed, firm and kind, he cut away the burnt, torn clothing. He washed out the ragged, blackened wound ; he tried the leg, and told us it was fractured—shattered—and would have to come off. And Soltké lay there, under the big tree, on a blanket spread on a heap of grass, as white as alabaster and as still, while we watched silently beside him, fanning him with small green boughs, and keeping off the flies.

Donald Mackay had started off at once for a doctor ; but we knew that, with the best luck in finding him, and riding day and night, it must be over two days before we could get him down there.

Robbie went with his brother to the nearest waggons a few miles on ahead, where Donald raised a horse and went on alone on his long ride for help. Robbie came back with a few things that we hoped would help a little, and then we settled down to watch in silence the awful race between ebbing life and coming help.

Through the hot, long, quiet day we watched and tended him, and so on into the cool of the evening. We could do nothing, really; but it seemed to please him and us to whisk away the flies, and say a word of cheer to him, or now and then to shift the cotton sheet that covered him. When the stars came out, and the soft cool feel of night grew up around, and the ruddy flicker of the fire worked its magic on the encampment, changing and beautifying everything with sudden lights and weird shadows; when the cattle were tied up to the yokes, and one by one lay down to sleep with great restful, deep-drawn sighs; when there were no sounds but the steady chewing of the cud and the occasional distant howl of a hyena or the sharp, unreal laugh of the jackal—then did we really seem to settle down to the business of waiting.

Now and then, perhaps three or four times in the night, Soltké asked for water; once or twice towards morning he sighed a suppressed tired sigh; but not a word of complaint, not a sign of im-

patience, not one evidence of the torture he was enduring, escaped him. When morning came, cool and fragrant, and the blue smoke of the camp-fire curled up straight and clean into the pure air, he was as quiet and uncomplaining still, though not for one second had his eyes closed nor the deadly numbing pain ceased its ache.

Soltké seemed to me to look younger than ever, though terribly white and fagged. His eyes looked blue and brave and trustful—childishly trustful—as ever, and he alone, of all the party, did not keep looking towards the west for the return of Donald Mackay and his charge.

All that day we watched and waited, and on through another slow and silent night; but we could see then that Soltké could not last out much longer without a doctor's help, and that his chance was becoming a poor one.

It must have been about three in the morning when, lying flat on my back, looking up into the wonderful maze of stars that spatters our southern sky, I heard or felt the tiniest tap, tap, tap under my head. I shot up with the cry of, 'There's Donald at last!'

We were all up and listening, but could hear nothing when standing, of course. However, there was no mistake, and after five minutes we could hear on the cool, clear, still air the footfall of a

horse—*one* horse, as we all remarked with an awful heart-sinking.

Two of us—Key and I—went on to meet the horseman, and in a few minutes came upon Donald leading a horse; upon which, by the aid of a propping arm, was balanced a man whom we all knew—only too well.

In a breath Donald told us that he had sent on from the first camp for the district surgeon, but, chancing on Doc Monroe, had packed him on the horse and come back with him as a makeshift. Munroe was a quack chemist of morose and brutal character, and a drunkard with it. His moral status might be gauged by the fact that no patient among those who knew him personally or by repute ever approached him professionally except upon the contract system—so much the job, payment on delivery, cured. He had a certain repute for ability. God knows how it was earned, for he had killed more men than any other agency in the country; but I believe that his brutal and sardonic indifference to public opinion, his fiendish hints that there was no accident about the deaths of *his* patients, and that ‘those who want Doc Munroe can pay for him, by G—d!’ inspired a weird dread which, irrationally, perhaps, yet not unnaturally, begot a sort of blind awed belief in the man’s ability.

Men hardly stricken have been known to sit on the bar-step and wait while Doc, having drunk himself drunk, would drink himself sober, and then, with implicit faith, swallow down mixtures to which the bloodshot eyes and the trembling hands of the Doc added the interest of a blind gamble.

By the uncertain light of the stars I had not recognised him, until Key, who was a few paces in front, said softly :

‘ It’s Doc Munroe—dead drunk !’

Donald was utterly worn out, and wild with despair. Doc had been drunk when he found him, but (as Donald said) he was always that, and he had hoped that a forty-mile ride would sober him. However, it seems that twice on the road he had got liquor, and the second time, when Donald had caught him and taken it away, he had sat down by the roadside stolid and immovable until the liquor was returned to him.

There were reasons why we bottled up our rage and treated the Doc with a show of civility, and even conciliatory respect. We knew, firstly, that he had his instruments, and that only he could use them ; and, secondly, that, however drunk he might be, he never lost his senses until delirium set in ; and, moreover, that he was intensely suspicious of offence when in this state, and if once

huffed, was indifferent to prayers and threats alike. The look on Gowan's face was positively murderous when he saw in what manner our waiting was rewarded. I am sure he would readily have killed Munroe at that moment.

Poor Soltké showed his first signs of anxiety then, and we had to make what excuses we could—the want of light, first of all, and then the long ride—to account for the doctor's not seeing him now that he had come. But the hours went by, the last chance was ebbing away, and we could do nothing—absolutely nothing—with the man.

We tried him with everything. We gave him black coffee—he wouldn't touch it; we tried soup—he kicked it over; food, sleep, a bath—everything was rejected with a sullen and stolid shake of the head, and the one word 'W'isky.' That we would *not* give. For four mortal hours the man lay sullenly by the waggon on a pile of blankets, and only the one word passed his lips. We dared not give him more—it would have destroyed our only chance; and without liquor he would not budge.

Day was well advanced when Munroe stood up quietly, and walked over to where Gowan stood beside his waggon. I suspected that the Doc had noticed Gowan's look when he came into camp with us, and now it was clear that he had.

'You think I'm drunk,' said Munroe, with a

malignant sneer. 'I saw you look at me when I got off that d——d horse! You think I'm drunk, do you?'

Gowan looked him steadily in the eyes, but made no answer, and Doc resumed :

'Are you going to give me that whisky?'

Again no answer; but I walked nearer, as I could see Gowan's hands close and go back, and his chest came up with hard breathing.

'Are — you — going — to — give — me — that — whisky?' asked Munroe again, slowly and deliberately.

'No!' roared Gowan, with a tiger-like spring at the other man; 'I'll see you in hell first!'

I caught Gowan's uplifted arm, but Munroe never flinched, and, pulling himself together with something of a shake, he said in a perfectly sober, even tone and with diabolical malevolence :

'Then I'll see your friend dead and rotten before I stir a hand to help him;' and with that he marched back to the blankets and lay down again.

An hour passed, and he never stirred a finger—never even blinked his staring eyes. Then the Mackays, Key, and I held a council, and decided to give him the liquor as a last—a truly forlorn—hope. It was left to me to see him, and I went over bottle and glass in hand.

He wouldn't touch it.

I argued, begged, and prayed ; but it had no effect whatever. He just lay there, resting on one arm, with the cruel, shallow glitter in his eyes that one sees in those of wild beasts. I returned to the others, and we had another talk, and then I offered him money—a price: all that we could give! That fetched him. He sat up, and looked at me for about a minute, and then said, shaking with hate :

‘Your liquor I won’t touch. Your money won’t buy me. As soon as it’s cool enough to move, I go back ; and if you’ve ever heard of Doc Munroe, you’ll take that for a last answer.’

That was a facer, and when I went back and told the others, opinions were divided as to what to do. Gowan and Key were for the rifle cure. If he wouldn’t operate, shoot him !

But we urged another—a last—delay, say till noon ; and they gave way, but warned us it would be useless.

The heat that day was awful. No breeze, no relief—only dead, oppressive heat, reflected to and fro the steel-blue sky and the hard-baked earth.

The fires were out—we had cooked nothing that day—and the camp looked dead and deserted. One or more of us would always be with Soltké ; the others would be lying in the shadow of a tree

or under a waggon. We had some faint hope that the district surgeon would turn up, but not before the morrow, and, knowing Soltké's condition, that seemed useless, so that our only real chance was with Munroe.

As we lay there, dismally and hopelessly waiting, we were suddenly startled by a most peculiar and unnatural bark. The two dogs also jumped up and ran out on to the road. We could see nothing except that Munroe had gone. The noise was repeated, and the dogs growled, and every hair stood up on their backs.

'Great God! look there!' came from Donald.

Following his glance, we saw, low down amongst the thick buffalo grass, the wild, haggard face of Doc Munroe. His shock red hair half covered his eyes, which glittered and glared like a lioness's. As we stood he barked again, and made a jump out to the margin of the grass. He was mad—stark, staring mad—with delirium tremens! In one of his hands, half hidden by the grass, we could see a Bushman's friend, and the bright blade seemed to catch an ugly gleam from the man's eyes and reflect it malevolently back on us.

Munroe was a big man, and, although ruined in health by years of hard drinking, would have been a very ugly customer while the mad fit lasted; so we just stood our ground, ready to take him any

way he wanted to come. After a minute or two he seemed to feel the effect of four pairs of eyes looking steadily at him, and the wild beast died out, and his body, which had been as rigid as a 'standing' pointer's, became visibly limp and nerveless. He got up heavily, with a silly, hysterical laugh, and stood meekly before us, looking as foolish and harmless as a human being might. He sidled over towards Donald Mackay, keeping as far as possible from Gowan, whom he clearly distrusted, and looking furtively about, as though others besides us might hear him, he said, with a sickly smile and in a thin, uncertain voice :

'I was playin', Donald, old man, only playin'. You know me—old Doc Munroe. *You* weren't frightened, Donald, eh? He! he! I *like* to bark, ye know. I *like* it, and who'll stop me if I like it, eh? You could see I was playin', old partner. *You* knew it, didn't you ?

The man was wretchedly weak and shaky, and as he continued to look about anxiously, he wiped the heavy drops of cold perspiration off his colourless face with the dirty strip of kapalaan which did service for a pocket-handkerchief. He sidled up closer and closer to Donald, and watched with growing intentness and terror the place from which he had just emerged. Mackay quietly imprisoned the knife-hand, but Munroe never noticed that,

and only clung closer to him, and began to mutter and cry out again, quivering with excitement and terror, which grew on him, until he shrieked to Donald to save him, and to 'knife him over there'—pointing to the tree beneath which he had hidden. Key took the proffered knife, and, walking quietly towards the tree, began to hack it in an unenthusiastic manner ; and the relief that this seemed to give Munroe would have been ludicrous but for the desperate hopelessness it brought for poor Soltké.

It was no longer possible to keep up our well-intended fiction about the doctor requiring rest, for Munroe's maniac laughter and shrieks of terror became so frequent and awful that they must have startled one half a mile away. He became so violent that we were obliged to take him down to the spruit, and to tie him down there in the shadow of a high bank, with one of the niggers to look after him, and an occasional visit from one of us to see if all was well.

Soltké bore the news as he had borne all that went before, with silent, martyr-like patience. He seemed to have guessed it : not a muscle moved, not a feature changed. He listened to it as calmly as he listened to our expressed hope that the district surgeon would turn up by sundown, and with as little personal concern.

Towards evening he spoke a good deal to us all, but in a way that made our hearts sink. He spoke of his home and his past life—for the first time—and of something that was troubling him greatly. He also admitted that his leg was feeling very hot, and that he felt twinges of pain shooting up into the groin and body.

At sundown he asked for his Prayer-Book, and later on, when we had left him alone for a while, and sat in silent, helpless despair by the neglected fire, he asked for Robbie. At last, at about ten o'clock that night, we heard the welcome sound of a horse's trotting, and to our unspeakable delight the cheery little doctor turned up. Poor old Soltké did brighten up then, and the smile which had never failed him throughout the days of suffering seemed to me more easy and hopeful. In less than an hour the shattered leg was off. In spite of the bad light and the rude appliances all went well, and with infinite relief we saw Soltké doze off under the merciful influence of the morphia which the doctor had brought. We felt that we had rounded the turn, and could afford to sleep easy. The little doctor, who had ridden seventy miles since sun-up, rolled into his blankets near where Soltké slept, and was in the land of dreams long before we, who were restless from very relief and joy, could settle down to close our eyes.

I seemed to have dozed for but a few minutes, when in my dreams, as it seemed to me, I heard in the faintest but clearest whisper the doctor saying: 'Mortification, you know! I couldn't see it by candle-light, or we might have spared him the operation.'

He was just dead. He sighed himself out, as the doctor said, like a tired child to sleep. We buried him close to the road under a big thorn-tree, which we stripped of its bark for a couple of feet to serve for a headstone for his grave. It was the tree where we had seen him on his knees at prayer. And as it neared sundown, we called for the oxen, and inspanned for the evening trek.

The doctor had gone. He had to get back those seventy miles to see another patient, whose life perhaps depended upon the grit of his gallant little horse.

During the night Munroe had managed to get loose, and with a madman's cunning had got away with his horse and disappeared, which was perhaps a good thing for him.

The boys had packed everything on the waggons, and were lashing the bedding in the tent-waggon so as to be out of the way of the dust and the thorns, when one of them picked up and handed out to us the open book and writing materials, just as Soltké had left them three days before,

when he had jumped out to shoot the blue jay.

The diary lay open at the last-written page, and we read :

‘The most verushius of reptile is the Whuyper——’

Robbie closed the book gently and put it away. It didn’t seem the least bit funny then.

At midnight, when the long night trek was over, and we were rolled in our blankets near the camp-fire, Robbie’s heart was full, and he spoke—slowly and in half-broken tones :

‘Ye mind the time he sent for me? Ye do? Yes; well, it was to ask my forgiveness for what he said the day I struck him. Ay, he did that!’

Robbie looked slowly round the circle through dimmed glasses, and then went on hesitatingly :

‘And he said, too, that we had all been too good to him, and that he had played it low on us; and that he—he hoped the good God would pardon him the greatest crime of all. And he said that I must give his Prayer-Book and his zither’ (Robbie continued in a lower and reverent tone) ‘to—to his child—his little boy.’

‘*Soltké’s child?*’ came from all together.

Robbie nodded, and there was a space of time when everyone shifted a little and felt chilled; but

it was Gowan who put our common thought into words.

‘Where is his wife?’ he asked slowly.

‘Dead!’ said Robbie.

‘I—I didn’t know he was married.’

Robbie’s look was a prayer for mercy, as he answered:

‘He wasn’t!’

INDUNA NAIRN.

I.

'MOODIE'S' was concession ground, and belonged to a company; but as 'findings is keepings' is the first law of the prospector, there were quite a number of people, otherwise honest and well-principled, who thought that it would be the right thing to rush it and peg it, and parcel it out among themselves upon such terms and conditions as a committee of their own number might decide.

So of course they rushed it !

They were good men and true, and they were strong in their righteous indignation, but in nothing else ; and when it came to trying conclusions with a Government, they, being penniless, short-rationed, and few in numbers, went under, and were carried off under arrest to Pretoria, the committee designate going in bulk, with their proposers and seconders thrown in.'

It was then that the real inwardness of an em-

barrassing position was revealed. The case of 'The State v. H. Bankerpitt and Twenty-nine Others' could not come on for many weeks, and the Government, being mistrusted by the Pretoria tradesmen, who would no longer accept 'goodfors' of even a few shillings value, attempted to masquerade stern necessity as simple grace, and offered to release the prisoners on bail.

The offer was rejected with derision.

Next day Government went one better and offered to release them on parole without bail. But even this did not tempt them, and eventually a delegate was deputed to interview the prisoners so as to ascertain their wishes. The unanimous reply was:

'You brought us here. You can keep us here. We are quite contented.'

It was then realized that the matter was serious, and a meeting of the Executive Council was called and the gravity of the situation explained by the President of the State. The result of the deliberations was the presentation by the Government of an ultimatum, which was in effect, 'Choose between a compromise and a freeze-out.'

They accepted the compromise.

It was that the Government should find them in lodging and they should find their board.

It was not a very grand compromise, but it was better than a freeze-out, and during the ensuing

months in which 'The State v. H. Bankerpitt and Twenty-nine Others' sustained many adjournments and much publicity in the Pretoria press, only once was the *modus vivendi* thus established in any way threatened.

The younger members of the party had begun to keep irregular hours. One or two remonstrances failing to effect an improvement, the worthy gaoler resolved upon the extremest measure. He posted the following notice on the door:

'Anyone failing to return by nine p.m. will be locked out.'

There was no further trouble.

* * * * *

Some months had passed since the trial. The State had vindicated its authority; the inherent right of man was thrown out of court; and 'H. Bankerpitt and Twenty-nine Others' had paid the penalty for their mistaken zeal. The man in the street had ceased to prophesy that the case would lead to war with the suzerain power, the weekly newspaper resumed its normal appearance, and the 'constant reader' was no longer haunted by a headline more constant than himself.

'Moodie's' was controlled by its rightful owners, but its name was as wormwood in the prospector's mouth, and the quondam Promised Land became a spot accursed and despised.

Across the valley of the Kaap, over the rock-crested mountains of Maconchwa, out into the shattered hills and ranges of Swazieland, and over the hot bush-hidden flats the prospectors took their ways to find something somewhere which would be their own.

They went singly and in pairs, and they 'humped swag and tucker' when they had no donkeys to pack. It was a rule with few exceptions that they only went in parties and without swag when there was a rush on.

This was one of the exceptions.

Seven men in irregular Indian file, and at irregular distances apart, were toiling up the green slopes of the Maconchwa.

They were following a path, and one after another would stop and turn panting to pay tribute to the steepness of the hill and the beauty of the view below.

Far below them, and farther still ahead, the smooth-worn path meandered over the hill's face like a red-brown thread woven in the green. The sun was fiercely strong, but the breath of the mountain was cool, and they drank it in gratefully at each rest.

They were all marked with the 'out-of-luck' brand. It was stamped on their faces. They were all tired, and most of them looked hungry as well.

When the leader reached the top, he looked expectantly around on all sides, then, stepping briskly towards an outcrop near by, from which a better view was obtainable, he looked again long and carefully. Then he came back to the path where the others had already assembled, and cursed the country and all in it from the bottom of his bitter soul.

‘There’s no house and there’s no kraal, and there’s no God-damn-nothing. It’s eight hours since we started on the “two-mile” tramp, and I knew from the start we were fooled. If Choky Wilson had *known* anything he would have come himself, and not told *you*.’

He scowled at a younger member of the party who was standing by chewing a stem of grass and looking down across the Crocodile and Hlambanyati valleys.

‘What did the Swazie boy say?’ asked another, turning readily on the youngster as the convenient scapegoat.

The younger one answered good-temperedly :

‘He said that the White Induna was on the Maconchwa, near the first water that came out of the white rock.’

‘Maconchwa!’ snarled the leader, ‘why, it’s twenty miles long! The whole d——d range is Maconchwa. Any idiot might be expected to know that.’

‘ Yes, that’s why I didn’t offer to explain,’ said the younger one.

The thrust passed unnoticed, and while a general *indaba* was going on the last speaker moved to the same spot from which the leader had viewed the country.

He knew the Kaffir and his language and his habits, and he could read the face of the country as well as the niggers themselves, so they heeded him when he spoke, although he was the youngest member of the party, and when a few minutes later, he cut into the conversation with the remark that ‘there was a cattle kraal near by and they had better go on there and ask the way,’ there was a general chorus of ‘Where?’ and an incredulous ‘Darned if I can see it!’ from the leader.

The youngster replied again :

‘Nor can I, but it’s there all the same.’

‘How do you know?’

‘Look,’ he said, pointing to a slope about a mile distant.

‘Well, look at what?’

‘Can’t you see that red patch on the rise there?’

‘What, those water-worn dongas?’

‘Not dongas—cattle tracks. They are from the drinking-place. That must be the White Rock up there, and I expect the house must be behind the clump of trees.’

They walked on until the trees were reached and they could see the small rough stone house through a thinner portion of the Bush, and there they waited awhile to take counsel. It was finally decided that they should all go up together, but they looked to the one who seemed to be their leader to act as spokesman.

‘If he’s a white man at all,’ remarked he in front, ‘he won’t refuse us grub, anyhow; but that’s just it. They say he’s no more white than old Bandine, that he hates the sight of white men, and keeps as far from them as he can. He’s been so long among the darned niggers that he’s just one of them himself.’

They passed along the path to the house, and six of the party waited below while the leader mounted the steps of the mud stoep.

A tall man with a long brown beard stepped out of an open doorway and met him.

The whole party offered ‘good-evening’ with more or less *empressement*, and certainly with a greater show of politeness than was customary with them; but the man only slid his hands easily into the pockets of a light duck-coat, and looked with critical and not too friendly glance at the leader, ignoring the others.

‘We’re out prospectin’ about here,’ began the leader, ‘and we thought we’d just come along and look you up.’

As there was no reply to this, not even a change in the look nor a twitch of a muscle to be construed into acknowledgment of the remark, the speaker resumed quickly and with less composure :

‘The niggers told us you hung out about here, and, bein’ the only white man in these parts, we kind o’ came along to see what was doin’, and if there was any chance of reefin’, and about the licenses and water and that.’

The owner of the house continued to look steadily and in silence at the speaker. The latter, when the invitation of a second pause passed unaccepted, flushed up and, abandoning the previous method, asked curtly :

‘Can you sell us any food? Fowls or crushed mealies, or anything. We’re half dead o’ trampin’ over your d——d hills, and I want food for self and mates. We’re far down enough, but we reckon to pay for what we get. We’re not loafin’!’

The man did not appear to notice this hostile tone any more than he had the former conciliatory one; but, after another deadly pause, he asked, in a quiet, clear voice :

‘Your name?’

‘Bankerpitt,’ said the other.

The faintest trace of a smile lit up the man’s face as he remarked quietly :

‘ Ah, *H. Bankerpitt* ’—and glancing for the first time at the rest of the party—‘ *and twenty-nine others!* ’

He turned and walked slowly into the house, closing the door after him.

Bankerpitt had scarcely strength to say, ‘ Well, I’m d——d! ’

The party turned away, tired and hungry, and marched in silence to the clump of trees near the spruit below the house. There was no other water near, so they made camp for the night there.

It was dark. Occasionally the brighter gleams of the fire lighted up the circle of sullen faces. There was nothing to eat or drink, so they had settled down to a monotonous chorus of curses on the renegade who had turned his back on his own colour. One by one each added his quota of bitter, unmeasured abuse until their vocabularies, comprehensive as they were, began to give out, and only now and then a mere exclamation of disgust, or a well-brooded curse, would break the heavy silence.

There being nothing to cook, there was nothing to do at that time of evening but to brood on their wrongs. They did this thoroughly until a faint rustle in the wood made them look round, and then a child’s voice close behind the group gave the Kaffir salutation ‘ *Makos!* ’ Someone raised a brand

from the fire, and by its light they saw two *umfaans* bearing on their heads a large earthen bowl each. One bowl contained fresh milk, the other a stew of fowls and stamped mealies.

The boys had the look of bright intelligence characteristic of the Zulu race, but when Bankerpitt asked sharply, 'Who sent this?' they exchanged one glance, and a cloud of the densest stupidity settled on their faces. Bankerpitt repeated his question, dragging one urchin closer to the fire. The reply, given in a thin, childish treble, was:

'It is food, white man! It is here!'

'Tell me!' he said fiercely, giving the child's arm a shake, 'does it come from that white dog up there?'

Even in the urchins of the race there is the instinct of evasion which enables them to baffle the closest inquiries.

'It is food for the white man. It is here!' was all that Bankerpitt's bullying could elicit.

'If we take it, it's because we must; but, by God! we'll pay him for it, same as we would any other blasted nigger!' exclaimed Bankerpitt savagely; and he drew from his leathern belt-pouch the three shillings it contained and thrust them into the *umfaan's* hand. The coins were dropped like hot coals, and the child said:

‘I want no money, white man; I bring a gift.’

But the men were hungry and took the food; and presently the two *umfaans* drew nearer to the fire, and, squatting on their haunches, awaited with ox-like patience the emptying of their bowls. When at last the boys stood up to go, the youngest of the party, who had been a silent and amused witness of his leader’s attempt to get information out of them, said something in a low tone, to which one boy replied:

‘Inkosikaas.’

A soft significant whistle was the only comment.

‘What was that, Geddy?’ said Bankerpitt quickly.

‘I asked who sent them with the food.’

‘Well, who did?’

‘He says “The missis”!’

‘Shrine of the Mighty!’

* * * * *

That was the first experience of Induna Nairn.

* * * * *

The second came this wise, about a year later.

There had been a row in Delagoa about some cattle which had been stolen. The rightful owners took their own way about getting them back, for they had more confidence in themselves than in the

Portuguese ; but, unfortunately, just at the last moment, an accident happened which made trouble for them. That was why they had been across the border away in Swazie country for so many months, and that was why they were coming back over the mountains and in a quiet way, for they were not sure of the reception which might await them.

One of them was Geddy, the youngster of the former party.

Geddy had not forgotten his experience of Nairn's 'hospitable roof,' and had given his companion, with considerable force and numerous illustrations, a fair picture of the well-remembered night. It is not surprising that they decided to give 'the d——d white nigger's' house the 'go-by.'

Nairn's house stood on the track ; in fact, the only feasible road up the Berg was a bridle-path cut by Nairn up to his house ; thence the ordinary native paths led in all directions, and—by reason— one or more led to the Kaap. In order to pass the house in mid-trek they made their morning off-saddle below the Berg, intending by noon to be some miles beyond the Peak. Near the Berg there are two climates, one for 'below' and one for 'on top,' and it was quite reasonable and natural to rise, as they did, out of the placid spring morning on the flats into a first-class thunderstorm with high wind and driving rain as soon as they reached

the exposed plateau. The tired horses refused to face the sheets of rain, and snorted and shook with fright at the lightning stabbing here and there and everywhere, and the deafening crashes of thunder. There was nothing for it but to dismount and, as the poor brutes turned their tails to the storm, to crouch to leeward of them for such shelter as they could give, and pray to Heaven that hail would not follow the rain.

Drenched, sopping, numbed and pierced by the cold wind that succeeded the storm, they resumed their ride half an hour later. Their clothes were setting hard in the wind, their blankets—strapped over the pommels—carried pounds weight of water, and the pulpy saddles clung like indiarubber.

The poor horses toiled on, slipping and sprawling along the greasy, smooth-worn Kaffir path, and when they rounded a little koppie that flanked Nairn's house, and came suddenly on the well-worn track that led to the house itself—not twenty yards off—they pricked their ears, and with a low whinny of welcome and joy trotted towards the house. Geddy pocketed his pride and, bowing to circumstances that were too much for him, allowed his horse to follow the other's lead. He did not, however, dismount as the other did, but sat in the saddle with an air of neutrality, awaiting the turn of events.

Geddy was prepared for many possible developments, and—by reason of the feeling description given him of the previous visit—his companion was also forearmed against contingencies, and was ready with replies suited to any form of incivility ; but when Nairn stepped out on to the stoep looking infinitely amused, and remarked frankly, ‘By Gad! you are two miserable-looking objects!’—when this happened the two just looked down at themselves and then at each other, and finally burst into laughter more genuine and prolonged than the ostensible cause would seem to warrant.

The house must have contained four rooms ; but they only saw two. It was a very quiet place. Oddly enough there were no dogs about, and the fowls did not seem to be as self-assertive there as Swazie fowls usually are. There were no noises at all about the place, not even the welcome sounds of life. All seemed to be toned down, *weighed* down, to about the level of sociability which had marked Nairn’s manner on the first visit. Geddy, feeling a little mean, it is true, was careful not to betray any indications of having been there before, but while they were getting into dry clothing in Nairn’s bedroom, he drew his companion’s attention to a large calabash that stood on the window-sill half full of milk. It had been cracked, and there was a small V-shaped nick in the rim, below which, and

encircling the gourd itself, was a delicate network of plaited brass, copper, and iron wires.

‘That was the one the milk came in that night,’ said Geddy, in a whisper. ‘I remember spilling some on account of that nick, and then I noticed the wire.’

His companion nodded. It was not an important nor even a very interesting discovery.

The younger waited a little, and then, slightly disgusted at the other’s slowness, said :

‘Well, either he sent the grub to us himself, or——’

‘Or what?’

‘Or—— Where’s the missis?’

They took in the room at a glance; but there was no answering evidence there. And when they joined Nairn they found that there were easy-chairs in the dining-room; so there they sat and smoked, and watched the rain set in as the regular spring drizzle does above the Berg.

The chairs, like the rest of the furniture, were rough-made from bushwood; but it seemed odd that a hermit should have three. There was a bookcase in the room, and it was full of well-bound and well-worn books, ‘mostly odd volumes—very few series,’ as Geddy remarked afterwards. There were a good many books of science, and all the poets he could recall; and there were books in

Latin, French, Greek, and German. Somehow he did not like to ask the real questions he wanted to put about the books. He did not quite know how far to go. In reply to one question, Nairn had said dryly that he had brought them with him, and was apparently indisposed to say more. He was not an easy man to draw.

During the day they had evidence of the respect in which Nairn was held by his dependents. He spoke to them in the lowest possible voice and in the fewest possible words, and never—except once, when something had occurred which annoyed him—never looked at, or even in the direction of, the individual addressed. On that occasion he was asking a question of a tall and remarkably good-looking Swazie woman.

She stood like a bronze statue while he spoke, and when he looked at her and his eyes blazed anger, although his voice did not alter, the colour rose to the woman's face, and turned her brown skin a reddish-bronze. Her head was slowly lowered, and the only answer was a faint whisper of the word, 'Inkos—chief!' The incident was trifling, but Geddy noticed it, and noted that his way with his boys and the men about the place was the same, and began to see why they called him 'Induna Nairn.'

As the rain had not abated Nairn insisted upon

their remaining overnight. He was pleasant, courteous, and most interesting, full of the strangest and most intimate knowledge of the country and the natives. He frequently illustrated remarks by references to other countries and other people, but neither of his guests cared to put the direct question as to whether he had been to those countries or only read of them. He gave no information about himself. Geddy was not satisfied with this, and with his sense of what is due to one's host somewhat dulled—doubtless by the recollection of his previous visit—took every opportunity of leading up to those topics which Nairn most avoided, but which Geddy hoped would throw a light upon the man himself.

Beaten on the subject of the books, baffled when he led up to personal experiences, foiled gently but firmly at every attempt, Geddy at last got an inspiration and laid for a bold stroke.

They were at dinner, and the peculiarly savoury character of the stew recalled to the youngster again the question that had been puzzling him all along. 'Summoning all his nerve, he said with cheery zest:

'By Jove, Nairn, after months of roast mealies and tough game—without salt, too—this does taste delicious!'

'Glad you like it,' said his host quietly. 'Staple

dish, you know. Just stewed fowl and stamped mealies !'

'Yes, by George ! but such a stew ! Who—who's your cook ?'

'Well, I suppose it becomes an easy task when the bill of fare doesn't vary once a month ;' and Nairn looked up curiously at his guest.

'But how do you manage it, eh ? No boy ever cooked like this.'

Nairn delayed replying until a faint guilty flush touched up the other's cheeks, and then laughingly—and with a significant look of complete intelligence—he said :

'I was just wondering, Mr. Geddy, if you were as favourably impressed with it *the last time you were here ?*'

Had the roof dropped in on him the collapse of Geddy would not have been more complete. Heron laughed unrestrainedly, perhaps because (as has been said) there is something not altogether displeasing in the misfortunes of our friends ; perhaps, too, because his view of the incident referred to was untinged by the bitter sense of personal humiliation, and his humour had therefore full play.

Nairn did not press his discomfited guest, but, smiling pleasantly, took up the burden of the talk.

'I know quite well what you thought of me, and I know even something of what you said

about "the white dog," etc., but I think (and I fancy neither of you will take offence at plain speaking)—I think that I did right in repulsing what had all the appearance of imposition.' He pushed back his chair and turned to the younger man. 'Just put yourself in my place, now, Geddy. I came to this place of my own choice. I seek nothing of other men, and I desire to go my own way unmolested. I was here before your people came in their feverish hunt for gold. I dare say I shall be here when you have ended the fruitless search. If things should turn against me and your luck be in the ascendant—why! there is room in Africa for us both. I can move on.'

Nairn spoke in an easy, unemotional way, as though discussing an abstract question of minor importance.

'Do you know,' he continued after a while, 'I sought out this spot and I chose this life because here there is no nineteenth century, no struggle, no ambition, no unrest. Here is absolute peace and content for me because I need take no thought of the morrow. You who spend your lives and energies on the outside edge of civilization paving a way for others' feet—you are beglamoured by your "life of freedom, adventure, and romance." My dear sirs, that is a view that I cannot pretend even to understand, much less sympathize with.

It may appear unnatural to you, but it is a fact, that I dislike the society of civilized men, and most of all that of the pioneers—the sappers and miners of civilization—who think a white skin a warrant for anything. Odd as it may seem to you, *I* do not regard each white man as a friend or a brother. On the contrary, I see in him a possible enemy and a certain nuisance.'

Nairn leaned back in his chair, and thoughtfully polished the bowl of his pipe.

They had finished dinner, and were lighting up for a smoke. The others puffed away in silence.

He had said his say candidly and without heat, and no offence had been meant or taken. Presently Heron said:

'What puzzles me, Nairn, is, since you distrust every white man you see, what the devil made you ask *us* in?'

'Aye! that's it,' said Geddy good-humouredly. 'That's the very question I was going to ask. What made you change your opinion?'

'Well,' said Nairn, with simple directness, 'your case is peculiar. I had a certain sympathy with you, you see, for we are all outlaws together—I from choice!'

Both men coloured faintly, and Geddy asked at once:

‘How could you know that at the time? How did you know us—or me?’

‘My dear fellow, I knew you by several means. In the first place, I had met you before—you see, I do not see so many white faces that I can’t remember them; and in the second place, the *umfaan* to whom you spoke that night, you recollect, also recognised you.’

Geddy, who recalled in a flash both the question he had asked that night and the answer given by the boy, shrank under Nairn’s direct, calm look.

‘But,’ he continued without pause, ‘you forget—or did you not know?—that for a month there was a detachment of police on the watch for you here.’

‘Lucifer! What luck we didn’t come sooner!’ exclaimed Heron, aghast. ‘They’d have had us, as sure as God made little apples!’

‘Oh, that was all right,’ said Nairn, smiling. ‘I was well posted as to their plans and movements. You see, I heard of your affair in Delagoa, and I knew you had gone for a spell to Mahaash’s and Sebougwaan’s, and you were safe enough there. In any case, I took the precaution of sending word to Mahaash to stop you if you wanted to come back before the coast was clear. He had a letter for you from me for some time, but returned it yesterday with a message to say you were coming

this way, and that was why I was expecting you when you turned up this morning.'

Geddy put out his hand, saying :

'By God, Nairn, you are a trump ! You've been a perfect Providence to us ; and—and I take back all I said about you that other time.'

Nairn smiled and shook his head.

'I'm afraid,' he answered, 'that it was only because you were in a scrape that I sided with you at all. It seemed a bit of a d——d shame that the Government should set on a couple of fellows because they had chosen to settle their grievances their own way, which is what you did, I believe?'

Heron smiled grimly, and nodded reply.

'You seem to have had pretty good information about us,' Geddy remarked. 'I suppose your neighbours keep you well posted?'

'Yes ; there are Boswells among them, too. I have had faithfully retailed to me the whole of the affair of Mahaash and the silver spur. Don't put another chief to ride a bucking horse with a spur. They may not all fall as lightly as Mahaash, and they may not all be as good-tempered.'

'Upon my soul,' said Heron, 'I did it in perfect good faith. He wanted a present, and I gave him what I could best spare. How could I possibly know that that old crock would buck?'

'Well, you had a lucky escape. Umketch

would have had you kerried. They don't like to appear ridiculous. How did you lose your pocket-book, Geddy ?'

'How—the—deuce——'

Nairn laughed heartily.

'Why, man, it has been here for weeks, waiting for you! They bring me all these things, with their gossip and their troubles. An old fellow, a witch-doctor, brought the pocket-book. He said he found it by divination—casting the dollas ; the old fraud! He walked up here, some forty miles, just to gossip about you. It took him three days before he produced the book. The first day he talked of the prospects of rain, and the grass and the cattle ; the next he spoke about the rumours that were afloat about white men working into the ground and bursting it open with guns, and wondered if white men would overrun Swazieland; and he wound up with the admission that he had *heard* of two having been seen, and on horseback, too, and with rifles. Notwithstanding which, he believed them to be English, for one had given a shilling to a young girl as a present, and the other had a book in which he wrote. There it is on the shelf beside you. He wanted to sell it, but I took it from him, and told him he would probably have bad luck, and one of his cows would be barren or lose her calf this year because he had meddled

with your goods, and failed to return the book to you. He stole it, of course ?'

'The old scoundrel!' said Geddy, reaching for the book ; ' he must have found it while we were yet in sight. I left it in a hut in one of the kraals.'

'Yes ; I'm afraid he was an old thief,' said Nairn. 'The raw Swazie would think nothing of a twenty or thirty mile jaunt to return it ; but these witch-doctors are mostly old Basuto ruffians, steeped in guile. They have few scruples when there is a prospect of profit.'

'On my word,' laughed Heron, 'I don't know what you may not know about us with agencies like this, and a whole nation making a confidante of you ! What a rum life you do lead !'

Nairn looked at him curiously, and remarking dryly that they were a very peculiar people, rose from his seat, and made it clear that he thought it time for bed. He showed them to his own room, where an extra bed had been fixed up, and wishing them 'Good-night,' left them.

Quoth Geddy :

'I didn't like to ask him where he would sleep if we took his room, as one feels bound to do in common civility. I'd have got another of those gentle cold-blooded sneers for my pains. You know, old chap, with all due respect—and all that